

Introduction

St. Olaf's mission statement is concise and challenging:

St. Olaf, a four-year college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, provides an education committed to the liberal arts, rooted in the Christian Gospel, and incorporating a global perspective. In the conviction that life is more than a livelihood, it focuses on what is ultimately worthwhile and fosters the development of the whole person in mind, body, and spirit.

Now in its second century, St. Olaf College remains dedicated to the high standards set by its Norwegian immigrant founders. In the spirit of free inquiry and free expression, it offers a distinctive environment that integrates teaching, scholarship, creative activity, and opportunities for encounter with the Christian Gospel and God's call to faith. The college intends that its graduates combine academic excellence and theological literacy with a commitment to life-long learning.

St. Olaf College strives to be an inclusive community, respecting all our differing backgrounds and beliefs. Through its curriculum, campus life, and off-campus programs, it stimulates students' critical thinking and heightens their moral sensitivity; it encourages them to be seekers of truth, leading lives of unselfish service to others; and it challenges them to be responsible and knowledgeable citizens of the world.

Every once in a while, the college pauses to consider the deeper meanings embedded in its mission. At its centennial, the college published *Identity and Mission in a Changing Context* to explain more fully its commitments and challenges. Twenty-five years later, the context continues to change. The world has changed greatly. The Cold War has ended, and the nations of the world are muddling into a new world order of economic globalization. The Reagan Revolution has changed the face of American politics, and of federal aid to education. A new wave of immigration is making America as diverse and interesting as ever, with challenging problems and opportunities. Scientists have just mapped the entire human genome. Environmental issues have come to center stage.

American higher education has also changed significantly. Young women have very different expectations of education than they did in 1974. Racial and ethnic minorities are taking advantage of increased access to higher education. Within the academy, there have been challenges to the canon of the disciplines, and there have been a variety of pedagogical innovations, some of them connected to new technologies. Colleges have become more complex institutions, and they involve

more people in time-consuming administrative and support services. In America today, colleges and universities face unprecedented problems of cost and accountability, and these sometimes strain our ability to provide high quality face-to-face education to our students.

In some cases also, expectations for higher education have changed: many students (and parents) focus on the instrumental effects of higher education, especially on the undergraduate degree as a credential for a career. Many of these students want double (and even triple) majors as a way of certifying the breadth of their academic interests. Prospective students are interested in the quality of instruction at places like St. Olaf, but they're also interested in the quality of our facilities for academic, residential, social, and spiritual life.

Since 1974, the people of St. Olaf have changed. From 1974 to the early 1990s, while the student body remained roughly the same size, the faculty grew; since then, faculty size has contracted, with all of the pain and conflict that such difficult decisions invariably entail. There are fewer Lutherans on the faculty and in the student population than in 1974. Our student body is geographically more diverse than in 1974, though we are still not as culturally diverse as we'd like to be. Today's students come with greater needs than before, causing increased need for counseling and tutoring programs.

Not surprisingly, St. Olaf has responded to these changes by changing. Since 1974, we've rewritten the mission statement to emphasize our developing commitment to global citizenship and stewardship. The faculty continues to reshape the curriculum to respond to the changing (and unchanging) needs of our students. Since 1974, the college's off-campus contacts have multiplied, and our overseas programs have become national models. Since 1974, the college has added interdisciplinary programs in Women's Studies, American Racial and Multicultural Studies, and Environmental Studies, among others. We've revised our general education requirements, and added new general education programs. We've initiated the Great Conversation, to help students become conversant with the Western tradition, and both an Asian Conversation and American Conversations, to help students see the world from different perspectives. Recently, the college concluded thirty successful years of innovation in the Paracollege. Since 1974, all of us have had to adapt to the demands of computers, discerning how to make them useful to our historic goals. Since 1974, we've built a music building, a massive addition to the library, an administrative wing, two residence halls, a college commons, and lots of parking.

In this changed (and still changing) context, we're thinking about our mission again—not to change it, but to reaffirm its validity for the 21st century. For a long time, St. Olaf thrived on the *ethos* of a Lutheran Norwegian-American community. With a more diverse faculty and student body, however, this *ethos* needs the support of *logos*. People who haven't grown up in the academic tradition of the college need to understand it, and they need see how the tradition might possibly grow on them.

This document, therefore, is a reflection on the St. Olaf tradition, and on the way we embody it--creatively and faithfully--today. It's an attempt to capture the *ethos* of St. Olaf College in words, to say why we act the way we do.¹

This document is the latest (but surely not the last) statement in a tradition of conversations about the meaning and purposes of education at St. Olaf. These discussions and debates have been going on for more than a century. Some of them are summarized in the 1999 volume *Called to Serve: St. Olaf and the Vocation of a Church College*. This document doesn't intend to repeat those conversations, but to say what they mean to us now. An account of our current thinking and practice, it attempts to synthesize some of the things we have in mind when we consider why we do what we do. And it hopes to provoke more conversations that keep our traditions alive--including the tradition of conversation.²

We hope many people will read this document--the faculty, staff, students and administrators of St. Olaf; parents and prospective students; people interested in liberal education or Lutheran higher education; people interested in higher education generally. That's why it's written in a conversational tone. And that's why we've decided to write boldly. If you can read these documents without getting excited, we'll be disappointed. We hope, of course, that you'll be excited because the statement articulates your hopes for higher education. But we expect that some people will be excited because it doesn't. And we expect there will be arguments--good arguments, rational arguments, impassioned arguments, but still civil arguments. That's how the conversation of this place has worked for 125 years.

The "we" of this document is both individual and institutional. At one level, "we" are the students, faculty, staff, graduates, and friends of St. Olaf College--a combination and collaboration of individuals. Each of us brings different perspectives and gifts to the college, and each of us experiences it differently. "We" are Lutheran and Catholic and Buddhist and agnostic. "We" are African-American and Asian-American and Native American and Euro-American. "We" are rural and urban and suburban, Midwestern and national and international. "We" are middle-class and wealthy and poor. "We" celebrate the college's Norwegian heritage on Founders Day and Syttende Mai, but we also celebrate our heritage on the Hmong New Year and Black History Month and Cinco de Mayo. "We" are women and men. "We" are heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual. "We" are liberal and conservative in politics and social values. We're scholars and musicians and athletes, dancers and partygoers. We're different and we're the same--and we're interdependent.

While there's a majority of white faces at St. Olaf, and a lot of Lutherans, there's still plenty of diversity, because none of us is just one thing. We're a patchwork of characteristics, and we shape individual identities from the ways we emphasize (or ignore) different aspects of our identity. At the same time that we make sense of our own multiplicity, we learn to be at home in multiple and overlapping groups. At St.

Olaf, the white Republican from a farm family near Hutchinson majors in Social Work, and belongs to Habitat for Humanity. She rooms with a middle-class African-American student from a Democratic household in St. Paul who attends Northfield's Baptist church and plays in the orchestra. Her best friend is a Texan, a guy she met in a psychology class, who is a member of the student congregation and the student senate. His roommate plays bass guitar in a rock band when he's not in the Biology classes that make up a major part of his pre-med training. Students like these suggest the multiplicity of St. Olaf life. Abercrombie and Fitch live down the hall from Levi and Strauss; the strains of Bach and Beethoven mix with rock and rap and reggae and salsa. Such students come to St. Olaf because they and their families believe in what the college stands for and what it has to offer--liberal arts education dedicated to the goals of personal enrichment and social service. A college like St. Olaf is a place where people of different backgrounds agree to emphasize certain pursuits and purposes.

St. Olaf is where our individual "we's" come together as an institutional "we," where our diverse perspectives and gifts come together intentionally to collaborate in a long-standing tradition of educational excellence. At this level, "we" is not just the people who work at the college now; "we" is the institutional identity and mission inherited from the college founders, and creatively reformed through 125 years. From the beginning, St. Olaf College stood for something, and it still does. The collective "we" has always been intentionally involved in creating an institutional "we," and it still is. St. Olaf's mission statement is a description of the ways in which people with different backgrounds and perspectives can come to share specific goals.

This mission musing tries to be a coherent statement of our institutional goals and objectives, but it's not a complete compilation, nor is it a loyalty test. Not all members of the St. Olaf community will resonate with all parts of the college mission. Some members of the community will disagree with parts of it, and that's a good thing. Mission statements (and reflections on mission statements) are an opportunity for individuals to connect their own stories to the collective story of the college. The mission is primarily institutional, but it's also personal, and interpersonal. We piece the college together out of the patches of our individual stories. Sometimes these patches fit established patterns, but sometimes too they change the pattern, and the crazy quilt of the college takes on new shapes.

We know that a college is the result of planning and foresight, but it's also the product of chance and serendipity. Certain individuals show up and change the ways people understand themselves and the ways they act together. An F. Melius Christiansen comes to St. Olaf to conduct the band, and decides to stay. By the time he retires, the college has established the leading tradition of American choral music. A Gertrude Hilleboe agrees to come to St. Olaf as Dean of Women until a more suitable candidate can be found. Forty-four years later, she retires, and the college enjoys a fully-developed program of residence life. A Carl Mellby shows up

in 1901, with a passion for history. By the time of his retirement, 48 years later, he has taught the first courses in economics, sociology, political science, history of art, and marriage and the family, and has helped to establish strong departmental programs in the social sciences. An Emil Ellingson comes with a passion for chemistry, and by the time he leaves, the college is fully committed to a strong program in the natural sciences. A Connie Gengenbach comes in 1975, teaching in the History Department and the Paracollege, and uses her life and her writing on vocation to help the whole college understand its vocation better. In this document, we'd like to celebrate the serendipities of our history, and the ways that our predecessors have shaped happenstance into institutional form.

These traditions are renewed in each generation. If people don't show up, traditions die. If students don't audition for choir, the choirs fall silent. If nobody decides to study the sciences, the college doesn't do sciences. If faculty don't stay engaged with their students and with the whole life of the college community, the institution loses some of its personality and personability. But the story of St. Olaf College is that good people continue to show up. The women and men of this generation are already engaged in establishing the traditions of future generations. We are a community of memory and a community of hope, engaged in practices of commitment that both symbolize and substantiate our goals.

A mission statement isn't a daily planner, although it should affect our daily planning. Instead it's meant to remind us what we're doing, to keep us mindful of the purposes that sometimes disappear in the daily grind. A mission statement helps us to consider the important objectives that sometimes get lost in classes and committees and cafeterias. When we are intensely focused on the details of the task at hand, we sometimes forget the purposes of the task at hand. When we are struggling with Calculus or Spanish or Sociology, we sometimes forget why we're struggling at all. What are the big questions for which these small answers are a response? How does this all fit together? These reflections on mission can't categorically answer those questions, but they can suggest some possibilities. Documents like this one serve mainly as a reminder--a call to mindfulness of how our creative tasks fit within the larger creative task that is Creation.

A mission statement reminds us that a college education is a collective mission, an institutional mission. The mission is not what individuals do alone, but what we do together. No one person fulfills the mission of St. Olaf College, although each person has responsibility for some important parts of the enterprise. A faculty is important, but you need more than faculty to fulfill St. Olaf's mission. Students are central, but students alone don't make a residential liberal arts college. Deans and directors and counselors and clerks and custodians are essential, but not by themselves. Cooks and a cafeteria are crucial, but students don't live by bread alone. Colleges are, like other social institutions, practices of cooperation and collaboration (and sometimes contention). This mission musing is, therefore, a declaration of interdependence.

This statement describes the main goals of the college, and some of the most important practices that embody those goals. It's not comprehensive, but it is, we hope, enough. We've decided to discuss the mission of the college in three sections: one on the liberal arts, which emphasizes *thoughtfulness*; a second on religion that accents *faithfulness*; and a third on campus culture, which focuses on *togetherness*. Together, these practices of learning and faith and sharing develop a wide range of different "intelligences" in our students--sensitivities, skills, and perspectives that help them to become good human beings who are good for their communities. A liberal arts college is committed, first and foremost, to the cultivation of rational intelligence. But a liberal arts college--and especially a church-related and residential liberal arts college--is also committed to the practice of intelligence beyond the bounds of rational discourse--artistic intelligence, religious intelligence, embodied intelligence, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal intelligence. We're committed not just to the independent development of these intelligences, but to their integration and interplay.

At a college like St. Olaf, all of these intelligences are shaped in the direction of vocation. We believe that all of our students are gifted, and that in a gift economy, the gifted have an obligation to be givers--as workers, lovers, parents, worshippers, neighbors and citizens. In the conviction that life is more than a livelihood, and a vocation is more than a job, we focus on the ways that whole persons--body, mind, heart and spirit--bring their gifts to the world around them. As St. Olaf Regent Martin E. Marty suggests, the vocation of this school *is* vocation.³

Although we've divided the document into sections, we obviously can't do the same with the complex synergies of a real college. Our academic life is informed by our religious commitments and by our community life. Our church relation is just that--a relationship to an academic program and a community setting. And this is not just any community--it's a learning community committed to higher education in a Christian context.

Finally, it's important to note that this is a reflection on a mission statement, not a "mission-accomplished" statement. In a world of imperfect human beings (and what other kind is there?), we know that we can't accomplish all of the goals we set out for ourselves. We know that there will always be problems and conflicts and tensions in our life together. But we also know that we won't accomplish any of them without continuous reflection and renewal. This document is, we hope, a part of that ongoing process.

The Liberal Arts: The Practice of Thoughtfulness

Introduction

St. Olaf is a liberal arts college, and that itself is a curious fact. In 1874, a small group of Norwegian Lutherans decided to incorporate a school to provide "higher education for the practical life." But it was by no means self-evident that "higher education"--or liberal education--was the most practical preparation for life in late-nineteenth century Minnesota. As late as 1870, only 17 Minnesota communities even had high schools, and they had produced only 117 graduates. Why, then, did a group of Norwegian-Americans in a small Minnesota town choose this particular form of education? Why did they think that liberal education was ultimately more practical than supposedly more practical alternatives like technical schools or agricultural schools or normal schools? How did they imagine that liberal arts ideals intersected with their religious commitments? Their collective choice in 1874 for liberal education, and the subsequent choices of countless Oles since then, have shaped St. Olaf's distinctive identity. For 125 years, St. Olaf has responded to the evolving ideals of liberal education in characteristic ways, and, in the process, developed a distinctive understanding of its liberal arts mission.

Today, St. Olaf College faces questions just as daunting as those that confronted the founders. In a pragmatic culture, people ask about the practicality of the liberal arts. In an era of rampant individualism, people wonder about the relevance of liberal arts ideals like citizenship and service. In an era of interchangeable parts and people, critics ask if science (or art, or history, or economics) isn't just the same at all colleges. In an era of assumed American supremacy, some people wonder about the benefits of a global perspective. In a commercial culture where the words "free" and "freedom" sell commodities like cars and vacuum cleaners, it's hard to see the richer meanings of freedom embedded in the liberal arts. In an instrumentalist culture, why should we develop a passion for life-long learning? In a secular age, how should learning be connected to vocation or religious faith? In a changing economy of higher education, how is it possible to maintain class sizes that allow for deep intellectual relationships between students and faculty? When people ask, "Why the liberal arts?" and, more particularly, "Why practice the liberal arts at St. Olaf College?" we need to have a good answer. This is ours.

Our answer to these important questions begins with the development of liberal arts ideals in Western culture. It then traces some contemporary controversies and perspectives within the liberal arts tradition: the parameters and purposes of freedom in contemporary society, the practicality of the liberal arts, the necessity of a global perspective, and the best ways to accomplish the goals of the liberal arts. At the same time, it describes St. Olaf's evolving engagement with these ideals, and the college's commitment to a culture of thoughtfulness, a culture in which people understand freedom as a commitment to the common good.⁴

Liberal Arts and the Art of Freedom

Today, most Americans (and many of us at St. Olaf) are unsure about the precise meanings and purposes of liberal arts colleges. And some of our confusions are reflected in how the public talks about the liberal arts. Sometimes people contrast the liberal arts with technical and professional education, as if the liberal arts were somehow less practical. Students often say that they've come to a liberal arts institution to become well-rounded, and liberal arts colleges do provide lots of choices in lots of disciplines. But such characterizations tend to confuse aspects of liberal arts education with the whole of it, and often pay little attention to the compelling and shaping purposes of such an education. The dictionary defines the liberal arts as "academic disciplines, such as languages, history, philosophy, and abstract science, that provide information of general cultural concern, as distinguished from more narrowly practical training, as for a profession." This definition also exhibits some of the confusions that make it hard--but ultimately worthwhile--to profess the liberal arts in the United States.⁵

For one thing, it ignores the history of the liberal arts, and the rooted meaning of the two words. The word "liberal" has many meanings, but the meaning most germane to the liberal arts is now listed in the *American Heritage Dictionary* as "obsolete." That meaning is "Permissible or appropriate for a free man." The "liberal" arts were, at one time, the arts appropriate for free men. At a time when there weren't many free people, the price of freedom was responsibility, and specifically the responsibility of leadership. Free men (and, at that time, it was almost exclusively men) needed to understand the world comprehensively, so that they could think clearly and compassionately about the public good. The liberal arts, then and now, were the arts involved in leadership and service, freedom and responsibility. A liberal arts college is, at its foundation, a freedom school, although, obviously, not all liberal arts institutions have acted that way.⁶

The "arts" part of liberal arts also means something different than most modern meanings of the word. Today, the arts are those areas of human endeavor where people produce and arrange sounds, colors, forms, movements, and other elements to affect our aesthetic senses. But this is a contemporary definition of the arts, developed mainly in the nineteenth century. Before that time, the arts were those trades or crafts that applied principles and methods in the performance of all kinds of human activity. There was a builder's art, a baker's art, an art of diplomacy and an art of war. These arts could be valued for their aesthetic properties, but their purpose was more pragmatic. The arts were how you got things done. The liberal arts still are. They are how you free people.⁷

Freedom is, after all, the main goal of liberal education, which values thinking for yourself. People need to know their own minds in order to be good citizens of a free society. We need to know our values, and why we value them. It's not enough

to think like our parents or our pastor or our peers, although these people may be good people and good thinkers. We need to know how to evaluate the ideas that our parents and pastors and peers proclaim, and how to make them our own--or not. A liberal education, therefore, teaches us to think twice about everything. Its motto could be "Dare to think" or "Think again."⁸

In the liberal arts tradition, we don't think in order to accomplish some simplistic goal--like building a better mousetrap. We think because thinking is good, and good for us--both individually and collectively. We learn to think broadly not because we want to become doctors or lawyers or professionals, but because we want to become better human beings (who can, of course, also be better doctors and lawyers and teachers and pastors). We learn because learning what's worthwhile *is* worthwhile. Cultivating curiosity and the passion to pursue our questions, we encourage a lifelong love affair with the arts and ideas. Endowed by our Creator with brains, we try to be creative and conscientious with them.

Know Thyself: Serve Thy Neighbor

As a practice of freedom, liberal education today promotes the cultivation of character in a multicultural community, and independent thinking for an interdependent world. The goal of self-development complements the goal of community development. The liberal arts, therefore, accentuate the intellectual development of the self, and of the self-in-relation. Dating back to Socrates' injunction to "Know thyself," this ideal of liberal education emphasizes the development of identity, and of identification with community. It asks people to think about the good life, both for individuals and for their communities. What qualities of people promote the quality of community? What kind of community elicits good moral character? Knowing the self in this way is not an easy achievement; it's nowhere near as easy as calculus or rocket science or literary criticism. Students who wonder "Who am I?" and "What's the purpose of my life?" must consider all sorts of related questions: What's an I? What's a human being? What are people for? How does my society define the self? What are the self's psychological, social, spiritual and political dimensions? How much is the self self-made, and how much does society shape the self? What are the social obligations of a self? What's the connection between the self and the physical world? How did I get to be a person? Where did I come from and where am I going? What can I make of myself? As these questions suggest, understanding the self involves understanding the world, its people and places, its myths and texts, its characteristics and properties.

In the same way, we learn to think for ourselves in conversation with other thinkers. The cultivation of character and community means, at St. Olaf, conversations with people, dead and alive, who have grappled with the same big questions. "Martin," a contemporary student may say to Luther, "how did you make sense of all this?" "And Henry," she says, turning to Thoreau, "what's your

perspective from Walden?" A curious student might ask Frederick Douglass or Sojourner Truth about the practices of freedom--and unfreedom. Others might ask Albert Einstein or Marie Curie about the implications of particle physics, or Watson and Crick about biotechnology, or E.O. Wilson about biodiversity. Eighty years ago, a St. Olaf student might ask in person, "Professor Rolvaag, can you help me sort out these ideas?" Today, students can still learn from Ole Rolvaag's perspectives on these issues. And so this tradition of questioning and conversation continues. Our students also place themselves in relation to the different voices of the women and men of their own time, becoming more aware of their own assumptions in the encounter with people of different beliefs and backgrounds. Our students ask great minds--philosophers, playwrights, novelists, artists, scientists, historians, faculty, roommates, parents, friends--to help them find and create meaning in their own lives. In many ways, in fact, a student's vocation is to place themselves within this convocation of provocative voices. And the faculty's vocation is to structure a curriculum as a catalyst for these ongoing conversations.

Within the framework of a liberal education, "know thyself" goes hand-in-hand with "serve thy neighbor." This emphasis of liberal education focuses on the interplay of identity and community, and on the cultivation of virtue *for* the community. This ideal was alive in Athens, and it also flourished in the medieval universities, where education occurred under the auspices of the church. This tradition in the liberal arts contended that the purpose of liberal education was to produce the moral values and mental disciplines necessary for leadership. If freedom was the goal of liberal education, then moral reasoning was its responsibility. People might be free to choose anything, but they *should* choose to do good. In America, at least until the mid-19th century, religion and moral philosophy were integrated to help students make conscientious decisions about their lives. Assuming that people were not *naturally* good, college leaders believed that people could *learn* to do better, and that colleges could assist in that ethical education. Believing that goodness could use some institutional support, they tried--intellectually and socially--to make it easier for people to act well in the world. We still believe these things. The liberal arts are an interrelated set of practices designed to help people become more thoughtful and sensitive to both intellectual and moral issues, and to become better human beings, both individually and socially.

The ideal of the liberal arts coincides with the Christian conception of vocation. Within a religious framework, we are all called by God to participate in God's work on earth. Vocation gives us a way of thinking about the cosmic and communitarian aspects of work, and it invites us to think about the gift of creation, the creation of our own gifts, and the ways in which our gifts might be applied to the purposes of creation. A vocation is a call from God, to use God's gifts in faithful service, for the good of the neighbor and the entire community, including the poor and dispossessed. A calling can never be purely private, nor can it be purely vocational in the narrowest sense of the word. A vocation is God's call to work in the world, not just at work, but in all of the settings of our lives. At St. Olaf, we teach this comprehensive sense of vocation, and

we expect that a liberal education will help our students do good work in the world, both before and after graduation.

The ideal of the liberal arts also coincides with the democratic ideal of citizenship. Democratic institutions assume that citizens will know the issues facing their political institutions, will understand the complexity of the situation, will know how to formulate a constructive response, and will have the will to do something. Good citizens must think and act compassionately. Thomas Jefferson, for example, was a passionate partisan of widespread public education, and a founder of the University of Virginia. Jefferson wanted people educated "so much as may enable them to read and understand what is going on in the world, and to keep their part of it going on right: for nothing can keep it right but their own vigilant and distrustful superintendence." In today's America, this means the development of education in and for a multicultural community in an interdependent world.⁹

The liberal arts tradition generally assumed that education prepared people for positions of leadership within an established order, and so, ironically, this liberal education was often fairly conservative. During the Enlightenment, however, the academy also began to see itself as an independent estate, a voice of reason speaking against the less reasonable institutions of the state and society. It shifted the emphasis from the education of freeborn elites to the education of critical thinkers. This ideal envisioned colleges and education both as counterculture and as a force for progress, because new ideas could help reshape society.

Challenges to the Liberal Arts

During the nineteenth century, the American liberal arts tradition, with its emphasis on contemplation, character-building and service, faced challenges from outside and inside the academy. In some cases, liberal arts colleges succumbed to elitism, and became essentially finishing schools for wealthy young men. In other cases, a positivist focus on facts and knowledge undermined the broader emphasis on understanding and moral character, and on the public purposes of higher education. In still others, learning became more instrumental than exploratory: such colleges taught how the world worked, and how to work the world for individual advancement. The college degree increasingly became a credential certifying a person's readiness for employment.

During the nineteenth century, the sheer increase in human knowledge also made it unlikely that any one person could master it all, and so specializations slowly developed. Increasingly, it became possible to be a professor of something so particular that it had little relevance to the inner life or the public life. The term "ivory tower" was coined to describe a place where the life of the mind was no longer mindful of its social and moral contexts. The trivium and quadrivium of classical liberal education became the numerous departments and subspecialties of the modern university.¹⁰ While scholars in such institutions would remain citizens of

the world, they would generally profess their citizenship less holistically. By 1874, American colleges and universities were deciding how to reconcile this specialist model of narrowing (but proliferating) knowledge with the liberal ideal of broad understanding. Within two years, the establishment of Johns Hopkins University would mark the first American acceptance of the new paradigm of specialized research. But all of American higher education still lives with this tension.¹¹

The development of this specialist ideal often accompanied a secularization of the academy, and a subsequent loss of curricular coherence. Early American college presidents often taught the college's capstone course in moral philosophy. This course instructed students how to think carefully about moral questions, and (sometimes) it told students what the right conclusions were. But the development of electives and specialized majors involved, almost inevitably, a reduction of moral and intellectual coherence in a college education. It freed students from the arbitrary constrictions of premature conclusions and narrow traditions, but it also freed them from the creative syntheses that had made some sense of a complicated world.

Throughout all the changes and complications, the liberal arts persisted, not just as a course of study, or a set of courses, but as an attitude about how to approach the world. Even research universities maintained colleges of liberal arts. But the liberal arts are not self-sustaining. Then and now, any college wanting to profess the liberal arts would need to be conscious and conscientious about its choices.

The Liberal Arts at St. Olaf

In 1874, then, the founders of St. Olaf had choices to make. How would they value liberal arts and technical skills? How would they emphasize leadership and learning for its own sake? Would the college be educationally elitist, or would it be open to all? How would their Lutheranism intersect with the "liberation theology" of the liberal arts?

By 1874, the liberal arts tradition was well established in America, even as it began to be questioned. The ideals of the classic liberal arts included human curiosity and questioning, love of learning in all its variety, disciplined practice of critical thinking, focus on moral reasoning, responsibility for service and leadership, celebrations of human expression, and, finally, a desire for wisdom and virtue. These ideals encouraged students to make meaning in their lives by making sense of their traditions and the world around them. Liberal artisans (to coin a phrase) assumed that human beings were complex and creative, and capable of many kinds of intelligence. They tried, therefore, to create an education that would cultivate the highest humanity of such creatures.

Embracing these ideals, St. Olaf's founders decided that the most practical course for their learning community was a liberal arts institution. The school began as an academy--a high school more challenging and more religious than the public

schools--and added a college course in 1889. All along, the founders assumed that their students would benefit from the open-ended learning of a liberal education. In making this choice, they made it clear that they intended liberal education to free people for leadership in their communities. At the dedication of the school in January 1875, President Mohn claimed that young people "must be instructed that they are not placed in the world for their own sake merely, but that every individual has a certain office to fill, a certain mission to perform, and although his position in life may seem insignificant in the life of the world, it is nevertheless necessary as a link in the greater humanity, and in this sense, just as important as the office of a prince and a monarch." A liberal education, thought Mohn, would show students "the harmonious construction of society," and would suggest that, "unless every part of it performs its function, the great machinery will be out of order. The student thus seeing his duty, must now be furnished with means to execute his charge. He must be educated in the different branches pertaining to his position in life, and instructed in their application, so that he can use them with readiness and ease."¹²

The branches of knowledge pertaining to a person's position in life have always been construed broadly at St. Olaf. The academy offered courses in English, Norwegian, Geography, History (including U.S. History), Religion, Music, Mathematics, Algebra, and Penmanship. The early college favored classical instruction, with Greek and Latin, History, English, Norwegian, Logic, Physics and Chemistry, and Religion. A Scientific Course was added to the classical and English courses in 1900, and an elective system was established by 1914. St. Olaf won North Central accreditation in 1915, and a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa confirmed the college's academic excellence in 1949. Adopting many of the practices of American higher education, the college adapted them to its own ends.

St. Olaf is not just committed to a course of study, but to a kind of study--and a kind of teaching. For 125 years, the St. Olaf faculty have committed themselves both personally and professionally to the growth of their students. Faculty and students work out their vocation in their research and creative performance, in classrooms and labs, in recital halls and practice rooms, in studios and playing fields. The college produces outstanding graduates because faculty mentors challenge each student to accomplish just a little more than at first seems possible, and they provide resources--books, assignments, encouragement and time--to help students meet those challenges. This tradition of face-to-face, hands-on, whole-hearted teaching and learning has distinguished St. Olaf in the past 125 years, and it is still the heart and soul of our academic mission.

The Arts of Practicality

St. Olaf began as a college for outsiders and working people. In his 1925 history of the college, Carl Mellby noted that "one special aim of the new school would be to combat the fear of being inferiors and outsiders, which the Norse population was laboring under. It must emphasize the American principles of equal right and

opportunity for every one and it was to stimulate self-confidence and ambition" in its students. The college founders believed that the children of Norwegian immigrant farmers, artisans and business people could benefit from an education that put the work of everyday life into a broader context. "Even if the young men and women, who had enjoyed the benefits of better training, chose to remain on the farm, the knowledge and the ability, which they had gained, could be put to excellent use. As leaders in church and neighborhood affairs, they would raise the standard of intelligence and efficiency in the whole environment. They would remove some of the burden of work from the shoulders of pastor and teacher, and help create the ideal American democracy of co-operative action and widespread responsibility."¹³

From the beginning, as this passage suggests, St. Olaf College admitted women, assuming that the benefits of a liberal education were by no means restricted to one sex. In the early years, in part because of limited housing, men greatly outnumbered women. But women also sought the benefits of a college education, and many early female students prepared for the teaching profession, so that by 1925 almost 300 St. Olaf women were teaching in public and private schools. Today, St. Olaf is notable for the number of women studying math and science. And one of our residence halls is named for the college's first female graduate, Agnes Mellby, who graduated in 1893.¹⁴

St. Olaf's historic open admissions policy was based on the assumption that the disciplines of liberal education were a practical preparation for any person's life in the world. Today, St. Olaf attracts students from different ethnic groups and different classes, and the college's need-blind admissions policy and its active recruitment of multicultural students continue St. Olaf's moral commitment to equal rights and opportunities. This assures that liberal education is not merely for economic or cultural elites, but for all people committed to values of clear questioning and complex thinking. Currently, about 20 percent of our students are first-generation college students.

At St. Olaf, we still offer "higher education for the practical life." We believe that liberal education is still practical for farmers, for women, for majority groups and minority groups--indeed, for all of our current students. The liberal arts disciplines offer their practitioners transferable analytical skills--the ability to interpret and integrate diverse source materials; the ability to express and evaluate reasoned arguments; the ability to test theories applied to culture and nature; the ability to think about the causes of cultural change and natural processes; the ability to assess the impact of natural and cultural factors on human institutions and activity; and the ability to compare cultural patterns to enhance understanding. These are eminently practical skills. Empathy and understanding are essential tools in a world inhabited by human beings. Knowing how cultures work and how they change can be useful in a real world of social beings. Critical consciousness helps in business and in life, while creativity

and imagination can transform a variety of situations. The ability to make meaning in a world of much meaninglessness is a practical talent.¹⁵

Indeed, one of the main practicalities of the liberal arts at institutions like St. Olaf is to show some of the impracticalities of the so-called "real world." Too often in modern societies, the push for practicality is a call to conform to the world the way it is, not the way it ought to be. The practical world sometimes accomplishes so much because it encompasses so little, setting aside whole dimensions of the human person--aesthetic, spiritual, ethical, and sometimes even political. The liberal arts reject this narrow definition of practicality, and remind us of the fullness of our humanity. By keeping our minds critically engaged with the world's presumed practicality, they free us to wonder how, practically, we might become as good as we could be. At St. Olaf, therefore, when we teach students practical skills and knowledge, we also teach them ways of evaluating their use in the world.

In the debate over liberal or specialized education, therefore, St. Olaf elected the liberal course, choosing to educate students broadly instead of training them narrowly. Over time, though, the college has chosen to use specialized knowledge within an institution committed to the broad purposes of liberal education. This has never been easy, and it's a tension we still experience. As early as 1887, St. Olaf employed a graduate of Johns Hopkins, and today virtually all of the faculty have Ph.D.s or the highest degree in their field. The college assigns university-trained specialists to its departments, and invites them to extend their knowledge in a wide variety of interdisciplinary and general education programs. The college employs specialists, and asks them (and not teaching assistants) to teach the whole person. The specialization of the faculty is meant to be a means to the general and liberal education of students. The college encourages such liberal specialists in its practices of recruitment and faculty development, in college-wide programs like Writing across the Curriculum and Ethical Issues and Normative Perspectives, and in general-education programs like the Great Conversation, Asian Conversation, and American Conversations.

When we offer technical subjects--like computer science or accounting or nursing or management studies--we teach them liberally. In any discipline, teaching liberally means teaching for freedom. Teaching liberally means teaching contextually, with a sense of the incompleteness of our own discipline, and the necessity of placing ideas in conversation across disciplines. Teaching liberally means exploring the broader implications--including the ethical implications--of ideas and action. At a church-related school, teaching liberally can mean wondering whether religious ideas about nature and human nature affect the ways the disciplines think about causality and purpose. Teaching liberally means teaching students to *evaluate* the status quo, including the status quo of the disciplines, utilizing critical perspectives within the discipline and from other disciplines. We teach economics and accounting not just for the bottom line, but for a full appreciation of the implications of the bottom line. Students in economics can

examine not just economic activity, but the objectives of economic enterprise. They can ask if the self-interested individual serves as an adequate account of human nature, and they can consider the ethical implications of unconstrained individual choice. We teach science not just to discover facts and theories, but to encourage a sense of wonder and amazement and responsibility. Students can study social work at a variety of academic institutions, but at St. Olaf they learn it in the context of a whole institution focused on service for others, and especially service for the most vulnerable members of society. At St. Olaf, we try to give students not just know-how, but know-why.

At St. Olaf we believe that the specialized developments in American colleges and universities have enriched American education by focusing inquiries, and by challenging faculty to participate in the creative work of their fields. At St. Olaf, this ideal means that we expect the college not just to pass on the knowledge of academic communities, but to contribute to it. The faculty of the college are not just good teachers; they are also scholars who practice their academic disciplines, and artists who perform and practice their arts. Although some of her colleagues surely disagreed, St. Olaf History professor Agnes Larson contended in the 1950s that "the most vital people in a faculty are those who do research with an eye to publication." The artistic and scholarly endeavors of the faculty--the ways that they pursue truth and beauty and make it public--are an essential element of the college as a community of interconnected professional communities.¹⁶

Learning Communities: Local and Global

Over time, this college has consistently challenged many of the instrumentalist and individualist assumptions of much of American higher education. We believe that the main goal of education should be the freedom of the individual and the cultivation of the individual's character. But we don't see how that happens happily outside of communities, where inner life encounters outer life. We do believe that the truth can set you free, but we also believe that people are most free and most fulfilled in community, and in service to one another. The statement of "Aims and Objectives" in the 1936-37 college catalogue, for example, contended that the college "strives to develop a high grade of active and intelligent citizenship, a sense of social responsibility and personal integrity in its students. It aims to substitute the ideals of service and cooperation for the prevailing struggle for personal gain, power, and distinction." At St. Olaf, therefore, we still practice the liberal arts in a residential community, under the tutelage of faculty who are active contributors to a wide variety of academic and artistic communities. And we expect our graduates to use their freedom to identify human needs and to contribute to their communities.¹⁷

...
St. Olaf is committed to a global perspective and to the thoughtful practice of world citizenship. The liberal arts tradition has long understood the world as a series of concentric circles, widening from self to family to locality, from city to country to all humanity. When asked where he came from, the Greek philosopher

Diogenes Laertius replied, "I am a citizen of the world." The liberal arts today require not just the capacity for critical examination of the self and the particular cultural traditions that have shaped the self, but the capacity to understand and empathize with alternative ways of being human--and of being free. And few things are as freeing as foreign study. Because some other peoples aspire to American freedoms, and because American freedoms now depend on continuous interactions with the world, a global perspective is in many ways a precondition of responsible freedom in the 21st century.¹⁸

Three Kinds of Thoughtfulness: Disciplinary, Reflexive, Empathetic

Over the years, St. Olaf has expressed its convictions about liberal education, and we've tried to live up to them. As a result of our tradition, therefore, when we practice the liberal arts at St. Olaf, we have several things in mind. We want to help students become thoughtful in three different ways: *disciplinary*, *reflexive*, and *empathetic*. First, we expect students to learn and practice disciplined thought. Each of the disciplines of the college is a way of thinking developed and developing over time. These powerful communities of inquiry have helped human beings to make sense of their lives and their world for centuries. At St. Olaf, we introduce students to the characteristic questions, theories, methods, and practices of a wide variety of academic disciplines. We expect that the perspectives and practices of each discipline free students, at least for a semester, from the ordinary perspectives they brought to school with them. In pursuit of academic excellence, we require that they master one of these disciplines in a major. We expect them to become, in short, good thinkers.

Because we expect students to become actively engaged in the world, we give them a lot of practice. In foreign languages, professors insist on the persistent practice of the language, as well as an understanding of how the language both makes and conveys cultural meanings. In music, St. Olaf students perform in recital more than a hundred nights a year. In the sciences, our professors routinely engage in research with St. Olaf students, and one chemistry professor teaches all of his classes and labs in small group, role-playing models that emphasize real world skills of communication, division of responsibility, and small group dynamics as an integral component of the practice of science. At St. Olaf, we're not satisfied with students who study the disciplines, or appreciate the arts. We want students who practice the disciplines, and perform the arts. And we mentor them carefully to accomplish these goals.

The second kind of thoughtfulness is reflexive, asking students to think about the patterns and purposes of their thinking itself. The 1974 Identity and Mission statement contends that "liberal education in its broad sweep confronts the student not only with various disciplines, but with the pervasive cultural consequences of dominant modes of thought." Today, when all Americans are politically free, the

liberal arts exist not just to show us how to lead other people, but to evaluate the conventions that still bind us, and to free us to enrich the communities that, in turn, enrich us. This reflexive quality of liberal arts education helps us to ask essential academic (and practical) questions like "Why?" and "So what?" It helps us to understand, as one scholar says, that "in knowledge as in the economy, our root problem now is not production, but ecology--which means more conscious concern for making fresh connections among existing things; more looking outward to the wider consequences of our information; more serious attention to questioning why we're doing what we're doing; . . . [and] more effort given to structuring all this productive activity into humanly manageable forms." This constructive deconstruction of the academic life makes us think twice about ourselves as thinkers. It keeps us wondering, "What good is this education? What in the world is it good for? What good is it for the world?" And it guarantees that, even though we're already pretty good at the practice of liberal education, we'll keep looking for ways to get better.¹⁹

It also means that we show students how to look for the applications of knowledge in the so-called "real world." Up until World War II, half of St. Olaf's graduates were licensed to teach. These days, we still produce capable teachers. But the annual practicum in Mathematics also engages students in the application of math to real world problems. And students in the Political Science research methods class regularly engage in research about genuine social issues. The Psychology department emphasizes student research teams. The Music department offers a Church Music Practicum that considers church music as vocation or call through readings, discussions, guest visits, and case studies designed to stimulate discussion of the challenges facing people serving the church today as church musicians. Internships are a regular feature of Urban Studies programs. The Finstad Center for Entrepreneurial Studies facilitates the study and practice of entrepreneurship as both an economic and a service activity. And internships in a variety of fields are a regular part of the St. Olaf curriculum. We maintain a few professional programs--in nursing and education and social work--because they provide our students with opportunities to do good work in the world. As a result, employers and professional schools seek our students for their skills and knowledge, and for their work ethic, their initiative, and their community-building talents. And St. Olaf's Career Development Center helps our students do well by doing good.

Liberal education at St. Olaf teaches students to be thoughtful in yet a third way--to be considerate, caring and kind. This kind of thoughtfulness suggests that higher education is not merely a matter of mind, but also a matter of morals. The life of the mind and liberal learning depend on a variety of virtues, which should carry over into life after college. Positivists notwithstanding, academic life is not value-neutral. Intellectual inquiry demands, for example, the virtues of honesty, justice, courage, persistence, consideration (or attentiveness) and humility. The community of scholars, when it is paying careful attention to what it's doing, cultivates these virtues carefully. Even within the secular academy, such virtues are necessary for the practice of scholarship. When scholars pursue their research, we expect them to

be courageous, doing justice to the truth wherever it leads. We expect them to be persistent, and to consider a variety of interpretations before settling on one. In the sciences and social sciences, we expect curious questioners to value careful questioning and observation, precision and straightforward presentation. In the humanities, we expect empathy and consideration, and attentiveness to details. We count on good scholars to practice humility, subordinating their own ideas and assumptions to the truths they discover. And we expect scholars to be charitable to one another, correcting errors in a spirit of collective endeavor. In short, we expect scholarship to model many of the virtues that we ask of people in the wider world. And we expect that the practice of these virtues in academic inquiry affects the whole life of practitioners like our students.²⁰

A good liberal arts college also nurtures disciplines and virtues that are not simply academic or intellectual. At St. Olaf, for example, we appreciate our embodiment in a variety of ways. The physical activity involved in the curriculum and the extracurricular life of the college reminds us that while we are mindful, we aren't just minds. Courses in Physical Activity integrate disciplined understandings of health and wellness with principles of fitness, nutrition, stress management and relaxation. And sometimes--at one of the few liberal arts colleges with majors in Art, Music, Dance and Theatre--this physical activity is combined with artistic acumen. Dance, for example, embodies both artistic and kinesthetic intelligence in its performances. And the creative arts embody a kind of intelligence that's not just in the mind. We expect our artists--both students and faculty--to express more than ideas, in more than words. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but it's not, in fact, translatable into any thousand words. And these artistic practices also have their virtues. In the arts, we value integrity and inspiration. In our music ensembles, we value commitment and collaboration and painstaking practice. On stage, we ask students to practice both empathy and expressiveness.

A good liberal arts college also nurtures the application of moral virtues in the world--both the world of the academy and the world beyond. For this reason, as St. Olaf's 1974 Identity and Mission Statement says, "a consideration of questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, about justice, integrity, goodness, and love, should be inescapable within the frame of liberal learning." Good liberal arts colleges don't just pose the questions that already have easy answers; they pose the enduring questions that complicate and enrich human life. And they confront students with some of the enduring answers that previous generations have propounded. The goal of this kind of thoughtfulness is not mere knowledge, or even understanding, but wisdom.²¹

Standing in the long tradition of the liberal arts, St. Olaf expects that liberal education involves the cultivation of virtues (intellectual and otherwise) in community, and for community. In short, we expect liberally educated persons to be of service to society. The measure of our success is not just what students know, but what they do with what they know--both now and in their later lives. This suggests

one of the ways that a liberal arts education can be distinguished from other approaches to higher education. In the United States, one of the primary purposes of higher education is to train students for a job. At St. Olaf, we believe this is important, because work is one way that people serve their neighbors. But we don't think that this "hire education" is nearly enough. We expect that liberal education will cause students to think about vocation comprehensively--to consider the meaning and purpose of work, but also the meaning and purpose of family, of neighborhood, of citizenship, of leisure, and of global and ecological responsibility.

Doing the Liberal Arts: Depth, Breadth, and Coherence

At St. Olaf, the faculty has crafted a liberal education characterized by breadth, depth, and coherence. A liberal education is the antithesis of narrow-mindedness, so our first requirement is breadth. As Wendell Berry says, "To think about one thing is not to think at all." Therefore, we expect all students to practice disciplines in the liberal arts, not only because the disciplines themselves are inherently valuable, but because they reflect the capacious capabilities of the human mind. We want each student to experience the interplay of disciplines, and of different ways of knowing. We want students to see the world the way a sociologist does, the way a musician does, the way a physicist does. We want them to think like theologians, and philosophers, and novelists. We expect them to learn a variety of languages: English, and a foreign language, but also the languages of mathematics and science and the social sciences. We want them to have words to describe the world they need to know, and to express the thoughts they think. We want them to experience the beauties and challenges of music and theatre and dance and the visual arts. We want them to experience these disciplines separately, and together. We want to free them from any narrow prejudices that they may have brought to college, and we want to free them to serve their neighbors, near and far.

Our second requirement is depth. While breadth has its virtues, it's not always enough in a society that needs competent and conscientious specialists. And so we require students to select a major course of study, a field that they can probe in depth. In part, this is because we want students to be prepared for post-graduate work--either in the workplace, or in advanced academic or professional study. But we also want them to practice the advanced skills of a single discipline because we want them to be confident of their competence not just in that specific area, but in any particular area they might subsequently choose. Having mastered one discipline, they should know that they can do it again--and again, and again. In a time when many of the jobs our students will hold haven't been invented yet, this is a useful skill.

Finally, we expect a liberal education to cohere, to make sense out of the depth and breadth of experience, academic and otherwise. In *The Aims of Education*, Alfred North Whitehead condemned the "fatal disconnection of subjects which kills the vitality of our modern curriculum." There is, he said, "only one subject matter

for education, and that is Life in all of its manifestations." And this simple unity, Whitehead claimed, was different for each student.²²

Coherence can't be taught, although it may be suggested. If liberal education is in part about the cultivation of character and identity, then no external principle of coherence may be enforced. Each student at a liberal arts college must make the connections that make meaning for them, teasing out the threads that connect their different learning experiences. Each student will ask in a History class, for example, "What does this mean?" and "What does this mean for me?" And all of the answers may be different; this self-examination is the kind the faculty can't grade. In creating the curriculum and revising it, in advising and academic practice, the faculty and the college can suggest essential questions and a variety of thoughtful answers. Each course at the college is a partial answer, implicit or otherwise, to the question "What does it mean to be human in a particular place and time in the universe?" Each professor and staff member is also an implicit answer. The student's major suggests another way of making sense of the world. The college challenges students with the concept of vocation, and provides tools of theological literacy and moral reasoning to think about an individual calling. Faculty advisors can help students to see how the universe of curriculum choices can be unified. But ultimately students must come to their own answers to their own questions. Each student finally needs to decide personally what they know, what they value, and what they intend to do about it.

In addition to a student's own synthesis of an educational experience, there is also a kind of communal coherence to a St. Olaf liberal arts education. The word "college," after all, comes from a Latin root meaning "chosen to serve with another" or "partner." People don't generally arrive at the meaning of life in solitary confinement. The collective coherence of a college comes from the peculiar patterns of campus culture, both academic and extracurricular. Each student is the nexus of a number of academic outlooks and associations. The senior Chemistry major sings in a choir, and is a member of the student congregation. She traveled to Asia in her junior year, and she plays intramural basketball. She's doing research with one of her professors, and she plans an internship during second semester. She shares a room with an English major just back from the term in the Middle East, a violinist who works in the Library. Last year, this friend was a Junior Counselor, and she has maintained a "big sister" relationship with many of her young charges. She met her boyfriend in the Great Conversation: he is a Psychology major and wants to go into counseling. This year, he volunteers at the Laura Baker School, an institution for mentally challenged children. And he's working with Amnesty International. For each of these students, and for other students like them, each of these associations leads a person out of the self and toward community. Each organization embodies its own coherence, and all together, they incarnate the interconnectedness of college life in real students.

These associations occur at every college in the country, but the "pattern of patterns" is different at each one, and leads to a different kind of communal coherence. St. Olaf is distinctive for its campus plan and location, for its outstanding teaching faculty, for its residential life program and its Junior Counselors. It has strong academic programs, with historic emphases on math and science, the humanities, and music. The student congregation, the daily chapel service, and the college religion and ethics requirements are distinctive. The college demonstrates its unusual trust of students with an honor system (in place since 1911) for academic work. It's extraordinary for its touring music organizations, and for the number of students studying overseas. The college, in short, cultivates a distinctive set of intelligences among its students and faculty and staff.

No one of these academic outlooks or associations is unique to St. Olaf. But all together, they are a mark of St. Olaf's distinctiveness. A student at this institution encounters a different set of coherences than students at other institutions, even at other liberal arts colleges. The interconnections and interdependencies of individual students is like a jazz chart. We're making music together, but we're improvising individually at the same time. It's coherent, even when no two of us are playing the same notes at the same time. And the coherence isn't static, but dynamic, changing--like music--in time, and over time.

Finally, if a student's liberal education consists of the conversation of identity with community, then the conversation itself can be a principle of coherence. A college like St. Olaf hangs together in its common questions and disciplined conversations, and those conversations help individual students to see how their ideas and values hang together too. Where there are conflicts, the conversations can show how ideas and values exist in tension too. It's important to remember that an ongoing conversation coheres not just in its conclusions, but in the fact that it's not conclusive. A good conversation, open to new tangents, new ideas, and even new participants, coheres by the commitment of participants to the conversation itself. A good conversation encourages conflict and contradiction, and works to use those conflicts creatively in rational and civil argument. A good conversation embodies a commitment to the practice of learning by careful listening and thoughtful speaking, to the practice of discerning important questions and trying to answer them.

Coherence may be serendipitous, but it's not accidental. St. Olaf College commits itself to coherence, therefore, not by a fixed course at the beginning, or by a standardized examination at the end, but by provoking conversations throughout. This happens both individually and institutionally. Individually, faculty, especially advisors and mentors, should feel free to ask students about the meanings of their courses, their experiences, and their lives. Students should feel free to discuss their big questions among themselves. The speakers in daily chapel services should challenge community members to reflect about the meaning of life on a small planet, as well as offering resources and examples that can help in making our own lives

faithful. We should act as if we were exemplary for each other, because often we are.

Institutionally, the college promotes coherence with its general education curriculum, a set of skills and disciplines that synthesize the traditions of the liberal arts embodied at St. Olaf. The Great Conversation, the Asian Conversation, and American Conversations are distinctive learning communities that exemplify the coherence of general education. The college also promotes coherence by promoting interdisciplinary studies, which model the connections that bring coherence. Like American Studies, for example, these programs celebrate "the connecting mind." From the 1930s on, practitioners of American Studies have tried to connect different disciplines, to connect past and present (and sometimes the future), to connect theory and experience, to connect different types of Americans, and to connect students and their society. Other interdisciplinary programs have similar aspirations. Recently too, the college has committed itself to a new Center for Integrative Studies, which will assist students to bring their own diverse ideas together. The college encourages coherence by requiring an upper-level seminar in Ethical Issues and Normative Perspectives as a way of asking junior and senior students to learn about different moral outlooks, and to consider how their college experience is affecting their moral reasoning and vice versa. Both Academic Internships and the Career Development Center help students to see the creative counterpoint of the college and the so-called "real world." Every once in a while, also, the college promotes coherence by appointing a committee to reflect on the mission statement to cause community members to think twice about their values and their vocations, and how they come together.

Conclusion

At St. Olaf, we're interested in what the liberal arts do. We're interested in how the persistent practice of different disciplines creates disciplined thinkers who can recognize people's presuppositions (including their own) and work out the implications of certain ways of thinking (including, again, their own). The liberal arts have always entailed critical thinking and problem solving, writing and speaking skills, self-discipline and strong work habits, an appreciation for culture and the arts, and a deep respect for others. When students graduate from St. Olaf, we expect that they can evaluate information critically, and respond imaginatively. We anticipate that they can understand and interpret a variety of cultures--foreign cultures, diverse American cultures, even different business and organizational cultures. We expect that they can learn to do many things that they haven't yet learned. Faced with virtually any problem, we count on them to say "I can figure out a way to be useful." And in their acts of usefulness, both large and small, we expect them to change the world.

St. Olaf's commitment to the liberal arts is the foundation of its academic mission. It gives students, in the words of historian Agnes Larson, a "love for

learning, a sense of curiosity that will cause a student to continue the search for truth which has been fostered during the undergraduate days." The purposeful and passionate engagement with ideas frees students from the assumptions of their times, and frees them to serve their communities, and change the world. Instead of encouraging students to adapt mindlessly to the 21st century, a St. Olaf education helps students mindfully adapt the ideas and institutions of their culture to the enduring visions and values that are part of our cultural inheritance.²³

Religion: The Practice of Faithfulness

Introduction

Religion is virtually inescapable at St. Olaf College, and that's a good thing for higher education, because, etymologically, religion is an art of connections. From the Latin "religare," the word "religion" means "to bind together," and religion is meant to bind people to God, people to each other, and people to the creation. A college with a religious perspective, therefore, is committed to investigating the ties that bind people in meaningful relationships in Creation. It has cosmic significance, because it's committed to seeing how human beings fit into the cosmos.²⁴

St. Olaf is committed to the interplay of faith and learning. Richard Hughes suggests that all human beings live by faith, because there isn't enough empirical fact to justify even their daily behavior. If you wait for enough undisputed facts to tell you how to act in the world, you're going to wait a long time. So, even if you don't think of yourself as religious, you act on a minimal kind of faith in many aspects of your life. You place your faith in some facts and not others, some authorities and not others, some ways of thinking and not others.²⁵

But many human beings place their faith not only in facts or human authorities, but also in God. For them (and for many of us) religion is important not because it fills the gaps of fact and conviction, but because it fulfills our lives as human beings. Faith isn't just the way we deal with what we don't know; it's how we deal with what we know too. It's a form of trust in the shape of the universe: as Martin Luther King said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Theology is important because it tells us about things we need to know, and can't find anywhere else. At a college of the church, faith can inform reason and vice versa, and both of them can bend toward justice.

Still, although St. Olaf is an expression of a church, faith is not its central purpose. Even a church-related college is not a church. A good liberal arts college is a good thing, whether it's church-related or not. And there's religion at a good liberal arts college, whether it's intentional or not. The difference between a church-related liberal arts college and a secular institution is a matter of intentionality and practice. Although church relations can sometimes make liberal education less liberal, a good church relation can make a good liberal arts college more liberating, because it adds critical perspectives to the life of the mind.²⁶

This section, therefore, considers what religion does to the liberal arts, and vice versa. It explores several questions. What good is a college for a church? What good is a church for a college? Why should religious people be involved in higher education? How does St. Olaf understand its involvement in higher education?

How does religion intersect with the life of the mind at St. Olaf? How is religion a part of our community life?

At St. Olaf, we are committed to religion as a matter of *content, context, contest, and conduct*. We believe that religious study, including theology, should be a significant part of the *content* of a liberal arts curriculum, because religion is an integral part of the individual, intellectual and institutional lives of human beings. Theology offers ways of thinking carefully about faith, which is an experience of trust in God. We believe that religion--and theology--should shape the *context* of academic studies, both in and out of the classroom, by adding questions and perspectives to our intellectual lives. We believe that religious claims--like all other claims at a college--should be *contested*. At a college, religion can't be just what we presume or assume; it's an intellectual matter, a matter of thoughtfulness and mindfulness, of argument and conversation.

Finally, we believe that religion should shape the *conduct* of life, not just on Manitou Heights but in the whole world. Lutherans--and many other religious people--call this religious dimension of the conduct of life "vocation." At St. Olaf, the answer to the question "What is college ultimately for?" is "A life of worth and service." We learn for the joy of knowing, but inert ideas are not enough. We expect ideas to be applied--in the workplace, at home, in politics, in voluntary organizations--in service to others.

Conversations are an essential way to make the connections that are at the heart of religious life. At St. Olaf, we actively invite varieties of religious (and non-religious) people to conversations about the importance of religion in life and culture. The mission of St. Olaf College is religious, but it isn't sectarian. It derives from an understanding of God and God's ways in the world, but it doesn't require a belief in God for productive participation in the community. This college is not the best place for everybody, but the college's religious commitments should enhance rather than inhibit all people's participation in this educational community.

Why (and How) Lutherans Do Higher Education

When Lutherans go to college, they go with historical precedents, following in Martin Luther's footsteps. Luther was a monk with a master's degree and a doctorate in theology. The reform movement that took his name emerged from the university, and had both religious and intellectual roots. Luther's basic belief in the free gift of God's grace, for example, wasn't just a whim; it was an intellectual insight derived from the scholarly exegesis of scripture. Luther issued his 95 Theses at the University of Wittenberg, because he welcomed disciplined argument about his ideas.²⁷

Luther appreciated the life of the mind for several different reasons. For him, faith was never superstition, or dumb (and dangerous) belief. People needed to

know how to read to understand the Scriptures. A confessional church--one defined by a set of theological principles--needed (and still needs) members to understand, interpret and apply the principles of the faith. People informed by faith and reason needed to be able to say which was which, and how they worked together. Luther, therefore, wanted people (and not just Lutherans) to use reason, experiment and experience to satisfy their curiosity and help them live better. Convinced that the church should be *semper reformanda*--always reforming--he expected them to study their traditions in order to shape them for their children. He would have appreciated the recent observation that "to be a Lutheran in the United States means always to be asking, 'What does it mean to be a Lutheran?'"²⁸

Luther's interpretation of the "two kingdoms" of God also affected his understanding of education. He believed that the world was God's gift to humanity, and that God governed it in two complementary ways. On the one hand--the right hand--God governs through the gospel and grace, offering a message of incarnate love, and a call for fallen people to repent and to be reconciled with their Creator. God addresses the gospel directly to each person, and calls for a personal response, a response that is itself a gift of God's grace. This kingdom emphasizes the holy and the sacred, the intersections of nature and the supernatural.

God also governs the creation through law--through the laws of nature, and the laws and customs of human societies. In the human sphere, God works through social structures to bring order and justice to a disordered world. Families, communities, economic institutions, and governments take responsibility for responsible action in the world, restraining people from harming each other, and encouraging them to be good for each other. "More than any great Christian leader before him," Reinhold Niebuhr suggested, "Luther affirmed the life in culture as the sphere in which Christ could and ought to be followed; and more than any other he discerned that the rules to be followed in the cultural life were independent of Christian or church law." While love and mercy are the core of the one kingdom, order and justice are the focus of the second. On the left hand, the secular kingdom isn't supernatural; it doesn't emphasize holy ground or sacred rituals or spirituality. But it's not profane; it's just religious in a different way. God works in ways that we can see, and in ways that we can't. Lutherans don't believe that God is absent from this second kingdom, but present in common and creative ways. For Luther and Lutherans, then, being fully religious is not different from being fully human--it's a way of being fully human.²⁹

Education serves the goals of God's second kingdom, educating people to understand God's creation, to act as stewards of it, and to serve each other in their common life. In Luther's worldview, education prepares people for both general and particular vocations in the world. As he thought about vocation, Luther realized that the fact of God's saving grace freed people from the merely instrumental purposes of work. If people were saved by grace alone, then their works (and work) could be an act of gratitude and service. Unlike other religious traditions that privileged the

religious life of clergy and cloisters, Luther preached the priesthood of all believers, the multiple ministries of human beings for each other, the religious practices of everyday life. This comprehensive view of vocation expanded the arena of education, as it prepared students for service--personal and professional, civic and political--in the world.

Luther also valued education for the secular public welfare. In an impassioned argument for Christian schools, he contended that "the welfare of a city does not consist solely in accumulating vast treasures, building mighty walls and magnificent buildings, and producing a goodly supply of guns and armor. Indeed, where such things are plentiful, and reckless fools get control of them, it is so much the worse and the city suffers even greater loss. A city's best and greatest welfare, safety, and strength consist rather in its having many able, learned, wise, honorable, and well-educated citizens." Like Jefferson and other Americans of the revolutionary generation, Luther expected people to learn about public issues, and to contribute to the commonwealth.³⁰

Luther didn't think of God's two governances as dichotomous. In fact, Luther's conception of two kingdoms is essentially dialectical and dialogical. Both kingdoms are God's, and people are responsible for keeping them in conversation with one another. Luther never imagined that a church--or church people--could be anywhere other than in this world. He never imagined that religion could be a purely private affair. Conversely, Luther never imagined that the so-called "real world" could *be* real without the interventions of common grace. The beauty of the "two kingdoms" metaphor was that it gave Luther (and us) a way of appreciating ambiguity, and of recognizing that multiple layers of life can and do exist at the same time. It helps us understand, for example, how people can be both saints and sinners, both rational and rationalizing, both serving and selfish--all at the same time.³¹

De-emphasizing the scholastic and pietistic traditions of religious education, Luther's interpretation of two kingdoms established a critical tradition in education that offered interdependent autonomy for both spheres. At St. Olaf, we have embraced this tradition. We understand Lutheran higher education to be a very catholic Lutheran tradition, embracing many valuable understandings of Christian faith and learning. It's a kind of Christian humanism celebrating the wide world of inquiry and scholarship both for itself, for the insights it brings to the Christian tradition, and vice versa.

What this means is that St. Olaf doesn't have to be academically unique as a liberal arts institution to be faithfully Lutheran. We don't believe in Lutheran mathematics or biology or sociology or history, even though we may believe that Luther and other Lutherans may have interesting things to say in these areas. Liberal education at St. Olaf doesn't have to be baptized or Christianized to be good; it's already good. As Luther said, a Christian cobbler makes good shoes, not inferior

shoes with crosses on them. We have a Lutheran warrant for our excellence in the liberal arts, for using our gift of reason to probe and prove, to experiment and experience, to sing and dance and symbolize. We even have a Lutheran warrant for the agnostic faculty member who may teach irreligious students about Luther or Kierkegaard or Buddha or Darwin or Virginia Woolf. But we also have a warrant for keeping our faculty and students in conversation with religious traditions, even in a document like this. We are distinctively Lutheran both by our educational excellence, which is good in itself, and by our commitment to critical conversations within and between the kingdoms of God.³²

Religious Foundations of St. Olaf

In its 125 years, St. Olaf has embodied the Lutheran practice of *semper reformanda*, asserting its mission and identity in new contexts that have demanded new formulations of the creative tension between the two kingdoms of God. American culture has changed a lot since 1874. People have different experiences and expectations. The churches have changed, and St. Olaf's church relation is different now than it was in the nineteenth century. Higher education has changed too, and St. Olaf has tried to adapt the best practices of American higher education. Students in the early twenty-first century are different than students of the late-nineteenth century. St. Olaf embodies a living tradition. We aren't traditionalists, locked in an academic or religious fundamentalism. But we aren't just blowing in the winds of change either: we have roots, and they hold us to ideas and values that we interpret for our own time. The light isn't dying here: when the first candles of inspiration burned near the nub, we've had the good sense to transfer the flame to new ones.³³

St. Olaf College was founded by religious people for several reasons, and one of them was religion. When St. Olaf began, the intellectual and cultural foundation of the college was the Norwegian Lutheran tradition of Christian religion. Because they believed that a Christian way of thinking and acting in the world was a good thing, our founders took care to pass that good gift on to the younger generation. In addition to providing higher education for men and women, the Articles of Incorporation promised "to preserve the pupils in the true Christian faith as taught by the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and nothing taught in contravention with the convention of said church." Even in 1874, though, St. Olaf chose a creative tension between the two kingdoms of God. Unlike the creative possibilities offered at other Norwegian-Lutheran institutions, St. Olaf was not founded as a seminary, nor was it connected to a divinity school. In 1874, it didn't even have an official church sponsorship. President Mohn captured this dynamic tension when he explained that "our school is not what is called a 'school of religion,' yet it is for the sake of religion that this school was founded."³⁴

By 1918, the college catalogue promised "a higher education on the basis of the Christian faith as taught in the Evangelical Lutheran Church." By the mid-Thirties,

the catalogue suggested that the college emphasized Lutheran doctrines and traditions, but "no propaganda with respect to those who may belong to other denominations." By the mid-Sixties, St. Olaf took "the position that men and women are called by God to faith and service. Accordingly, it provides the opportunity for worship and seeks to graduate students who are morally sensitive and theologically literate."³⁵

In 1974, the Identity and Mission statement interpreted the original St. Olaf mission of establishing a college "for the purpose of giving young men and women a higher education in harmony with the Christian faith" as a call to provide a "Christian context" for higher learning. This context consisted of institutional support to preserve the insights and values of the Christian heritage, and of professorial support for a dialogue between the disciplines and Christian faith. To Harold Ditmanson, chief author of the 1974 statement, such a goal was not sectarian. But it did support "the conviction that no member of the community should be able to avoid being brought face to face with his own ultimate commitments and with the persistent problems of human life to which Christian faith speaks."³⁶

Today, we affirm St. Olaf's religious heritage and commitments, and we now shape that reformed and reforming tradition for our posterity. We think we serve our students best--and all of higher education too--not by being officially uncommitted or noncommittal, but by committing ourselves to a particular tradition that offers substantial leverage in approaching questions of religion and the liberal arts. We believe that, in this case, particularity is the best way to general usefulness. Higher education in America is best served, not by the development of manufactured McColleges, but by the preservation of a variety of different educational traditions. The Lutheran tradition is one of them, offering a theological understanding of education that enhances the best practices of the liberal arts tradition. Both Lutherans and non-Lutherans can learn a lot from it, as they might also in the specific traditions of other denominations.³⁷

Committed to the critical model of religious education, to the dialectic and dialogical principles of Lutheran educational philosophy, we intend to keep the contemplation of sacred and secular in close proximity. At St. Olaf, it's significant that the Chapel and the Library are connected by the Commons--faith and reason are united by the conversational spaces that bring them together.

Telling the Truth, For God's Sake

At St. Olaf we try to be intentional about the intersections between religion and liberal education. First and foremost, because we are a college, we are committed to telling the truth. Like faculty at every other institution of higher education in America, the faculty at St. Olaf have a responsibility to seek and share their interpretations of the truth, and their particular passion for the truth. Some of us do this for religious reasons, and understand our work as vocation; others of us do it

because of professional propriety (which often derives from long-forgotten religious warrants). In either case, within Luther's framework of two kingdoms, this is what you would expect. In either case, this commitment to a quest for truth is the primary way that the faculty--religious and secular--fulfill the religious mission of a college of the church. At St. Olaf, it's the way that the students and faculty--both called to be seekers of truth--are involved in a rich convocation of individual vocations.³⁸

A college of the church can pay particular attention to truths that make people uncomfortable. We can follow the truth wherever it leads. In a world where scientific truths can be a matter of life or death, it's important to investigate the way the world works. In a world where human relations are in need of improvement, we need social scientists to say how our social world works. In a culture often at odds with its values, it's essential to think clearly about what we ultimately value, and why. In a society that often shades and spins the truth, colleges have a critical role in setting things straight.

Sometimes, therefore, it's essential to speak truth not just to our students, but to power. Colleges can be a truth serum for the churches and the culture, speaking in the prophetic voice of the Christian tradition. St. Olaf's 1974 *Identity and Mission* statement suggests that "as a point of intersection between the church and the world, the college can serve to articulate and emphasize the social responsibilities of the church. The church has been sensitive to the spiritual and personal needs of those with whom it comes in contact, but it has found it more difficult to be sensitive to the ways in which personal injuries are often the result of social injustices. . . . A major impediment to this kind of sensitivity is an inability to acquire perspective on present action and policies. The evil done in other times or by other persons, institutions, or nations seems clear. The evil done in one's own time by one's own institutions or nation is not seen so clearly. A college can provide this perspective by its habit of seeing actions and policies in wider historical, social, and cultural perspective." Often, it seems, provocation is a part of the academic vocation. Often, Christ and culture are in uneasy tension. Often, careful study gives Protestants (and others) something to protest about.³⁹

Since the ultimate values for a college of the church also transcend the cultural values surrounding it, a church related college can challenge worldly claims to ultimacy. It can speak the truth about the culture that it serves. In *Earth in Mind*, for example, David Orr notes that a conventional measure of academic success is successful people. He contends, however, that "the plain fact is that the planet does not need more successful people. But it does desperately need more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers, and lovers of every kind. It needs people who live well in their places. It needs people of moral courage. . . . And these qualities have little to do with success as our culture defines it."⁴⁰ Where other institutions may uncritically accept the norms of the culture, a church-related college has the responsibility to evaluate (and sometimes challenge) them.

A church relation can also be a corrective for a college, not in calling it to be a church, but in truthfully reminding it to be faithful to its commitments as a college. Since the ultimate values for a college of the church transcend the liberal arts tradition, a church-related college enjoys a critical perspective that can remind liberal artisans of their own best insights. It can remind all of us of the humane and humanizing purposes of liberal education. It can critique the narrow vocationalism of higher education with a more robust conception of vocation. It can remind critical cynics of the goodness of the world; it can help uncritical absolutists to contextualize values. It can remind objectivists of the need for evaluation and judgment. It can challenge practitioners of all the disciplines to consider issues like the character of human beings and the demands of justice. It can help pedant professors remember that their real subjects are students, and truth, not the disciplines. A college of the church can lobby against the fragmentations of the academy, asserting the unity of truth and the wholeness of students. It can affirm learning as a good for its own sake; and it can call learners to think about how their learning serves their communities.

Why We Study Religion

Good thinking is, of course, a good thing, as is telling the truth. But it's not quite good enough at St. Olaf. Unlike many liberal arts colleges, we also focus explicitly on religion in the life of the mind and in the lives of the people of the world. We teach religion to let students dive deeper into themselves and their traditions. We think critically about the cultivation and preservation of Christian learning. We teach students about Christian ways of being in the world. We do this in several ways, and for several reasons. We do it, first, because, like St. Olaf's founders, we think that Christian ways of thinking and acting in the world are a good thing, and we want younger people to know about this tradition--in some depth. When conversations in the classroom go deep, we don't have to stop.⁴¹

We teach students about religion, second, because religion matters to most Americans. Eighty-five percent of Americans have received religious training as children. As a matter of practice, two-thirds of Americans belong to a church or synagogue or mosque. And on any given weekend, about 40 percent of us will show up for services. We are, by many measures, one of the most religious nations on earth.⁴²

Third, we critically converse about religion because even Americans committed to living a religious life lack a language and a contextual framework for thinking seriously about that challenge. Contemporary American religion, says pollster George Gallup, lacks biblical roots. "Most Americans are hard-pressed to say what they believe and why." Sometimes this religious illiteracy is the fault of the churches. Robert Wuthnow, for example, has considered how religion affects our lives at work, which is--aside from sleep--the thing we do most in our lives. He finds that Sunday sermons don't tell us much about Monday decisions, and that most

of us don't think much about how religious teachings affect the way we work and spend the money we earn. As a result, religious people don't act discernibly different during the workweek. Like cultural chameleons, we tend to blend into the crowd. Even in matters of religion, the church and the unchurched in America have a lot in common, differing most on matters of personal freedom. And in that area, it seems, church people are experiencing a conversion experience to the unchurched point of view, becoming increasingly suspicious of the so-called "narrow" strictures of religion. The serious study of religion can help our students cope critically and constructively with these cultural pressures.⁴³

A fourth reason for including religion in the liberal arts curriculum is because we want to offer people social and intellectual support for their religious commitments. Most Americans believe that religion is important to them, but they're not so sure that it's important to anyone else. In a very telling juxtaposition, one survey found that 66 percent of Americans think that religious faith provides important guiding principles for their lives. But only 18 percent think that religious faith is an important part of most people's lives. We don't see much social support for our religious commitments. The culture--and its colleges--seems to see religion as a private matter, sequestered on Sundays, but having little to do with the so-called "real world." This college sees it differently.⁴⁴

A fifth reason for the practice of religion and theology as liberal arts is that both the Western intellectual tradition and the American academic traditions are immensely religious. The Christian heritage is a constitutive element of Western civilization, whether we like it or not. It's hard to make sense of Dante or Milton or Martin Luther King without a fairly strong sense of Christianity. It's not entirely truthful to consider a painting of a "Madonna and Child" as a mom and her kid, or a cathedral as just a big building. It's hard to understand the Declaration of Independence without understanding Jefferson's sense of "Nature's God." It's not intellectually honest to teach American history without teaching the history of religion. And it's virtually impossible to understand contemporary American society without understanding American religion, although lots of academics try. Still, American higher education often overlooks this matter that matters to Americans. In many disciplines, religion is just an afterthought.

A final reason for the academic practice of religion and theology is diversity. Honoring Luther's insistence on the extensive scope of the intellectual community, St. Olaf can encourage an academic and theological dialogue with people (both on campus and elsewhere) who aren't Lutheran or Christian. These conversations help all of us to sharpen our sense of the truth, and our appreciation for the varieties of religious experience. As Martin E. Marty observes, Lutherans know that they have the truth, but they also know that they're not the only ones who do. If we are all faithful to the truth (and not just to *our* truth), we find that we have something to learn from different believers and non-believers alike. Practicing this kind of

epistemological humility, we enhance the possibility of finding the truths that help us in our continual reforming.

In its broadest sense, the Christian heritage is also a constitutive element of almost all American colleges, and not just the church-related ones. Any good American educational institution should pursue critical studies of Christianity, if only to understand itself. But the church-related liberal arts college can carry on an intelligent conversation with the Christian tradition in a place where there is institutional interest in the conversation, a disposition to treat the tradition and its religious practices with generosity, and yet a willingness to submit it to genuine critique. And especially at a Lutheran college, the critique is essential; if the critique isn't genuine, then the enterprise isn't worth pursuing because we lose the dialectical and dialogical qualities that are essential to a Lutheran educational philosophy.⁴⁵

How We Study Religion

A college of the church can challenge mistaken assumptions about religion, and about its role in the world. A college of the church can speak truth in such a way that it helps people think clearly about religion in their lives and culture(s). It can assist the vast majority of Americans who have religious commitments, but lack the intellectual and social resources to live them out well. A college of the church can speak the truths of religion and about religion to a culture that needs that truth. At St. Olaf, we are committed to doing this in intersecting and overlapping ways. We require certain forms of study, and we encourage many others.

We require the disciplined study of the Bible, for example, not as a call to conversion or worship, but as a call to understanding the central scripture of Christianity, and arguably the central text of the Western tradition. The Christians among us believe that the Bible contains the inspired word of God, a revelation of God's activity in creation and redemption, of the patient work of maintaining a (sometimes thankless) relationship with imperfect people. Others find the Bible inspiring if not literally inspired, and study the inspiration that it has provided to people and societies, art and music, theater and literature in Western cultures. One of the most-read books of all time, it merits careful consideration by Christians and non-Christians alike.

St. Olaf also requires the disciplined study of theology, a liberal art. As liberal artisans, we invite students to think carefully and rationally about God and the implications of God. We ask students to address specifically religious questions, especially those posed by the Christian tradition. Like the other disciplines of the college, theology is a way of thinking--both critical and normative--developed and developing over time. It embodies a community of inquiry that has helped human beings to make sense of their lives and their world for a long time. Theological literacy includes (at the very least) Biblical knowledge, the practice of the discipline of theology, ethical understanding, and a contextual understanding of religion and

culture. Its characteristic questions, theories, methods, and practices help students to "read" and make sense of a variety of big questions in their lives.

St. Olaf is also committed to the academic study of Ethical Issues and Normative Perspectives. As late as the 19th century, a college student's final academic experience was a course in moral philosophy, taught by the college president. The presumption was that a college education would inevitably lead students to certain conclusions, and that the college president could tell them what those conclusions were. The assumption was, as Peter Gomes reminds us, that "people do not teach themselves to be good," so somebody else has to do it. Contemporary St. Olaf presidents no longer teach capstone courses in moral theology, but they still do preach occasionally in the daily chapel service. We don't presume, as some of our predecessors did, that either education or religion lead all people to the same place, nor do we believe in the omniscience or infallibility of college presidents. But we do believe that ethical literacy is a reasonable goal of undergraduate education, and we consider it part of our mission to help students shape a moral philosophy for themselves--both individually and collectively.⁴⁶

The required upper-level course in Ethical Issues and Normative Perspectives--often in a student's major discipline--analyzes ethical issues from a variety of perspectives (including Christian theological perspectives) that show students how important norms of justice and guides for moral reasoning might work in the world. Like the nineteenth-century capstone course in moral philosophy, this course challenges students to think about the ethical implications of their education and their experience. It challenges students to think seriously about the goodness of the good life, and to consider a variety of ways of acting well in the world. It invites students to understand and develop their own perspective by setting it in conversation with other perspectives in ways that enhance both personal commitment and respect for difference.⁴⁷

Less formally, but no less intentionally, St. Olaf is committed to the study of the Christian tradition, and of religious practice throughout the world. The Religion Department offers courses that introduce students to the fundamentals of Christian belief and practice. These students learn not just what others have taught, but also how to form their own reasoned views of religious issues. Complementing their global studies, they gain an understanding of how religious symbols, beliefs, rituals and texts--especially the traditions of Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam--have influenced the human cultures of the world. In other departments of the college, too, religious questions and concerns can be a part of the best professional practice. Throughout the curriculum, faculty and students can converse freely and deeply about the religious dimensions of human experience. Historians may consider the impact of religious ideas and institutions on reform movements; English professors may highlight the religious imagery in classic (and contemporary) literature; sociologists and anthropologists may address the interweaving of religion in the social life of the world's peoples; biologists can

address the religious questions raised by discussions of biotechnology. In other academic aspects of the college, too, we can take religious questions seriously. St. Olaf is internationally known, for example, for its exemplary program of choral music. A large number of St. Olaf students sing in a choir. A large part of the choral tradition is sacred music, and at St. Olaf, we can take the sacredness of the music seriously. Sacred music is not just words and notes on a page; it's a system of meaning and expression, and it is, for God's sake, religious. And it helps that all of these studies take place in a context of regular religious practice. Seeing your Chemistry professor in Chapel, for example, is one way to learn that faith and reason are not incompatible.

Religion and the Art of Freedom

Properly construed, the Christian religion is about the practice of freedom. Properly understood, few things are as liberating as Christianity. People are created with free will, and they freely use it--sometimes to no good effect. After the Fall, freedom is neither a natural condition or an earned achievement, but another gift--a gift of God's love in redemption. The response to this God-given freedom is to take the risk of moral action, doing the best you can, and knowing that, in any case, God does love you. A liberal arts education can help students discern the good, and to incarnate it in their lives.⁴⁸

Within a Lutheran framework of two kingdoms, Christian education is also about the practice of free inquiry. Within this framework, people are saved by God, and not by human accomplishments. Because we are not saved by intelligence or academic degrees or a certain GPA--but by God's free grace--we are free to think about anything. Assuming that in God's creation truth always complemented faith, Luther could support the passionate pursuit of truth. Free academic inquiry is, to some extent, a consequence of Christian freedom.⁴⁹

Free inquiry is not always easy, or free of significant consequences. Usually, it's just the opposite. Sometimes, at a college, you find that what you learn confirms what you believe. Sometimes, you find that what you learn challenges what you believe, and that you have to search deeper for the resolutions of understanding and belief. Sometimes the challenges result in harmonies, other times in dissonance. Sometimes this counterpoint of mind and soul leads to transformation. Sometimes this transformation is dramatic, and other times nobody but yourself knows it.

Religion and Community Life

A college connects with religion primarily on intellectual terms. But a church-related college may have other connections. Because religion is a theory and practice of connections, it keeps the mind connected to other elements of human life. Lots of colleges claim to educate the whole person, but what exactly do they mean by "whole?" When a college of the church claims to educate the whole person, the

whole includes the holy. Such a college assumes that students have brains and bodies, but it also assumes that they have souls and a spiritual life, however well developed. It believes that students (and other people too) are made in the image of God, and that God calls them (and us) to certain kinds of action in the world.

Several basic Christian teachings, therefore, affect the common life of a school like St. Olaf. Believing that people are created in God's image and likeness, we try to treat them with the dignity they inherently deserve. Believing that people are created by God to take part in the Creation, we believe that they have important things to do with their lives. Believing that people have a capacity for good and evil, we try to create institutions that make it easier to be good. We offer support for each other in the pursuit of the true and the good. Believing that people will always make mistakes sooner or later (the technical term for this is human fallibility), we believe in forgiveness and a theology of second chances. Even if some students don't believe in God, the college's foundational beliefs have benefits for them. It means that we are committed to treating people with the respect and dignity due to creatures made in the image and likeness of God--even if we don't believe in the same God, or in any God.

In a secular institution, this behavior might be called "common sense." You obviously don't have to be Christian (much less Lutheran) to be good to one another, and for one another. In part, that's because there's a lot of Christian teaching built into the social construction of American common sense. But Christian teachings also help us with some of the uncommon sense of the gospels--like the Beatitudes, or the strange mathematics of forgiving seventy times seventy.

In its community life, therefore, St. Olaf makes explicit religious connections that are only implicit at other institutions. Without being coercive, we provide opportunities for engagement, and encourage students to take religion seriously and personally. At St. Olaf, religion isn't just an academic department or a course of study, it's a part of the pattern of patterns in many students' lives. For many students, religion is not merely a subject of study, but a force that informs their lives. For members of the St. Olaf Student Congregation, for example, religion isn't just academic: it's practiced and practical. For some other students, religion is what other people do. But for virtually everybody, religion is a presence to be considered. All college convocations begin and end with prayer, and the chapel bells call people to worship every Sunday and every weekday. At St. Olaf, interest in religion isn't universal, but it isn't weird either; instead, it's just normal.

St. Olaf believes, for example, that the gospel should be faithfully proclaimed. The life of a religious community almost always involves worship. At St. Olaf, we are committed to proclaiming the gospel and providing opportunities for sharing the Word and the sacraments, and for offering thanks and praise to God. In liturgy and the sacraments, we celebrate the convergences of the natural and supernatural, the

serendipities that some of us call grace. We remind people of the living tradition, and help them figure out how to keep the tradition vital. We speak the language of faith and grace and mercy and justice and forgiveness and salvation in a central place in the life of the community.

We arrange community time to signal the priorities of our lives. Because it's important, St. Olaf celebrates daily chapel in the middle of campus, in the middle of the morning, in academic prime time. At daily chapel, members of the faith community and their friends and colleagues gather to hear words of scripture, and words of reflection on those scriptures. The faithful come to share their voices in prayer and hymns and homilies. It's a place for paying attention to the spirit in the world. Chapel speakers include faculty and administrators, students and staff, connecting the words of the gospel with the worlds of their own experience and concern. We don't schedule classes or official meetings during chapel, so that the whole community is free to come together. The twenty minutes devoted to Chapel on weekday mornings are a way of telling time, even for students who never enter the Chapel. "I'll meet you after Chapel," they say, implicitly acknowledging the importance of Chapel as a time apart at the college.

Sunday services are organized by the St. Olaf Student Congregation, which is organized by the students, who are its founders, leaders, and members. Students read Scripture, sing hymns, and compose prayers that connect them to Christian traditions, to the Creator, and to Creation, including each other. They become community by sharing the sacrament of communion. Since 1951, the Student Congregation has occupied a central place in the religious life of the college, bearing witness to God's love by calling people to worship, study, stewardship, and fellowship. The Congregation's Council consists of four "commissions" that address the students response-ability to the call of the Gospel. The Worship Commission works with the college pastors and the music organizations to plan daily chapel, Sunday morning services, Sunday evening Taize, Wednesday evening compline, and festival worship services throughout the year. The Life and Growth Commission enriches the spiritual life of students with Bible study and discussion groups, speakers, forums, and concerts. The Extra-Campus Commission pays attention to the global perspectives of the congregation. And the Stewardship Commission works with the Student Government Association and the Volunteer Services to organize opportunities for students to share their gifts with others, both on and off campus.

Music and the arts are an integral part of the St. Olaf worship community. We preach the gospel in word and song and sight and movement. Liturgy is not extra-sensory perception, but it is designed for multi-sensory participation and perception. We sing hymns that harmonize ideas and aesthetics. On Sundays, six of the college choirs take turns providing music for worship. Three other musical ensembles, and a subset of the St. Olaf Dance Company also regularly contribute to worship services.

At St. Olaf, we also encourage people to incarnate their religious commitments, to embody love and justice and other virtuous abstractions. We encourage the practice of religious virtue, as well as the contemplation of it. We encourage the discernment and development that help students find a calling, a way of doing well by doing good. Even at college, we provide substantial opportunities for work in service to others. The Volunteer Network coordinates activities that allow hundreds of our students to find ways to be helpful to people on and off campus. The Student Congregation dedicates 90 percent of its budget to charitable giving. Some of this giving is local. But the congregation also maintains a global perspective, contributing to schools and missions and relief efforts all across the world. It maintains an ongoing relationship with a district of schools and churches in Tanzania, sending hundreds of books and thousands of dollars annually for scholarships, resources, facilities, and church work.

The practice of religion isn't limited to the Student Congregation, nor is the practice of service. Within the pattern of patterns that is St. Olaf College, there's a substantial religious weave. Student organizations like Inter-Religious Dialog, Christian Activities Network, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Catholic Students Association, BASIC (Brothers and Sisters in Christ) Bible Study, Inter-varsity Christian Fellowship, Student Christian Outreach and Care Ministry sponsor a variety of programs. At St. Olaf, the practice of service isn't always religious either. Several of St. Olaf's international programs are study-service combinations. St. Olaf students serve also in the college's TRIO programs--Educational Talent Search and Upward Bound. And each and every year, groups of students who propose service projects live together in the honor houses on St. Olaf Avenue.

Although these service projects are usually extracurricular, they have an impact on the academic life of the college. A recent study of the Higher Education Research Institute discovered that every one of 35 different outcomes--in academic development, civic values, and life skills--was positively influenced by students' service participation.⁵⁰

This practice of service doesn't end at graduation. St. Olaf is the # 1 source of Lutheran seminary enrollments from the nation's Lutheran Colleges. It has been the # 1 source of volunteers for Lutheran Volunteer Corps for every year of LVC's existence. And the college is always a leading collegiate source of Peace Corps volunteers.

As in other aspects of our college life, our commitments don't end at the borders of the campus. As Tom Christenson suggests, "we are called to explore what Christian freedom implies for a community of inquirers, not only in regard to curriculum and campus policies, but also in relation to the economic, social and political life of our institutions." Christian freedom isn't freedom from social and political life; it's freedom to shape social and political life so that it's easier to be

good, and to be good for other human beings. It's freedom employed in the service of justice.⁵¹

Varieties of Religious Experience

OK, so what if you're not Lutheran? What if you're Catholic or Jewish or Buddhist? What if you're an agnostic or an atheist? What if you're doubtful or indecisive? Is St. Olaf a good place for you? Can you work well here, as a professor, a staff member, or a student?

In the contemporary Lutheran tradition, the answer is "yes." It's a Lutheran thing not just to serve Lutherans, but all our neighbors as well. The call of vocation doesn't call people to serve Lutherans; it calls people to serve all of God's children, which is all of us. It's also a Lutheran tradition to learn from people who have truth to tell, by keeping Lutherans in conversation with people from other faith communities. The college doesn't require religious belief in faculty and students, but it seeks people interested in the questions that religion and theology pose for us.

St. Olaf students seem to have figured this out for themselves. About half of our students are Lutheran, but students from a great number of religious perspectives seem to flourish at St. Olaf. Almost 20 percent are Catholic, and smaller percentages are Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and Episcopalian. But Jews and Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus are also a part of the college community. This religious multiplicity is good for all of us for many reasons, in part because it can keep all of us honest with ourselves. Agnostics can be good for the faithful--any faithful--because agnostics exemplify other ways of being and doing good in the world. Conversely, religious people can be good for agnostics, because encounters between believers and non-believers encourage both to clarify their own beliefs, to practice respect and toleration, to understand and learn from those with different worldviews. In short, like the college's international programs, the inter-religious dialogue at St. Olaf advances the central purposes of liberal education.

Because the Christian religion is about the practice of freedom, students at St. Olaf are free to make their own religious choices. They may worship or not, pray or not, sing hymns or not, join Bible study or not. And they do just that. St. Olaf schedules daily chapel and Sunday services, but not all of our students go. In religion classes, students are not graded on their religious commitments; they are graded on their understanding of religious issues. We hope that religious learning will sometimes lead to religious transformation, but we teach for the sake of learning, not for the sake of conversion. Students are free to practice their faith (or not), but they are required to think about faith. St. Olaf students must engage in the conversation and confrontation of Christ and culture, but what they say, and what they hear, is entirely up to them.

Conclusion

As Lutherans would expect, we haven't yet perfected the interplay of faith and theology and service. But St. Olaf does achieve many of its goals. A recent study suggests that, compared to students at flagship public universities, students at Lutheran colleges like St. Olaf find a pervasive emphasis on faith and values (84 percent for Lutheran college students vs. 35 percent of flagship university students), and they find opportunities to interact creatively with students of similar values (83 percent vs. 59 percent). Students find many more opportunities for spiritual development on our campus (79 percent vs. 24 percent), and a much better integration of values and ethics in classroom discussions (65 percent vs. 25 percent). Compared to the flagship universities, our students are much more engaged in church and religious activities (64 percent vs. 28 percent), and they learn more about their faith and values during their college years (60 percent to 10 percent). In addition, many more of our students know faculty members on campus who serve as models of spiritual life for their students (38 percent to 8 percent). While 14 percent of students at the flagship universities found help in integrating faith into other aspects of life, 60 percent of students at Lutheran colleges did.⁵²

The survey also shows that our graduates apply these values in later life. Again, compared to graduates of the flagship public universities, our graduates attach more importance to raising a family, to applying moral and ethical ideals to decisions, and to integrating faith and life. They place a higher value on contributing to their communities, promoting racial equality and other social justice concerns, and by joining organizations that help the disadvantaged. And by every measure of involvement, they are more involved with service and volunteer organizations, and with religious congregations, both as members and as leaders.⁵³

This is not bad. But still it could be better. And so St. Olaf is still *semper reformanda*, following our rich tradition of 125 years of experiments with ways to enlarge the circle of conversation about things that ultimately matter. As Dean Gertrude Hilleboe said in 1929, "ours is a definite program to plant the seed, to surround our students with all the constructive forces for spiritual growth that we can. We can nurture and cultivate, but we cannot force growth. We may see fruits in some, in many none, but we know that if we are faithful God will give the increase."⁵⁴

Campus Culture: The Practice of Community

Introduction

St. Olaf is committed to the thoughtfulness of the liberal arts, and faithfulness to religious traditions. The college is also committed to the cultivation of community. We are mindful of the ways that the extracurricular life of students complements the life of the classroom, and vice versa. The campus culture, therefore, is an essential part of a St. Olaf education, since the values that govern campus life are interwoven with the values that imbue our liberal artistry and religious character. At its best, campus life is thoughtful. At its best, it is spirited as well as spiritual. By living in close proximity with 2500 other young adults, our students take part in a form of experiential education where they are the primary teachers. St. Olaf's campus life is guided by the college, but ultimately it is determined by the students, who each year teach each other--in hundreds of different ways--how to be Oles and responsible adults. This coming of age in community is an essential aim of St. Olaf College.⁵⁵

With all the emphasis on academics these days, it's easy to forget that college education extends beyond the classroom. Students know better; the college staff knows better too. While students and faculty collaborate in fulfilling the college's academic mission, students and staff generally carry out the extra-curricular mission of the college. The college support staff--including the people in the Dean of Student's office, in counseling, in housing and residential life, in intercollegiate athletics, on the grounds crew, in the Academic Computing Center, in the Library, and in all of the departmental offices--show their thoughtfulness by freeing students to enhance their learning in life experience. St. Olaf's community is sometimes a family affair, with generations from the same family serving students on the faculty, in the administration, in the food service, or on the custodial staff. By informal conversations, by sharing work with student assistants, by taking pride in the quality of their work, these staff members teach students valuable lessons about the varieties of vocation and service.

The goal of this collaborative campus culture is to create a trust community, which might serve as a model for community-building in the wider American culture. One of the major issues in American life in the late twentieth century is the erosion of community. Sociologists like Harvard's Robert Putnam decry the loss of "social capital," as American individualism, business, and busyness erode the mediating civic institutions that have historically held communities together. In our contemporary "time bind," Americans often neglect the practices of community--neighborhood gatherings, coffee klatches, celebrations, volunteer work, etc.--whose collateral conversations create the trust that makes cooperative endeavor possible. In such a time, a college that is conscious and conscientious about community can teach students (and the culture) much-needed lessons by offering models of community for the so-called "real world."⁵⁶

St. Olaf's mission, therefore, includes thoughtful stewardship of campus and its resources, and of the special (some would say peculiar) culture that has developed here since 1874. It includes not just academic aims, but ecological and social goals, the conscientious and deliberate application of thoughtfulness to the matter of why we are who we are where we are. In an age of individualism, distraction, and fragmentation, this college is intentional about the cultivation of community.

The Campus Environment

St. Olaf College is people in place. Although we send students all over the world, the college isn't going offshore. You can get a college degree by mail, or these days, even over the internet. But such an education doesn't ground you in a real place, doesn't show you any examples--good or bad--of what an intellectual community might actually look like. St. Olaf is grounded (literally) on a hill called Manitou Heights, and that special place affects and reflects our commitments as an academic community. Our rootedness in Northfield also has implications for our mission, even though we haven't often considered them explicitly in the past. But as citizens of Northfield, we plan to continue collaborative relationships with the city and with Carleton College, both for reasons of efficiency and for reasons of neighborliness.

The campus itself is a part of the informal curriculum of the college; the care of the campus, therefore, is part of our mission. The campus is the main way that we care for the earth. We think globally and act locally, and the campus is the locality where we act. A global perspective includes interactions with other people in other places, but it also involves care for the land and the neighborhood in our own place.⁵⁷

When Harald Thorson purchased 30 acres of land on a hill west of Northfield in 1876, St. Olaf began its relationship to its current campus. One of the highest points in Rice County, the hill was densely wooded, and offered a fine prospect of the surrounding area. The college contracted for the construction of the Main Building (now Old Main) in June 1877, and classes began there in the Fall of 1878, although the formal dedication waited until Founder's Day on November sixth.

From the very beginning, the idea of stewardship governed St. Olaf's relationship with the land. When the college moved from downtown Northfield to Manitou Heights, the builders brought the lumber from the East Side buildings to construct the new Ladies Hall. As early as the 1880s, the college planted several hundred evergreens in a valley that had been stripped of its maples by a previous owner. Although Anna Mohn, the President's wife, thought that the trees would make the terrain look more like Norway, she earnestly hoped that it would be called the Vale of Tawasentha, after Longfellow's epic poem "Hiawatha." Despite her desire, the name that has lasted is Norway Valley.

For much of the twentieth century, John Berntsen was the chief steward of the St. Olaf campus, serving St. Olaf for 52 years, most of it as Superintendent of Grounds and Buildings. "I want to make St. Olaf so nice," Berntsen said, "[that] no student will ever have to apologize for it." Students can still see Berntsen's work on Thorson hill, where crews hauled in tons of dirt and fertilizer, and over 600 trees, to transform the sandy incline into a forested hill. They can see an example of his experimental curiosity in the unusual ginkgo tree to the south of Holland Hall. Any day of the year, visitors can see the continuing work of the dedicated people on the grounds crew who are colloquially called "the Green Army".⁵⁸

The college used to have a dairy farm on campus. It disappeared during the Fifties, when we added Boe Chapel and a new Student Center on the site of the old barn. St. Olaf maintained its own creamery, and oldtimers can still remember visiting the Physical Plant for ice cream on sunny afternoons, or seeing faculty heading home from the Hill with gallons of milk. We think we've lost something by abstracting our relationship to agriculture and our food sources, and we're working to regain a better sense of our working relationship with the natural world. Northfield commends itself as the town of "cows, colleges and contentment," and it might be good for the colleges to see the cows now and again.

Currently, the St. Olaf campus consists of 1000 acres, including a 300-acre academic core arranged roughly in concentric circles. The central "Green" is a wooded lawn surrounded by several academic buildings, and the connected complex that includes Rolvaag Library, Boe Chapel and Buntrock Commons. It's a pedestrian environment, with sidewalks and paths crisscrossing the green. A single ring road surrounds this central space. The second circle of buildings is the residence halls, arranged in two clusters on either side of the academic core. The third circle of the college consists of facilities below the brow of the hill, including the Skoglund Athletic Center and the athletic fields.

Although the campus is a beautiful landscape, it's also a cultural landscape that hasn't always nurtured wildlife or a lot of natural diversity. In 1985, therefore, the college committed to restore some of its agricultural lands to native species on 700 acres adjacent to the academic campus. Since that time, student and faculty volunteers have planted more than 20,000 trees and seedlings to re-establish an area of Big Woods that were here 150 years ago. We have established four different prairie areas, with five species of native grasses and a wide variety of wildflowers. Five restored wetlands invite waterfowl like ruddy ducks and tundra swans to become a part of the natural community. A 44-acre parcel of farmland has been converted from conventional agriculture to a more sustainable system. All of these restorations offer opportunities for student research and observation, as well as natural areas for jogging, walking, and quiet contemplation. In addition, they help to counterbalance the carbon dioxide we exhale into the atmosphere by our burning of fossil fuels. By holding almost all the stormwater that falls on the campus, these

plantings also enhance the quality of aquifer recharge in the Cannon River watershed. And they begin to suggest a way of living responsibly in creation.

Architecture as Pedagogy

Because they shape our activity and interactions, the campus buildings also constitute an important element of our mission. Buildings are a way of structuring human life in the world. Architecture is the art of shaping space for particular purposes, including--at a college--instruction and experimentation, artwork and music-making, sociability and conviviality. Good buildings make it easier to be good at what we need to do.

Good buildings are also spaces of instruction, because they teach us how we deal with the constructed world. As David Orr says, architecture is a form of pedagogy. The college buildings, therefore, also reflect an evolving sense of stewardship. St. Olaf, for example, has always built for the long future, so effectively, in fact, that we are surrounded by the past. The first building on campus, Old Main, is still in daily use. Only two of our durable structures have ever been razed. This sturdy construction suggests the college's long-term commitments. All together, the blending of buildings and landscape shows students the possibilities of harmony.⁵⁹

St. Olaf believes in architecture as pedagogy. In 1927, professor Carl Mellby contended that "the modern college is not a factory where utilities and commodities are turned out wholesale. . . . So its outward shell should not altogether express the spirit of utility and profit nor resemble the structures where competition and material struggle for gain are the outstanding forces. Rather it should say: Here dwells the thinker and the scholar, the poet and the missionary, the prophet and the reformer: all those who have a vision of a better world and have dedicated their abilities to its realization."⁶⁰

Beginning in the Twenties, the college has designed many buildings in variations of the Norman Gothic style. Mellby liked this architectural association with the medieval monastery, because, he said, it embodied "the same ideas and ideals as those which the modern Christian institution of learning stands for. The striving for truth and beauty, for nobility and dignity of thinking and living, for all self-denial and selfless service was the soul of the monastery as it is of the ideal college." Mellby considered the Gothic a potent teacher, even in the details of a building like Holland Hall. The massive walls and buttresses suggested "the permanence and the power of the religious and intellectual ideas which it is to shelter." The repetition of ascending lines spoke of "the upward reach of the search for truth and beauty and the deep seated striving of the human mind and heart for an ideal lying far above things commonplace and material." The constant variation in form and line pointed to "the richness and variety of human thinking and human experience, as well as to the endless resources of the world, spiritual and material, to which we are heirs."⁶¹

Recent construction expresses the college's commitment to environmental stewardship. The new Buntrock Commons, for example, is meant to teach us as it shelters us. It takes advantage of natural light in many of its public spaces. Its roof insulation puts it thirty percent ahead of state standards in energy efficiency. And the college is committed to composting all of the cafeteria food waste, taking it out of the solid waste stream and converting it to organic fertilizers.

St. Olaf's campus and buildings support a wide variety of student needs. Outdoor spaces offer areas for contemplation and recreation. Indoor spaces provide shelter and furnishings to help students fulfill additional goals. The Commons conserves the social community by creating congenial spaces for the informal conversations that are so much a part of life at a residential college. The Rolvaag Library offers individual spaces for study and quiet contemplation. Boe Chapel offers an uplifting space for worship, lectures and performances. And residence halls offer rooms for shared living, along with lounges and rec rooms for shared entertainment.

Campus Culture: Why We Live Together

At St. Olaf College, students live together on campus because it's good for them. Studies regularly show that students who live on campus participate in more extracurricular, social and cultural events at college. They interact more often with faculty and friends. They are more satisfied with college, and are more likely to graduate. And, compared to students at commuter colleges, they show greater gains in autonomy and self-concept, and in aesthetic, cultural and intellectual values. They become more socially and politically open-minded, and more likely to participate in productive groups. A rich college culture actually enhances the academic achievement of students.⁶²

St. Olaf is committed to the continuation and improvement of its nurturing college culture. St. Olaf is a friendly place. Although we may have our doubts about the universal appropriateness of "Minnesota nice," we generally practice it here. St. Olaf is also a civil place: we encourage the practice of civility in our interpersonal interactions, but also in classroom discussions and debates, and even (usually) in campus politics. The campus is where we learn to be thoughtful with other people. We care for the campus, for the college community, and for each other.

St. Olaf's residential character is an essential part of its mission. We believe that students learn important lessons of freedom and responsibility by living together. Moving away from home, students make new homes together in the close quarters of the residence hall. We don't want students to see each other only as brains in bodies, or to talk only about classwork together (although we are not unhappy when they do talk about classwork together). Instead, we try to structure residential life so that students interact with each other as multi-faceted persons.

Residence life also teaches lessons of difference and tolerance. Residence halls move most of our students from the privacies and privatism of the American single-family home to the shared spaces of a wider world. (A hundred years ago, of course, going to college often meant that, for the first time, you got a bed of your own.) From the time they meet their roommates, students experience different worldviews and life experiences, different definitions of personal and household cleanliness, different religious and political ideals, different work and sleep patterns, different attitudes toward work and play, different skills and different gifts. Students learn how to accommodate and (sometimes) appreciate these differences. They learn skills of negotiation and cooperation, of compromise and confrontation, of compassion and consideration, of patience and sheer endurance. They learn tolerance, and, in the best of cases, they learn better ways of doing things. This is a kind of lifelong learning that comes with the freedom and the restrictions of a residential college.

At St. Olaf, we also try to make sure that every student encounters some strange ideas, and even some strange people. This is not very hard. Roommates often provide a good case of "perspective by incongruity." Some devoted Lutherans find it strange that not all people take religion seriously, but more secular students find people who take religion seriously positively exotic. The student from the suburbs gets new outlooks on life from a roommate from rural South Dakota. Large numbers of students believe that any adults who are passionate about Latin or History or Chemistry are very strange indeed.

At St. Olaf, we are dedicated to the proposition that our differences make a difference in good thinking. But we also believe that the experience of diversity is as important as the study of diversity, and we are committed to providing "diversity competence"--an ability to work with all members of a multicultural society--to all our students. In the beginning, St. Olaf College was purposefully multicultural, as it worked at adapting Norwegians to American life, and vice versa. Now, we try to recruit a wider variety of people, and people with a wider variety of ideas, to participate in the overlapping multicultural communities of Manitou Heights. This is easier said than done. Each year, dozens of students from countries across the world join the St. Olaf community, and enliven it with new accents and perspectives. But a college of Norwegian-Lutheran origins located in Northfield isn't yet an obvious choice (or a first choice) for many African-Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics, or Asian-Americans. Currently, about seven percent of our student population comes from these groups. Still, it's a continuing challenge to everybody at St. Olaf to consider how we can be good for an increasingly multicultural America.⁶³

We're much more successful at promoting diversity competence by sending our students somewhere else, where they themselves are minorities. More than 80 percent of St. Olaf's students spend a term off-campus, not because they don't like the campus, but because they want the "perspective by incongruity" that travel

affords. The close communities that develop in a month or more of common travel often translate back into friendships on the Hill, and the combination of these off-campus friendships with the friendships of first-year corridors and student organizations is one of the things that makes the culture of Manitou Heights truly distinctive.

Like other aspects of St. Olaf's history, the residence life program at the college depends in part on serendipitous circumstance. At the beginning, of course, the faculty and students lived in the same building, the Main Building. Eventually, as the college grew, the faculty moved off-campus, but for decades they lived close to school, and entertained students often in their homes. Many faculty still live within walking distance, and St. Olaf is still a part of their neighborhood. Although other faculty live geographically at some distance from the college, they still maintain close social connections to students and colleagues. Indeed, many of the faculty find that former students are their current friends. This tradition of sustained (and often personal) interaction between students and faculty is a distinctive and valuable feature of St. Olaf, and one that we intend to maintain.

To some extent, the close interactions of St. Olaf campus life are Gertrude Hilleboe's doing. Hilleboe came to St. Olaf in 1908, graduated in 1912, and became Dean of Women in 1915. "Gert" lived in the residence halls as a house mother from 1915 to 1952. As Dean of Women, she helped shape the college's long-lasting commitment to co-education by championing the active participation of women in the social and political life of the college. She also directed the development of St. Olaf's pioneering (and lasting) program of Junior Counselors, in which talented juniors volunteer to live and serve as advisors on the first-year corridors. This distinctive arrangement helps incoming students with common questions and concerns to get them resolved, and to enter the larger community of college as a cohesive cohort.⁶⁴

The college provides food for thought and for the spirit, but also for our bodies. The food service uses fresh ingredients to create a variety of nutritional foods for people on campus. It's still cafeteria food, and students complain about it, of course, but we try to prepare it with care, and to provide a setting for the extended conversations over meals that nourish community. The cafeteria consequently is one of the most beautiful spaces on the St. Olaf campus.

Freedom and Responsibility

From its beginnings, American culture has experienced the tensions of freedom and responsibility. As Eric Foner notes in *The Story of Freedom*, the definition of the word has changed considerably. In the 17th century, a person found freedom in community, and was only free to do good. These days, we often seek freedom from community, the freedom to do as we please. In this ongoing cultural tension between freedom and responsibility, St. Olaf sets parameters that limit the freedoms

of our students. Our alcohol policy, for example, prohibits the consumption of alcoholic beverages on campus--not just for students, but for faculty and visitors as well. This doesn't mean that nobody drinks on campus, but it does mean that the college requires students to think twice about drinking. Even if alcohol can be a good thing in moderation, American society is not in general a culture of moderation, and college youth are often tempted to experiment with extremes. Most of our students are too young to buy beer legally, and for their sake, as well as for other reasons, we try--with mixed success--to keep alcohol off-campus.⁶⁵

The college has also been fairly conservative about the impact of cars on intellectual and community life. A 1916 plan for the campus--drafted at the height of early enthusiasm for automobiles--included an extensive road system. But it was never developed, and the campus remains primarily a peaceful pedestrian environment. Until June of 1960, only seniors were allowed to have cars on campus. Since then, the college has allowed cars by permit only, fearing that students will drive themselves to distraction(s) in cars. Cars are a centrifugal force in American culture, but the college expects a St. Olaf education to be centripetal and communal. As an instructive counterpoint to the world, a place for contemplation and conversation, the college tries to encourage students to stay on campus to learn and live together.

Lots of things happen in residence halls, and not all of them are a part of the college mission. But educational researcher Alexander Astin has found that "residential liberal arts colleges in general, and highly selective liberal arts colleges in particular, produce a pattern of consistently positive student outcomes not found in any other type of American higher-education institution." His research shows that residential liberal arts colleges offer both educational and existential benefits to their students. Students at liberal arts colleges, compared to other college students, "are more satisfied with the faculty, the quality of teaching, and the general education program, and are more likely to view the institution as student-oriented. Attending a private liberal arts college also enhances the student's odds of completing the bachelor's degree, being elected to student office, trusting the administration, and seeing the institution as focused on social change." Astin also shows that campus life is an important factor not just in student satisfaction, but in academic achievement: "liberal arts colleges, more than other types of institutions, enhance the student's chances of enrolling in graduate study, winning graduate fellowships, and eventually earning the doctorate degree." In short, colleges like St. Olaf make a difference.⁶⁶

Why is this? It turns out that the college environment is a surprisingly strong influence on student learning: most of these effects, Astin shows, "appear to be attributable to the private liberal arts college's small size, its residential nature, and the strong student orientation of its faculty." The existential elements of college life affect how students learn and live. Small residential colleges produce these benefits, presumably because their intentional communities allow for the ongoing

conversations (between students and faculty and among students) that are an essential part of college life.⁶⁷

Recently, as members of the college community designed the new campus center as a commons, students demonstrated how intentional their community can be. They adamantly chose to eat together in a single cafeteria, they said, because it's like a secular communion--a place where everybody can come to share a meal together. They chose a central location for student post office boxes, again, because the P.O.s have become a traditional gathering spot. They chose to share unlocked P.O.s, because, in general, they trust each other. At the end of the week, the P.O.s are often lined with "Friday flowers," ritual tokens of affection or appreciation. Small things like these eventually make a big difference in campus culture.

Campus Culture: Organizational Life

Although it doesn't show on a student's transcript, campus life is an essential part of a St. Olaf education. Students generally spend less than twenty hours a week in classrooms or labs, but they are learning day and night. Indeed, as hard as you try, you can't stop them from learning, because learning is what human beings do. But you can help them, and so the college intentionally structures both time and spaces (including social spaces), for students to live and learn together.

On this campus, in these buildings, St. Olaf students have developed their own college culture. For all of 125 years, students have created their own organizations to do things they value. In the early years, literary and debating clubs were particularly popular. Now, as then, organizations are a counterpoint to the competitive individualism of much of American academic life, and a place where thoughtfulness takes a different form. It's a place where students from different majors come together, where the academic perspectives of the curriculum can be applied to the challenges of the extracurriculum. The student organizations are places where practices of commitment teach lessons of cooperation and contention, planning and endurance. They give students experience with the voluntary associations that Alexis de Tocqueville considered the foundation of American civil society.

The college doesn't organize the student organizations, but it encourages them, hoping that students will come to understand the pleasures and the pains of constructive work together. The college creates the context in which students can determine the contents of their organizations. Because of their centrality to students' extra-curricular education, for example, the college has provided a central place for student organizations in the new Commons. With individual offices and shared workspaces and conference rooms, the organizations can work effectively both separately and together.

Organizational life complements the academic and religious life of the college. The political organizations like the Democrats and Republicans and Greens remind us that social problems aren't merely academic. The various forms of student government let students participate in the shaping of campus culture, and practice the skills needed to re-shape American culture. The religious organizations like the student congregation and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes remind us that religion isn't just a sometime thing. Service organizations like Habitat for Humanity show how students can learn by doing a different sort of homework; other service organizations let students learn by teaching or mentoring students at the Laura Baker School or at middle schools in the Twin Cities. Athletic organizations remind us of our embodied existence, the pleasures of play, and the delights of teamwork. Social organizations like the Lion's Pause and the Larson Coffeehouse create spaces (both social and geographic) for having fun together. Organizations like Harambe provide a space for multicultural students to come together--both with people like themselves, and with diverse other students at the college. And miscellaneous organizations like the fly-fishing club remind us that no system of classification can encompass the imaginative purposes of our students.

Music organizations have a special place in St. Olaf's campus culture. They teach the beauties of sound, and the aesthetics and ethics of ensemble performance. They bring together students from different majors and different subcultures of the college to play and sing together. The choirs and instrumental ensembles teach music, but they also teach cooperation, interdependence, and human harmony. Several of the music organizations travel nationally and internationally, and they find the combination of public performances and bus or plane rides make for conversations and community. You might think that students who take time for music would suffer in their other work, but research shows just the opposite--that participation in music is correlated with academic achievement.⁶⁸

St. Olaf's athletic programs also offer special opportunities for students to learn as athletes. In the tradition of Ade Christenson, who served St. Olaf for 38 years, the Ole coaches try "to make athletics important but not too important." Christenson loved John Ruskin's adage that "the greatest reward for a man's job is not what he gets for it but what he becomes by it." And the men and women of the Ole sports teams--both intercollegiate and intramural--still learn a variety of skills, not all of which are athletic. They learn teamwork, which is paradoxically a form of both cooperation and competition. The football team, for example, fosters just the sort of cooperation that gives a group a competitive advantage. The "work" of teamwork is long and hard and time-consuming, as athletes practice for their performances. And the performance is important--one of the reasons that extracurricular activities are so important to students is that they have demonstrable results that many people see--not just a single professor.⁶⁹

In many other ways, too, the students who play together stay together, as friendships form around the recreation and physical activities that are also an

essential part of St. Olaf's campus culture. Intramural sports, club sports, open recreational activities, fitness programs, aerobic and aquatic programs all complement the college's academic requirements in Physical Activity. Joggers and walkers and cross-country skiers tour the campus and natural lands in season. Frisbees fly on the campus green--and on the frisbee golf course--in the Fall and Spring. During the cold months of the winter, students engage in hockey, broomball, and ice skating. And during the whole school year, a Peer Education program promotes conversations about health and wellness, including such topics as nutrition, exercise, spiritual and emotional health, chemical health, relationships, sexuality, and sexual safety.

Other events, organized and less organized, also become a part of campus culture. For many years, for example, the "First Nighter" was a St. Olaf tradition. During Week One, men and women were lined up by height, and marched together. Each man presented a rose to his assigned date, and they kissed before proceeding to the evening's entertainment. It was a charming enactment of romance and chivalry, but its charm wore thin in a new era of women's independence and changing attitudes toward dating and marriage. Other traditions have persisted. Concerts and performances in the Lion's Pause have made the transition from basement quarters in the old Ytterboe Hall to state-of-the-art facilities in the new Commons. The seniors still march together 100 days before graduation, and new traditions are undoubtedly being invented.

Unfortunately, the rich academic and residential life of the campus causes some of our students to be over-scheduled. Many St. Olaf students spread themselves thin with commitments. They work hard in classes, and many of them have two (or more) academic majors. They work hard in student employment. About a third of our students participate in music organizations, and many of them are members of multiple associations. This is a good thing, because it's one of the most important forms of learning in college. But engagement is not without its costs. At a time when students need time to think and talk about the big questions that college poses, some of them are too tied up in meetings and practices and performances.

Because we schedule ourselves so incessantly, it means that we're often not available for the serendipitous occasions that occur--the visiting speaker, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra concert, the St. Olaf Theatre's latest play. Our daily planners get so full that there's no place for the unplanned event or concert, the circuitous conversation or the meditative epiphany. We work so hard that we often miss the education that working less might provide. We forget that, at its root, the word "school" derives from the Greek word for "leisure," and we often fail to maintain the leisure that would actually enhance our thoughtfulness.

Conclusion

In campus culture, as in the curriculum, the college mission is to do what it can to make it possible for students to do what they need to do. The faculty can structure classes and assignments and exams, but they can't learn for students; students do that on their own. The staff can make it easy for students to learn from their experiences on the campus, and students themselves can also be serendipitously creative. Indeed, we count on their creativity and conviviality to convert the opportunities provided by St. Olaf College into their own campus culture for nurturing the growth of their various gifts in the service of human freedom and freely-chosen communities.

We know, however, that we are not always the community that we intend to be. We have our fair share of mistrust and misunderstanding, our arguments and conflicts. There are days when anger and animosity overcome our feelings of belonging and inclusiveness. There are times when we seem hypocritical, even to ourselves. Sometimes we forget that what we share is greater than where we differ. But these breaches of faith and community are, in fact, part of the process of community, which depends on forgiveness and reconciliation. In a world of imperfect human beings, these inevitable antagonisms are part of the raw material of community, which is not a state of harmony, but a process of learning to live together. Community is an ongoing practice of commitment, which needs to be renewed daily, and can be creatively renewed even in controversy. In our campus life and our residential life, in our extracurricular activities and our organizations, we commit ourselves to understanding our differences, and using them to make us better.

Over the years, St. Olaf College has been faithful to a vision of learning from life, and of lifelong learning, and it has tried to create a community of constructive forces on campus. We recommit ourselves to those goals, but we also recognize that we are co-creators of campus life with our students, and, ultimately, with God.

Notes

¹ The distinction between *ethos* and *logos* comes from St. Olaf's good friend Paul Dovre, former President of Concordia College.

² Pamela Schwandt, Gary De Krey, DeAne Lagerquist, ed., *Called to Serve: St. Olaf and the Vocation of a Church College* (Northfield: St. Olaf College, 1999). For earlier reflections on identity and mission, see C.A. Mellby, *St. Olaf College Through Fifty Years* (Northfield: St. Olaf College, 1925) and *Identity and Mission in a Changing Context: A Centennial Publication of St. Olaf College* (Northfield: St. Olaf College, 1974). For a rich collection of documents from St. Olaf's history, see Joan R. Olson and Joseph M. Shaw, ed., *Readings from St. Olaf History on the Christian Liberal Arts Tradition* (Northfield: St. Olaf College, 1981). For an influential meditation on the mission of church-related colleges, see Harold H. Ditmanson, Howard V. Hong, and Warren A. Quanbeck, eds., *Christian Faith and the Liberal Arts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1960). For a brief account of St. Olaf's tradition, see Mark Granquist, "Religious Vision and Academic Quest at St. Olaf College," in *Models for Christian Higher Education*, ed. Richard T. Hughes and William B. Adrian (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 82-96. And finally, for more detailed histories of St. Olaf College, consult the comprehensive works of college historian Joseph M. Shaw: *History of St. Olaf College 1874-1974* (Northfield: The St. Olaf College Press, 1974); *Dear Old Hill: The Story of Manitou Heights, The Campus of St. Olaf College* (Northfield: St. Olaf College, 1992); *The St. Olaf Choir: A Narrative* (Northfield: St. Olaf College, 1997); *Bernt Julius Muus, Founder of St. Olaf College* (Northfield: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1999)

³ Martin E. Marty, "Foreword," in *Called to Serve*, p. ix. For a meditation on vocation as a response to a gift economy, see Tom Christenson, "Learning and Teaching as an Exercise in Christian Freedom," *Intersections* 6 (Winter 1999): 5.

⁴ For a review of the liberal arts college today, see the Winter 1999 issue of *Daedalus*: "Distinctively American: The Residential Liberal Arts Colleges." For a contemporary account of the goals of liberal arts education, see William Cronon, "Only Connect . . .: The Goals of Liberal Arts Education," *American Scholar* 64 (October 1998): 73-80. For rich discussions of the liberal arts tradition, see Bruce A. Kimball, *Orators & Philosophers: A History of the Idea of Liberal Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1986); Martha C. Nussbaum, *Cultivating*

Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); and Darryl J. Gless and Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *The Politics of Liberal Education* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992). For accounts of Lutheran contributions to American higher education, see Richard W. Solberg, *Lutheran Higher Education in North America* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985) and Ernest L. Simmons, *Lutheran Higher Education: An Introduction for Faculty* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998).

⁵ For an account of public perceptions of the liberal arts, see Richard H. Hersh, "Intentions and Perceptions: A National Survey of Public Attitudes Toward Liberal Arts Education," *Change* (March/April 1997): 16-23.

⁶ At the heart of a liberal education, contends A. Bartlett Giamatti, "lives the conviction, derived from the Greeks, that freedom of thought is the precondition to political freedom. If freedom, with all its freely chosen constraints, does not first reside in the mind, it cannot reside anywhere." Giamatti, *A Free and Ordered Space: The Real World of the University* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), p. 92. See also Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity*, pp. 30-35; and Darrell Jodock, "The Lutheran Tradition and the Liberal Arts College: How Are They Related?" in *Called to Serve*, pp. 24-28.

⁷ As William Cronon says, liberal education "aspires to nurture the growth of human talent in the service of human freedom." Cronon, "Only Connect," p. 74.

⁸ Or the motto could be "Prove All Things," the injunction inscribed on St. Olaf's Steensland Hall, the college's first library building. Christenson, "Learning and Teaching as an Exercise in Christian Freedom," pp. 5-10.

⁹ Thomas Jefferson, quoted in Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (San Francisco, : Sierra Club, 1976), p. 144. Jefferson probably didn't know it, but he was echoing Martin Luther. See also Geoffrey Canada, "The Currents of Democracy: The Role of Small Liberal Arts Colleges," *Daedalus* 128 (Winter 1999): 121-32.

¹⁰ The trivium and quadrivium were the seven liberal arts of the Middle Ages. The lower division, the trivium, included grammar, logic and rhetoric; the upper division, the quadrivium, comprised arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music.

¹¹ Sometimes, scholars explain(ed) the specialization of their research and teaching programs in terms akin to classical economics, suggesting that the common good came from the sum of all particular researches. This remains to be proven.

¹² Address by Th. N. Mohn on the occasion of the Dedication of St. Olaf's School, January 8, 1875, reprinted in *Readings from St. Olaf History*, pp. 2-3.

¹³ Mellby, *Saint Olaf College Through Fifty Years*, pp. 19, 21. See also Michael B. Aune, "'Both Sides of the Hyphen'? The Churchly and Ethnic Heritage of St. Olaf College," in *Called to Serve*, pp. 37-56.

¹⁴ Mellby, *Saint Olaf College Through Fifty Years*, p. 27.

¹⁵ Peter N. Stearns, *Meaning Over Memory: Recasting the History of Culture and History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), pp. 153-61.

¹⁶ Gary De Krey, "Agnes M. Larson: Historian," in *Called to Serve*, pp. 117-24.

¹⁷ "Aims and Objectives," reprinted in *Readings from St. Olaf History*, p. 7.

¹⁸ See, for example, Nussbaum's *Cultivating Humanity*.

¹⁹ *Identity and Mission in a Changing Context*, pp. 10, 16; Gene Wise, *American Historical Explanations* (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1973), p. xv.

²⁰ On the virtues of higher education, see Mark Schwehn, *Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 44-65.

²¹ *Identity and Mission in a Changing Context*, p. 12.

²² Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), pp. 6-7.

²³ De Krey, "Agnes M. Larson," p. 119.

²⁴ A religious connection is not always an advantage in American higher education. Indeed, for many people, a religious connection is a liability. Peter Gomes suggests that "today the chapel [on campus] is increasingly a symbol not of unity but of division, an all too visible reminder of the parochial and particular sectarian origins of the school, a cultural liability in the school's necessary positioning of itself to gain market share in a increasingly diverse, multicultural, and secular world. Compulsory courses in the Christian Bible, required attendance at daily and/or Sunday services, and the scholar/preacher/president are all a part of a distant past except in those institutions with which most elite liberal arts colleges choose not to compare themselves." Peter J. Gomes, "Affirmation and Adaptation: Values and the Elite Residential College," *Daedalus* (Winter 1999): 102-103. In a secular society, a church relation seems to be a disadvantage, because it seemingly limits the range of what can be considered and how. When you look at the listings of America's best institutions of higher education, you

don't find too many with a church relation, unless you look at a list like Loren Pope's *Colleges That Change Lives* (New York: Penguin, 2000). Some people think that St. Olaf would be more prestigious without its religious affiliation, and they may well be right. But that's more a problem for the culture than for the college. See Alan Wolfe, "A Welcome Revival of Religion in the Academy," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (September 19, 1997), B5.

²⁵ Richard T. Hughes, "Musing on Tuesday's Questions: Luther in the Context of the American Enlightenment," *The Cresset* (Trinity 1999): 29-31.

²⁶ Whether they acknowledge it or not, all colleges operate on assumptions about the character [or constitution] of the universe, the meanings and purposes of life (including human life), the nature of human nature, the goodness of "the good life," and an implicit interpretation of the ends of life. Sometimes, these assumptions just come from the cultural contexts of these colleges--from business and media and government, from graduate and professional schools, from students and their families. But almost all American colleges also operate implicitly on assumptions that are, at least in part, Christian. St. Olaf is more explicit about its religious assumptions. Hughes, "Musing on Tuesday's Questions," pp. 29-31. See also Mark Schwehn, "A Christian University: Defining the Difference," *First Things* (May 1999): 27-28

²⁷ Darrell Jodock, "The Lutheran Tradition and the Liberal Arts College: How Are They Related?" in *Called to Serve*, pp. 14-15.

²⁸ The observation is Dick Everson's. But it's not a new one. St. Olaf historian Connie Gengenbach offered a similar formulation in 1987. See Constance Gengenbach, "St. Olaf: A College of the Church," *St. Olaf* 35 (March 1987): 3-4.

²⁹ The 1976 LCA statement on "The Basis for Partnership Between Church and College" is emphatic about the goodness of the secular. It notes that people live in community and for community, for association with each other in a variety of secular institutions. And it suggests that "This association is God-given; this cooperation in the secular is God-pleasing. For the term secular means non-redemptive; it does not mean God-forsaken." "The Basis for Partnership Between Church and College," *A Statement of the Lutheran Church in America* (Adopted by the Eighth Biennial Convention, Boston, Massachusetts, July 21-28, 1976), pp. 2-3.

³⁰ Jodock, "The Lutheran Tradition and the Liberal Arts College," pp. 16-17.

³¹ Philip Nordquist, "From Pietism to Paradox: The Development of a Lutheran Philosophy of Education," *Intersections* 8 (Winter 2000): 11-15; DeAne Lagerquist, "Incarnating a Tradition: Personal and Institutional Reflections," (lecture delivered at Gustavus Adolphus College, September 1998), p. 3. Lagerquist also contends that a Lutheran theology of education equips us for the paradoxes--or creative tensions--that abound in human life. But Americans love dichotomies: we think that we've gotten all the news that's fit to print as long as we've gotten "both sides." Our love of dichotomies has led us to simplify the intellectual complexity of Luther, to prefer the basic binary of either/or to the rich elegance of both/and. Too often, it has led us to concentrate on the clarity of simplemindedness, instead of the complexity of ambiguity.

³² Nordquist, "From Pietism to Paradox," p. 3; Robert Benne, "A Lutheran Vision/Version of Christian Humanism," *Lutheran Forum* (1997); and Tom Christenson, "Learning and Teaching as an Exercise in Christian Freedom," pp. 3-11.

³³ See also Mark U. Edwards, "Christian Colleges: A Dying of the Light or a Different Refraction," *Christian Century* (April 21-28, 1999): 459-63.

³⁴ Joseph M. Shaw, *History of St. Olaf College*, p. 17.

³⁵ "St. Olaf Catalogues," in *Readings from St. Olaf History*, pp. 4-9.

³⁶ *Identity and Mission in a Changing Context*, p. 19.

³⁷ St. Olaf President Lars Boe claimed that "St. Olaf has a real contribution to make along these lines, none as a colorless, Liberal Arts institution. We dare to be different. We must be." William H.K. Narum, "Lars W. Boe 1875-1942," in *Called to Serve*, p. 77. See also Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 96-97.

³⁸ *Identity and Mission in a Changing Context*, pp. 14-15. See also Joseph Sittler, "Church Colleges and the Truth," in *Faith, Learning and the Church College: Addresses by Joe Sittler* (Northfield: St. Olaf College, 1989).

³⁹ *Identity and Mission in a Changing Context*, p. 16. "Speak truth to power" is a common Quaker phrase, reminding religious people that their first allegiance is to God, and not to the powers that be.

⁴⁰ David Orr, *Earth in Mind* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1994), p. 12. See also Tom Christenson, "Learning and Teaching as an Exercise in Christian Freedom," pp. 7-8.

⁴¹ The observation about "going deep" comes from Jill Baumgartner, professor of English at Wheaton College.

⁴² Robert Wuthnow, *Poor Richard's Principle: Recovering the American Dream Through the Moral Dimension of Work, Business, and Money* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 295. 84 percent of Americans see God as a heavenly father open to prayer. Three quarters of us think Jesus was the Son of God. And 71 percent believe in life after death. 38 percent define themselves as born-again evangelical Christians. According to the Minnesota Poll, Minnesotans share these American religious commitments. 75 percent of us believe in God, and 64 percent of us find God very important in our personal life. Oddly, even though only 75 percent believe in God, 80 percent of us think God intervenes through prayer. 65 percent of us are church members, and 44 percent of us do something about it, attending religious services at least once a week. Martha Sawyer Allen and David Peterson, "Off the Fence on Faith," *Star Tribune* (September 14, 1996): 5B.

⁴³ The Princeton Religion Research Center, *The Unchurched American* (Princeton, NJ: 1978), pp. 6, 15.

⁴⁴ One third of Americans don't know the meaning of Easter. Fewer than half of us can name the four gospels, and even 25 percent of people engaged in Bible study locate the Acts of the Apostles in the Old Testament. Only 4 in 10 Americans know who delivered the Sermon on the Mount. Four out of five Americans believe that the Bible includes the passage, "God helps those who help themselves," even though the central message of scripture seems to be that "God helps those who help their neighbors." "Pollster Calls U.S. Religious Life 'Superficial,'" *Star Tribune* (23 May 1998): B7.

⁴⁵ In "Methodological Doubting and Believing: Contraries in Inquiry," Peter Elbow contends that both believing and doubting are essential elements of academic inquiry. Elbow, *Embracing Contraries: Explorations in Teaching and Learning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 254-300. Likewise, Paul Tillich said that doubt isn't antithetical to faith; it's an element of faith.

⁴⁶ Gomes, "Values and the Elite Residential College," p. 115.

⁴⁷ Gomes, "Values and the Elite Residential College," pp. 115-119

⁴⁸ Luther's *On Freedom of the Christian* describes this "Christian freedom": "A Christian is perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all. -- Freed from the vain attempt to justify himself . . . [the Christian] should be guided in all his works by this thought alone . . . considering nothing but the need and advantage of his neighbor. -- This is a truly Christian life. Here faith is truly active through love, that is it finds its expression in the works of the freest service,

cheerfully and lovingly done." Christenson, "Learning and Teaching as an Exercise in Christian Freedom," p. 6.

⁴⁹ Jodock, "The Lutheran Tradition and the Liberal Arts College," pp. 22-24.

⁵⁰ Alexander Astin, "Liberal Education and Democracy: The Case for Pragmatism," in Robert Orrill, ed., *Education and Democracy: Re-imagining Liberal Learning in America* (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1999), pp. 207-224.

⁵¹ Tom Christenson, "Learning and Teaching as an Exercise in Christian Freedom," p. 8.

⁵² Hardwick Day, "Reclaiming Lutheran Students Project," (Report prepared for LECNA, 1999).

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Gertrude Hilleboe to Beulah Folkedahl, September 18, 1929.

⁵⁵ For a good introduction to extra-curricular education, see George D. Kuh, Katie Branch Douglas, Jon P. Lund, and Jackie Ramin-Gyurnek, *Student Learning Outside the Classroom: Transcending Artificial Boundaries* (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 8 Washington, DC: The George Washington University, School of Education and Human Development, 1994). See also Ernest T. Pascarella and Patrick T. Terenzini, *How College Affects Students* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991); and Alexander W. Astin, *What Matters in College? Four Critical Years Revisited* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993).

⁵⁶ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

⁵⁷ For a history of the St. Olaf Campus, see Joseph M. Shaw, *Dear Old Hill*.

⁵⁸ Norman E. Madsen, "John L. Berntsen: Keeper of the Grounds," in *Called to Serve*, pp. 111-116.

⁵⁹ David Orr, "Architecture as Pedagogy," in *Earth in Mind*, pp. 112-116.

⁶⁰ C.A. Mellby, "New Norman Gothic 'Mount St. Olaf,'" *Viking Yearbook* (1924-1925), reprinted in *Readings from St. Olaf History*, p. 38.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Alexander W. Astin, "How the Liberal Arts College Affects Students," *Daedalus* (Winter 1999): 82-85.

⁶³ For a cogent discussion of the importance of diversity to higher education, see William G. Bowen and Derek Bok, *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions* (Princeton, 1998)

⁶⁴ L. DeAne Lagerquist, "Gertrude Miranda Hilleboe: Dean," in *Called to Serve*, pp. 103-110.

⁶⁵ Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998).

⁶⁶ Astin, "How the Liberal Arts College Affects Students," p. 77. See also Richard M. Hersh, "Generating Ideals and Transforming Lives: A Contemporary Case for the Residential Liberal Arts College," *Daedalus* 128 (Winter 1999): 173-94, and Pope, *Colleges That Change Lives*.

⁶⁷ Alexander W. Astin, "How the Liberal Arts College Affects Students," p. 83.

⁶⁸ See Joseph M. Shaw, *The St. Olaf Choir*.

⁶⁹ Tom Porter, "Adrian Leonard ('Ade') Christenson: Coach," in *Called to Serve*, pp. 125-32.