



# UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

## President Keefe's Faculty Day Address August 24, 2011

I am pleased to have this opportunity to welcome you back to the university for the 2011-2012 school year. I hope that you all had a good summer; I can say with no fear of contradiction, the university is not the same without you.

One of our new undertakings this year is to communicate with parents on a bimonthly basis in an email newsletter called, "The Odyssey." I'd like to read you the opening of my first letter.

"The process of education is an odyssey. As many of you contemplate your students' imminent odyssey to the University of Dallas, I offer you these lines from the proem of the original *Odyssey*. Homer says of Odysseus:

*Many were they whose cities he saw, whose minds he learned of,  
Many the pains he suffered in his spirit on the wide sea,  
Struggling for his own life and the homecoming of his companions.*

I.3-5, trans. Richmond Lattimore

Our students learn of many cities and many minds—some of the greatest of both—and while they certainly will not have to trick a Cyclops or suffer the wrath of Poseidon, they *will* struggle. They will struggle to do something that Odysseus also tried to do—to realize their full humanity and potential. Odysseus turned down goddesses, riches, and possibly even immortality for the uncertain chance to return to his home, his wife and his son—to fulfill his human destiny. Our students will struggle to discover their human destiny and realize their full human potential."

I believe that the ultimate aim of a UD education, whether it is in Constantin, Braniff, School of Ministry, or GSM is no less than the Greek *paideia*, "the leading out of the soul and directing it upward," to quote Louise Cowan.<sup>i</sup> *Paideia* implies a formation of both the intellectual and the moral virtues. This formation is accomplished through inspiring students towards the ardent pursuit of truth.

The search for truth brings the relationship between faith and reason to light and meaning. Pope John Paul II called Catholic universities "to explore courageously the riches of Revelation and of nature so that the united endeavor of intelligence and faith will enable people to come to the full measure of their humanity, created in the image and likeness of God."<sup>ii</sup>

The intention of our efforts at UD is not simply to teach students. We aspire to more than imparting knowledge or wisdom; we aspire to the formation of human excellence in all spheres—in the city, among the family, individually, and before God.

Contact with excellence, with great and noble and beautiful things, will transform a student. A contemplation of the heroic ideal embodied by Achilles in the *Iliad* can be such a powerful experience for students that they are challenged through considering what Achilles values to consider what they themselves value and assess it differently. Achilles is given such a powerful presence by Homer that in light of the example he provides, students will be inspired to strive for excellence.

The needling questions of Socrates (hence the Socratic Method) in Plato's *Republic* will cause students to realize how little they do, in fact, know, and to reconsider many of their assumptions. These assumptions are not necessarily wrong, just unexamined. Socrates asks such relentless questions to bring about a *metanoia*, a turning point. When students reach the point of saying "I don't know," then they have become teachable. Then they become receptive to the truth. The passionate pursuit of truth is part of the mission of every college in this university—GSM, School of Ministry, Constantin, and Braniff.

The Romans make their first appearance in the Core curriculum with the *Aeneid*. Aeneas' *pietas* demonstrates the self-sacrifice of civilization building. Aeneas is the first hero for a cause. What he does he does for others, to found Rome, to bring the civilizing arts to the West.

The *Aeneid* has been treated as the epitome of heroic leadership through much of Western and Christian history. Have we lost this vision of a civilization worthy of self-sacrifice and selfless loyalty? It is incumbent upon us to ensure that the understanding, contemplation, and study of Homer, Vergil, Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas is not just an academic exercise—but a commitment to the formation of citizens and fully formed human beings. This is as true for GSM and School of Ministry students as it is for our undergraduates and Braniff students. The formation of a citizen is the ultimate end of every college at UD.

An alumnus from 1971, Mr. Bill Betzen, is a shining example of just such citizenship. A teacher and tireless supporter of the disadvantaged in Dallas for many years, Mr. Betzen recently submitted a proposal for the redistricting of Dallas which was a non-political suggestion, founded on common sense and logic, and aimed at reducing gerrymandered district lines and accurately representing constituent groups. Out of 18 proposals recommended his was one of three moved forward and of those three his was the only non-political proposal. This is exactly the kind of disinterested leadership that we need right now.

I cannot think of a time in our nation's history when a profound understanding of the role of the citizen has been more important. When what we see from so many of our leaders is an unfortunate lack of leadership, statesmanship, and vision, we hope that the education and formation of a UD student will open their capacity for visionary leadership and the qualities of civic virtue, and that it will become apparent in them that they have the qualities to lead in a selfless, visionary, statesman-like way.

We are in the process of building a great university, but like Aeneas we are called upon to set aside our individual agendas and make the sacrifices necessary to continue and improve our university. The great heroes of classical time pursued their goals on behalf of the polis whose virtues and values they embodied in heightened form. Aeneas' *pietas*, as mentioned above, is a manifestation of the self-sacrifice necessary for the formation of a great civilization. The over-arching mission, vision, values and educational agenda were established as a legacy from the founders, nurtured and developed by the Cowans, and carried forward by so many in this room with so much sacrifice. It is unacceptable for individual agendas to trump the over-arching University of Dallas' institutional commitment to a deeper understanding of the formation of a citizen, a deeper understanding of Western civilization, and our Catholic faith.

In conclusion, I will share with you my priorities for this year.

1. Come up with a plan to address the faculty and staff salary inequities in a systemic, fair, long term way.
2. Build on the success we have enjoyed in undergraduate enrollment.
3. Re-energize GSM and reverse the decade long trend of declining enrollment.
4. Increase graduate enrollment in Braniff and the School of Ministry.
5. Find a solution to the transfer conundrum that respects the academic integrity of the institution while providing worthy students the opportunity to participate in the UD phenomenon.
6. And finally resources.

Greatness requires resources and I am committed to generating the resources that will allow UD to not only survive year after year but to finally thrive. We will generate more resources from a more vibrant *Cor Fund*, more leadership gifts from major donors, more foundation contributions, gradually growing enrollment in Constantin, Braniff and the School of Ministry, and substantial enrollment growth in GSM. At the same time we need to continue to keep an eye on our budgets and spend our precious resources only when necessary to advance the central mission.

There is a wonderful old Irish proverb: "You are not a fully fledged sailor unless you have sailed under full sail." I want all of us to sail rapidly across the waves with the sails and spinnaker full. We can turn the corner but it will require everyone pulling in the same direction.

Thank you for your time.

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<sup>i</sup> Cowan, Louise. "The Necessity of the Classics." *The Intercollegiate Review*, 2001: 6.

<sup>ii</sup> John Paul II, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Apostolic Constitution on Catholic universities, Vatican Web site, August 1, 2011, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apc\\_15081990\\_ex-corde-ecclesiae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_15081990_ex-corde-ecclesiae_en.html), Intro.