

The Ten Hallmarks of Benedictine Education

Association of Benedictine Colleges and Universities

Abstract

Benedictine educational institutions all have their own particular character and culture. Yet, because of the universality of the Benedictine way of life, Benedictine colleges and universities also have a strong sense of connectedness with each other. In early 2005, this unique Benedictine quality of diversity within unity inspired the Association of Benedictine Colleges and Universities (ABCU) to articulate educational values that arose from Benedictine life—values that were ingrained in each institution’s educational mission even though each educational community had a *different* origin and path of development. The ten hallmarks of Benedictine education serve as a basis for general understanding among Benedictine institutions and as a resource for new presidents, monastic superiors, faculty, staff, students, and visitors. This article explores the way in which the ABCU formalized the ten hallmarks document as a means to draw together the insights of the fourteen member colleges and their sponsoring monasteries.

Education within the Benedictine Wisdom Tradition

The Role of Benedictine Monasticism

St. Benedict (480-547) guaranteed that monasteries would be places of reading, study, and learning within the larger orbit of Christian life and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition. They were places for all monastics to spend time praying the psalms and engaging in meditative reading of Scripture and other sacred texts. From the sixth century beginnings of Benedictine life, monasteries also welcomed guests into their midst, including young people who were preparing for a monastic vocation and those readying themselves for adult life

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in the broader church and society. This interaction with guests and the young fostered a powerful exchange of ideas and opinions and helped shape the intellectual lives of all involved. As a result, long before the rise of universities or colleges as we know them, monasteries functioned as centers of thought and learning for the larger world.

Through many centuries, monasteries have cultivated a range of intellectual pursuits. They have nurtured the study of theology, arts, and sciences; they have stewarded knowledge of the past in scriptoria and libraries; and they have promoted understanding of the earth and of the wise use of its resources. This work has engaged the labors of a great many monastic men and women and, as a whole, has been a source of social, economic, and cultural grounding for entire civilizations.

Benedictine Colleges and Universities in a North American Context

As immigrants flocked to North America in the nineteenth century, a number of Benedictine monasteries were established in the United States and Canada. The impetus for their founding was a revival of monastic life in Europe as well as a missionary urge to be of service to the Church in a new land. These new monasteries, drawing on an ancient heritage of communal life, prayer, study, and work, often started schools to help preserve the immigrants' Catholic faith and cultural heritage. They also fostered new vocations to monastic life. These schools, colleges, and seminaries developed deep local roots and, as times changed, came to serve broader and more diverse populations.¹ Initially staffed by sisters and monks, the institutions' development was aided by a growing cadre of dedicated lay colleagues who constitute the vast majority of the faculty and staff today.

In the twenty-first century, Benedictine colleges and universities participate in a millennial saga of thought and learning. As Catholic institutions of higher education, each is a "primary and privileged place for a fruitful dialogue between the Gospel and culture."² Each seeks to cultivate virtues that resonate with the world of Benedictine monastic

¹ Joel Ripinger, *The Benedictine Order in the United States: An Interpretive Essay* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 116-29.

² Pope John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae: On Catholic Universities* (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1990), n. 43.

life in the lives of faculty, staff, students, board members, parents, and friends.

The Benedictine Wisdom Tradition

Like the most ancient of wisdom traditions,³ Benedictine education sets its sights on the transformation of the human mind and heart. Benedictine education stresses the formation of the whole person rather than the intellect alone, calling for a lively interplay between rigorous thinking and the development of practices for right living.

Three influences animate Benedictine education: *Christ*, who is encountered anew each day in Scripture and in the human person; the *Rule of St. Benedict*⁴ as it is lived in community; and the extensive and rich *tradition* of those who have pursued Christian and monastic holiness in the past. St. Benedict exclaims, “What page, what passage of the inspired books of the Old and New Testaments is not the truest of guides for human life?”⁵ The Rule, itself steeped in scriptural references, aims to show monastics the way to abundant life.⁶ Far from being static, these two sources, Scripture and the Rule, are interpreted through a living tradition originating in times and places far distant from today’s monastic practitioners and remarkably more generative than contemporaries often realize.

Preserving Benedictine Wisdom in Catholic Higher Education

The Association of Benedictine Colleges and Universities’ (ABCU) members believe strongly that education provided by Benedictine institutions is distinct from that of other religiously-sponsored institutions. However, articulating that distinctiveness presented a dilemma. Therefore, one of the primary tasks undertaken in the first years of ABCU’s founding was to develop a statement on Benedictine education titled,

³ See, Lawrence Boadt, “An Introduction to the Wisdom Literature of Israel,” in *Collegeville Bible Commentary*, ed. Dianne Bergant and Robert J. Karris (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989), 634-43. See, Dianne Bergant, “The Wisdom Books,” in *Catholic Study Bible*, ed. Donald Senior (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), Readers’ Guide, 231-32.

⁴ Saint Benedict and Timothy Fry, *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1981).

⁵ Saint Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, 73.3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Prologue, 15-21.

“Education within the Benedictine Wisdom Tradition.”⁷ The statement, a result of a lengthy and collaborative effort,⁸ begins with brief descriptions of Benedictine monasticism and Benedictine institutions of higher education in North America and then describes the hallmarks of Benedictine education.

In this statement, ABCU sought to articulate educational values within Benedictine life. These were values that were ingrained in each institution’s educational mission even though each educational community had a *different* origin and path of development. ABCU members wanted the statement to serve both as a basis of general understanding for their institutions and as a resource for new presidents of the colleges and universities (most of whom are lay people) and for newly elected prioresses and abbots of the founding and sponsoring monasteries (a significant proportion of whom had not worked in the educational institutions before their election). The document has been incorporated into a report commissioned by ABCU about best practices for faculty development for mission and will also be used for future work related to the orientation of administration, staff, governing boards, and students. Each individual college and university is left to decide how best to use these hallmarks on their own campus, but ABCU believes that if the statement can foster more effective communication, interaction, and collaboration between educational institutions and their sponsoring orders, it will have served its purpose.

The statement contains the articulation of ten values that were considered to be Benedictine: love, prayer, stability, *conversatio* [conversion], obedience, discipline, humility, stewardship, hospitality, and community. ABCU identified these values as hallmarks, and described how

⁷ Association of Benedictine Colleges and Universities. *Education within the Benedictine Wisdom Tradition*, (Collegeville, MN: Association of Benedictine Colleges and Universities). http://www.abcu.info/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC=%7B94EFD1ED-B758-49CE-A3EA-1688AFFC9AC7%7D&DE=%7B47641124-0236-45D2-9FD4-2B0617CC3C1A%7D.

⁸ The process started in 2005 with reflection by the presidents and monastic leaders on the question, “What in the *Rule of St. Benedict* could be relevant to the work of higher education in contemporary America?” Then, five monastic authors put pen to paper and developed the first draft. A long, iterative process followed that began with grassroots discussions on the fourteen member campuses. Some of the institutions distributed the paper across the campus community while others used focus groups of faculty, staff, alumni, and board members for their discussions. Next steps included in-depth reflection by more than 20 presidents, prioresses, and abbots on the draft statement and the campus discussion reports, followed by re-formulation of the document by the same group, and intensive editing by a half dozen others knowledgeable in the Benedictine tradition.

each is set forth in the Rule and embodied in monastic life. St. Benedict promises that by steeping themselves in these values, his disciples will come to the point where they run the way of God's commands with the inexpressible sweetness of love,⁹ a perfect love that casts out fear,¹⁰ including fear of the unknown, the new, or the stranger. This is the transformation of life that is at the heart of Benedictine monastic life, and variations on these ten core values from the Rule are often adopted as core values for individual Benedictine colleges. Although a full study of how the ten hallmarks are being implemented at each of the fourteen ABCU colleges and universities has not yet been undertaken, illustrative examples from the University of Mary (Illustration #1), The College of St. Scholastica (Illustration #2), and Mount Marty College (Illustration #3) are provided as appendices to this document.

The Ten Hallmarks of Benedictine Education

A school is a different social and cultural entity than a monastery. However, an institution of higher education that is founded and sponsored by a Benedictine monastery cannot help but be influenced by the fundamental concerns of the monastics. Therefore, the core values that animate their life find a home in Benedictine colleges and universities and can be seen as hallmarks of educational vitality and of fidelity to the Benedictine mission. To the extent that these hallmarks shape a pattern of life for the campus community, they foster a particularly fruitful—and particularly Benedictine—engagement with the Catholic Intellectual Tradition.

There is no single way to embody these ten hallmarks; they cannot be decreed. Instead, as the members of a Benedictine educational institution reckon with them in pursuit of their own deepest educational goals, they sink roots into a particular place in the broader Church and culture. As they do so, a more expansive life emerges for all, the collective result of a surprising transformation of individual human hearts and minds.

1. Love of Christ and Neighbor

Benedictine life, like that of all Christians, is first and foremost a response to God's astonishing *love* for humankind; a love expressed in

⁹ Association of Benedictine Colleges and Universities, *Education within the Benedictine Wisdom Tradition*, ¶11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

the free gift of his beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Love, the motive and the goal for monastic life, tops St. Benedict's list of tools for good works.¹¹ Yet, the Rule recognizes many ways in which monastics can fail to ground their lives in love and sets up personal and communal practices that deal directly with human selfishness wherever it occurs, seeking to heal the resulting harm to one's self and others. Ultimately, however, the power of God's love is decisive. Indeed, the crowning good work for the monastic is "never to lose hope in God's mercy."¹²

Benedictine colleges and universities seek, above all, to be grounded in love and animated by it. The "love of learning and desire for God," so celebrated as part of Benedictine culture,¹³ make demands on all and are expansive enough to engage the deepest purpose of persons from all backgrounds who desire to teach and to study, to serve and to lead. As Benedictines, we call all to pursue a rigorous and disciplined search for truth and to support one another when that quest becomes difficult. We recognize how easy it is for one to hold on to habits of mind and behavior which diminish one's own potential or impede the development of others. Yet, we are confident in the capacity of all persons to grow and develop, to cultivate habits of mind and behavior that are life-giving and contribute to the good of all. This hallmark can be seen in the design of the first-year program at The College of St. Scholastica, which focuses on the theme of dignity (Illustration #2), and in the value of "awareness of God" at Mount Martyr College (Illustration #3).

2. Prayer: A Life Marked by Liturgy, Lectio, and Mindfulness

Benedictine monasteries cultivate a fundamental attentiveness to the ways in which God is present in the human mind and heart and, indeed, in all creation. The primary way for doing this is through the monastery's daily rhythm of liturgical prayer. St. Benedict directs that nothing is to be preferred to it.¹⁴ This daily experience of community prayer is supported and deepened by individual spiritual reading, a practice that Benedictines call by its Latin name, *lectio divina*, in order to differentiate it from reading undertaken to gain information or knowledge. *Lectio divina* is the slow meditative reading of Scripture

¹¹ Ibid., ¶13.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, 3rd Edition (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982).

¹⁴ Saint Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, 43.3.

and other sacred texts with the intention of discerning how God is at work right now in the world and is calling within the individual's own heart. For a monastic, the daily movement between common liturgical prayer and *lectio* opens up new space, within which qualities and virtues such as compassion, integrity, and courage can develop and grow strong.

Benedictine educational institutions seek to create and to preserve a noticeable rhythm of public prayer and of private attention to the sources of religious inspiration. We strive to ensure that the design and life of the campus promotes a spirit of transcendence and mindfulness, encouraging all to cultivate lives of prayer appropriate to their own faith. The intent is to cultivate, by analogy, a fundamental openness to the work of intellectual and personal transformation. It is important that the thinking of all members—students, faculty, and staff—be shaped by movement between shared engagement with ideas and the close, personal reading of “texts” (whether written, aural or visual). It is our intent to foster connections between the subjects that people study and the fundamental, deep purpose of their lives. The hallmark of prayer, expressed as mindfulness, is an element of the senior seminars at The College of St. Scholastica (Illustration #2) and, with Love of Christ and Neighbor, is experienced as an expression of the value of Awareness of God at Mount Martyr College (Illustration #3).

3. Stability: Commitment to the Daily Life of this Place, its Heritage, and Tradition

Stability shapes a Benedictine monastery. All of its members commit themselves to seeking God. They resolve to pursue this, their heart's deepest desire, *together*, day in and day out, in good times and in bad, throughout the entire span of their lives.

At Benedictine educational institutions, we put great energy into cultivating lasting relationships among students, faculty, and staff. We seek to embed a vigorous exchange of ideas within the pattern of life on campus, recognizing the shared human standing of all. We strive to foster a pervasive commitment to share our intellectual passions, our bewilderments and our breakthroughs with one another. We do this because we believe that persevering together in the pursuit of wisdom, as opposed to engaging one another only enough to achieve private understanding, builds strong and lasting relationships and makes remarkably powerful growth possible for all. Mount Martyr College (MMC)

(Illustration #3) joins together the hallmarks of community, stability, and obedience as essential components of the MMC value of community. The concept of stability came into play for The College of St. Scholastica when the College created a first-year program that kept the same students and faculty together for a full year (Illustration #2).

4. Conversatio: The Way of Formation and Transformation

The aim of life for Benedictines is the same as it is for all Christians: to be transformed in every part of one's life so that God's image, in which each has been created, becomes palpable and transparent. The Benedictine word for this way of life is *conversatio*, the process of letting go, in day-to-day life, of self-centered preoccupations and false securities so that the divine life at the core of one's being becomes manifest in a trustworthy pattern of living. *Conversatio* is a commitment to engage in practices that bring about conversion into the likeness of Christ, in particular, Christ's giving of self for others. This transformation proceeds according to small steps, and it is tested, in unexpected ways, over a lifetime. To come to fruition, *conversatio* requires stability, discipline, faithfulness, and resilience.

Benedictine colleges and universities attempt to call all members of the campus community to move out of their comfort zones for the sake of learning and integrity. We are not afraid to focus on habits of mind that will require many years to develop. In curricular and cocurricular programs, we seek to challenge realities we often take for granted; to foster intellectual and personal breakthroughs; and to cultivate habits of mind that will transform students, faculty, and staff alike, nurturing deep learning and generosity over a lifetime. The reflective components of the senior seminars at The College of St. Scholastica build in the hallmark of *conversatio* (Illustration #2).

5. Obedience: A Commitment to Listening and Consequent Action

Benedictine life is unthinkable without *obedience*, a value that cuts against the grain of much in contemporary life. Many forget that the root of the word *obedience* is found in *audire*, "to listen." When St. Benedict begins the Rule with the exhortation, "Listen," he emphasizes the stance of obedience required of all who seek wisdom. He asks for obedience not only to the spiritual head of the monastery but to the other

members of the community as well.¹⁵ Each has something of value to say about true fullness of life. For the monastic, obedience is putting into practice what is learned by listening to the other “with the ear of the heart.”¹⁶ Centuries of Benedictine experience show that such listening requires a willingness to submit to imperatives outside of the self—something that is not easy, but is deeply rewarding.

Teaching and learning are impossible without obedience, without listening to others with the awareness that no one possesses all truth or knows everything worth knowing. In intellectual inquiry, obedience means respecting the integrity of disciplinary methods of study and maintaining fidelity to the evidence, wherever it leads. Obedience helps to form an intellectual community that draws on a number of disciplines, and respects the methodologies proper to each. All members of a Benedictine educational institution are encouraged to work to understand, to respect the viewpoints of others, and to adhere to standards of excellence in thinking and communicating. Learning to listen well and respond deeply to others and the world is a prerequisite for growing in wisdom that requires courage and perseverance. Obedience, discipline, humility, and stewardship are all listed values expressed in the *Cor et Anima* initiative, which sets behavioral expectations for students in a Benedictine framework, at The College of St. Scholastica (Illustration #2).

6. *Discipline: A Way Toward Learning and Freedom*

Discipline is a way of focusing energy and attention on what matters most. Benedictine life is built around a fundamental discipline of prayer, work, and relationships, which is set forth in the Rule and seeks to free a monastic to take delight in God’s presence within the self, the community, and the world. New members are taught how to cultivate the discipline of monastic life and to realize that it takes a lifetime of practice to develop fully the skills needed to live life freely and wholeheartedly on the deepest of levels.

No true learning takes place without discipline and without the hard work of stretching beyond one’s comfort level to master complex practices and ideas within a variety of fields. In pursuing academic excellence, a Benedictine institution of higher education strives to shape

¹⁵ Saint Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, 71:1-2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Prologue, 1.

the classroom, laboratory, and studio—as well as social interactions and athletics, service, and leadership programs—so as to model and to call forth personal discipline on the part of students. The goal is to move from a discipline imposed from the outside to a mature self-discipline in which a person possesses a robust love of learning and, in setting his or her own goals, is able to imagine and pursue the steps necessary to achieve those goals. Mount Marty College's value of Life-Long Learning is dependent upon the hallmarks of *conversatio*, discipline, and humility (Illustration #3).

7. Humility: Knowledge of Self in Relation to God, Others, and Creation

Humility is St. Benedict's word for wisdom. He begins his extended description of the twelve degrees of humility by describing awe at the abiding presence of God and ends by depicting a love that casts out fear.¹⁷ Monastics seek an accurate knowledge of self and a pervasive awareness of God's presence in their lives; they seek an attentiveness to their dependence on others and on creation itself. They recognize their limitations without losing hope and accept their gifts without becoming arrogant because the measure of their lives is not found in themselves alone. There is always room for additional personal growth and for the giving of one's self for the good of others.

Time and again, this simple and balanced perspective engages the self-understanding and pursuits of students, faculty, and staff in Benedictine educational institutions. Alone, none of us can learn what we most need to know, nor bring to completion what most needs to be done. We strive to engage the insights and expertise of a wide variety of persons in our educational mission so that each of us can discover what we are good at doing and what we need others' help to achieve. We seek to cultivate the multifaceted exploration of truth in academic disciplines, confident that in a rigorous and wide-ranging pursuit of academic excellence, all participants are freed to discern and to cultivate the gifts they possess, thereby contributing to the wellbeing of all.

8. Stewardship: Responsible Use of Creation, Culture, and the Arts

At its core, the Rule seeks to foster a fundamental reverence toward God's Creation. St. Benedict exhorts his followers to regard *all* the

¹⁷ Saint Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, 7.

tools and goods of the monastery as the sacred vessels of the altar.¹⁸ Benedictine monastics do not simply use up what has been given to them, nor do they aim to live in poverty. Instead, they prize good *stewardship*: the respectful use of material things for the good of all, with special attention to frugality, the integrity of form and function, and the capacity of beauty to communicate the presence and power of God.

In Benedictine educational institutions, we seek to foster awareness that we are part of a larger ecology and that the environment—human as well as nonhuman—has been given by God for the sake of all. We encourage the creative and sustainable use of resources and their just distribution for the good of all. We seek to sharpen awareness of noteworthy past and present contributions to the well-being of society and the earth itself, trying to keep strong the memory and practice of human creativity and generosity. At every turn, we strive to promote the study and practice of the arts, aware of their capacity to bring all to a deeper recognition of the nature and purpose of life itself. Global stewardship is one of the four concepts providing the foundation for the core curriculum at the University of Mary (Illustration #1).

9. Hospitality: Openness to the Other

St. Benedict sees Christ present within the monastery through Scripture and liturgy as well as in the person of the abbot or prioress, in the sick, and in each of the members of the monastic community. However, St. Benedict accords special attention to Christ's unexpected arrival from outside in the person of the guest, whom he describes alternately as poor and as a stranger. Christ presents himself in the outsider's vulnerability and calls the monastic to put aside individual plans and preoccupations in order to let the unexpected person in, to help her get established, to respond to his most pressing needs. When this outsider experiences being "at home" in this new place, for however brief the stay, the monastic discovers new awareness of the common journey in which all are engaged. A blessing accompanies both the offering and the receiving of *hospitality*.¹⁹

Within Benedictine educational institutions, we strive to extend hospitality to each member of the educational community, especially to

¹⁸ Saint Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, 31.10.

¹⁹ See, Aquinata Böckmann, *Perspectives on the Rule of Saint Benedict: Expanding Our Hearts in Christ* (Collegetown, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 163-194.

those new to the community and/or coming from other traditions. More broadly, we seek to cultivate curricular and cocurricular ways to recognize the needs and to call forth the talents and gifts of persons of differing capacities and dispositions, of diverse races, cultures, and backgrounds. The educational community that can result breaks down any residual sense of insiders versus outsiders and manifests an openness to being transformed by engaging deeply with the other be it an idea, a person, or an experience. In Illustration #3, Mount Marty College reflects both hallmarks of stewardship and hospitality in its value of hospitality while the *Cor et Anima* initiative at The College of St. Scholastica calls students to exercise hospitality by being open to all persons (Illustration #2).

10. Community: Call to Serve the Common Good

Benedictine monastic *community* is rooted in a particular place in which mutual service, especially in the mundane areas of everyday life, is demanded of all with no expectation of individual reward. Yet, contributing to a living, flesh and blood community on such terms is a challenge. The qualities of character that are required are nurtured by the individual community's sense of its mission, the witness of monastic forebears, and the broader communion of saints across the ages. The imagination to persevere and to thrive in such a life is enriched through the example of communities across the world—monastic and nonmonastic, Christian and non-Christian, religious and nonreligious—that make sustained practical efforts to foster human wellbeing, often in the face of overwhelming obstacles. Though directly grounded in a particular place, the commitments and aspirations of Benedictine life can only bear fruit if they stretch to horizons that are truly universal.

Benedictine colleges and universities seek to inculcate this practical focus on community building and its profound openness to human history and to global experience. It is our intent to cultivate a focus on the nature of responsible living; such a focus is enriched by local example, grounded in the wisdom of the past, and refreshed by the perspectives of other cultures. We attempt to provide students with a tangible experience of community, deepened by curricular and cocurricular programs, to help them make the connection between the individual and the communal, the local and the global, the present and the past. In so doing, we seek to ensure that students develop the disposition to serve others, near and far, by meeting their most critical needs.

Students at The College of St. Scholastica are expected, through the *Cor et Anima* initiative, to practice the common good in their actions (Illustration #2).

Conclusion

Near the end of his Rule, St. Benedict has the following to say about the spirit that ought to animate the life of monastics:

Just as there is a wicked zeal of bitterness which separates from God and leads to hell, so there is a good zeal which separates from evil and leads to God and everlasting life. This, then, is the good zeal which monks must foster with fervent love: *They should each try to be the first to show respect to the other* (Rom 12:10), supporting with the greatest patience one another's weaknesses of body or behavior, and earnestly competing in obedience to one another. No one is to pursue what he judges better for himself, but instead, what he judges better for someone else. To their fellow monks they show the pure love of brothers; to God, loving fear; to their abbot, unfeigned and humble love. Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ, and may he bring us all together to everlasting life.²⁰

There is an analogous “good zeal” for a Benedictine educational institution. It results from cultivating the hallmarks of Benedictine education—love, prayer, stability, *conversatio*, obedience, discipline, humility, stewardship, hospitality, and community—with wise and carefully directed energy. To be sure, these hallmarks will manifest themselves differently in each Benedictine college and university. Yet, a campus community that keeps renewing its understanding of and fidelity to these hallmarks will provide a lively home for the Catholic Intellectual Tradition in keeping with the culture and spirituality, the core values and hopes of the sponsoring monastery. The graduates of such a school will be able to engage in the promise and peril of their times with confidence, while deepening and expanding the reach of peace, justice, and human dignity throughout their lives. The varied gifts and talents, the passionate commitment, and full support of the entire campus community, as well as the broader human family, make possible an educational experience capable of producing such graduates.

²⁰ Saint Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, 72.

Benedictine Hallmarks Illustration #1—University of Mary

By Diane Fladeland

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The University of Mary was founded in 1959 by the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery in Bismarck, ND, to serve the religious, academic, and cultural needs of the people of the region. Its Christian, Catholic, and Benedictine identity provides a foundation for its service to students, to the Church, and to the larger community. With the influence of Vatican II and the changing demographics in religious communities, the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery took initiative in the late 1980s to strengthen collaboration with their lay colleagues in their sponsored institutions. The University of Mary embraced the Benedictine values of hospitality, respect for persons, moderation, community, service, and prayer for more intentional emphasis. From 1989-1994, corporate faculty workshops addressed one of these values to “create a space where people can flourish.”²¹

A grant proposal was funded by the Bush Foundation (1995-1999) to *Incorporate Benedictine Values in University Curriculum and Instruction through Faculty Development*, with the overarching goal being, “to [e]nsure that graduates of the University of Mary are imprinted with the Benedictine values central to this institution.”²² Summer workshops, cross disciplinary discussion groups, redesign of courses, and orientation of new faculty and staff strove to make Benedictine values explicit. Assessment data confirmed that 30% more of the graduates of these programs increased “the ability to clarify values.”²³ A dissertation completed in 2000 by the chair of the nursing division, Dr. Janet Auer, *In Search of Benedictine Values at a Catholic University: A Historiography of the University of Mary*,²⁴ concluded that values can be and are implemented.

²¹ Fr. Placid Solari, OSB, “Benedictine Values and the Educational Endeavor,” *Heritage in Dialogue* 1, (1992):24.

²² University of Mary, “Incorporate Benedictine Values in University Curriculum and Instruction Through Faculty Development,” Bush Grant, 1995.

²³ University of Mary Annual Assessment Report, 2003.

²⁴ Dr. Janet Auer, “*In Search of Benedictine Values at a Catholic University: A Historiography of the University of Mary*,” (PhD diss., University of North Dakota, November 2000).

A new strategic plan with the vision to “become America’s Leadership University” described the graduate as a servant leader who is “marked by competence in [his/her] chosen profession, courage in making ethical decisions based on Benedictine values, and compassion in serving the needs of others.”²⁵

The explicit goal of preparing servant leaders brought review of the liberal arts curriculum, curricular goals, and outcomes data. Other changes were occurring as well, including new criteria from the Higher Learning Commission, a renewed commitment to understanding Catholic identity in higher education, and the changing global environment. Formative and summative assessment data highlighted strengths and weaknesses of a general education curriculum that had been in place for more than twenty years. The work of the Association of Benedictine Colleges and Universities, including the *Ten Hallmarks of Benedictine Education*, also influenced curricular review.

The University of Mary core curriculum to prepare servant leaders, developed by the office of academic affairs in conjunction with interdisciplinary faculty cohorts and division faculty and chairs, converts definitions and outcomes for servant leadership into a learning experience that reflects the founders’ and sponsors’ mission and philosophy. Four concepts provide the foundation for the core curriculum: spirituality and ethics, global stewardship, communication, and critical thinking. The emphasis of the curricular focus on spirituality and ethics is to “draw upon spiritual, philosophical, religious and Benedictine traditions to express and act upon a principled set of values.”²⁶ Curricular outcomes include “[d]escrib[ing] the relationship between the Benedictine values and the values of other religious traditions” and “[d]escrib[ing] Catholic Social Teaching as it relates to contemporary life.”²⁷ A required theology class provides the scriptural basis for an introduction to the *Rule of St. Benedict*, Benedictine values, servant leadership, and Catholic identity.

The hallmark of stewardship is evident in global stewardship: “Respect and be critically aware of oneself and the diverse world to protect and strengthen natural, cultural, and social environments.”²⁸ Obedience, a commitment to listening and to consequent action, is brought

²⁵ Sr. Thomas Welder, “America’s Leadership University,” University of Mary Convocation, Keynote speech. September 14, 2001.

²⁶ University of Mary white paper, “*Threads of Learning*,” May 2008.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

forward in the concept of communication: “Read, write, listen and speak effectively to gain and share meaning in a diverse world.”²⁹ All core concepts will be threaded through each undergraduate and graduate program, from the new required courses to the courses in professional areas.

As of April 2008, required courses of the University of Mary servant leadership core curriculum include responsible citizenship, cultural anthropology, courses in composition and speaking, computer use, art, mathematics, ethics, and theology. Courses accepted as electives in the core provide breadth and depth within the disciplines of philosophy, theology, math, science, the humanities, and social and behavioral sciences. While the core curriculum credit requirements have not changed significantly, the shift from a general education program that was largely elective to a core that has more than half of the courses required reflects a new intentionality to provide each student the foundation for a Catholic and Benedictine education that prepares servant leaders.

Fifty years after its founding to serve the needs of the people of the region and “to prepare leaders in the service of truth,”³⁰ University of Mary faculty have committed themselves and their programs to ongoing faculty development for mission and for curricular revision of the core and courses within the professional areas. It is a commitment to make explicit the vision of the founding community, the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ University of Mary Bulletin, 2008-2009, p. 4.

Illustration #2—The College of St. Scholastica

By Elizabeth Domholdt

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Ceramic tiles depicting an elephant, owl, squirrel, and phoenix are embedded in the floor of the foyer of Tower Hall, the signature building of The College of St. Scholastica, in Duluth, MN.

Representing the values of strength, wisdom, providence, and rebirth through learning, the tiles go unnoticed by many. In fact, they are often covered by the runner that soaks up boot slush for six months of each year. The tiles—and other more visible signs such as carved Peace Doors and stenciled quotes from the *Rule of St. Benedict* in building entryways—are visual promises that the education at St. Scholastica will reflect the Benedictine heritage of the Sisters who founded the College, the Benedictine heritage made manifest in the values the College has adopted from the tradition: community, hospitality, respect, love of learning, and stewardship.

The most overt curricular expression of the Benedictine hallmarks can be found within three elements of the College's general education program: *Dignitas*, senior seminars, and the "heritage" outcome. *Dignitas*, launched in 2005, is a required two-semester sequence designed to help first-year students make a successful transition from high school to the College. Students study with the same faculty member and group of students for a full year—a form of stability. Although each faculty member gives his or her section a unique twist, whether teaching financial planning or coming-of-age novels, each builds the course around the theme of dignity.

In senior seminars, piloted during the 2008-2009 year, students are asked to reflect on ways that the Benedictine values adopted by the College have influenced their development while at the College and how they might translate into "responsible living and meaningful work" (elements of the College's mission) after graduation. Some of the seminars are within capstone courses in majors such as nursing and psychology; others, such as a recent seminar on "Faith and Reason," are outside the major and attract students from a variety of disciplines. These seminars contain elements of the hallmarks of prayer (especially as it relates to mindfulness) and *conversatio* (as it relates to living life in ways that are both responsible and meaningful).

In February 2009 the faculty adopted a new learning outcome for students at the College. This so-called "heritage" outcome specifies that students at St. Scholastica will (1) articulate the ways they have

experienced the Benedictine values at the College, (2) recognize the Catholic Intellectual Tradition and its role in their experience, (3) contend with academic issues where the tension between reason and faith is present, and (4) analyze critical questions from the perspective of the College's Benedictine heritage and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition. The challenge before the College is to develop our curriculum and our faculty in creative ways to ensure that the intent of this outcome is met.

The most overt cocurricular expression of the Benedictine hallmarks is in *Cor et Anima*, a way of infusing our Benedictine heritage and character into the daily lives and actions of students. Implemented in 2007-2008, this infusion is not an add-on program but instead a way of explicitly articulating the culture we seek to create at the College. The keystone of the program is a statement of expectations:

I freely choose to be a member of the St. Scholastica community. I assume all responsibilities as they relate to my engagement in the greater Scholastica community. I will fully involve myself in all efforts to be formed as an ethical and conscientious individual. I will be faithfully committed to a love of learning, a life of stewardship and daily actions that express a genuine dignity and respect for all persons. I will receive the enrichment of all my gifts and in turn enhance humankind through the practice of the common good. I am Scholastica, heart and soul—*Cor et Anima*.³¹

This statement reflects the Benedictine hallmarks of obedience, discipline, humility, stewardship, hospitality, and community. Displayed in a variety of formats across campus, it is used to orient students to the behavior expected within residence halls and in their approach to their studies. Using the *Cor et Anima* framework, staff who deal with student behavioral incidents have shifted from a rule-oriented to an expectation-oriented paradigm. The number of behavioral incidents in residence halls has been lower during the past two years than in previous years and, more telling, fewer students appeal the fines or disciplinary measures related to the incidents.

Following the founding of The College of St. Scholastica in 1912, the hallmark of our Benedictine education was its delivery by Benedictine Sisters who were living witnesses to the tradition. Today, our largely lay faculty and staff represent the Benedictine tradition and its educational hallmarks—living up to the promises implied by the elephant, the owl, the squirrel, and the phoenix—through programs and approaches such as *Dignitas* and *Cor et Anima*.

³¹ *Cor et Anima* Statement of Becoming. The College of St. Scholastica; Duluth, MN, 2007. Available at: <http://www.css.edu/Administration/Student-Affairs/Cor-et-Anima.html>.

Illustration #3—Mount Marty College

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Mount Marty College, Yankton, SD. Mount Marty College is a Catholic,
Benedictine, liberal arts college.

In the early 1990s, Mount Marty College (MMC) identified four core values, based on the spirit of the Gospel, that speak to the heart of the college. In the MMC Mission Principles and Guidelines Manual it states:

Values[,] more than any other element, are the ‘heart and soul’ of an institution. They provide stability in times of change, forbearance in the face of challenge, and nourishment to strengthen performance. It is important to define explicitly those values that reflect what our institution stands for: what we believe in and what we expect from ourselves and each other and, perhaps most importantly, what we aspire to be.³²

The MMC core values that provide guidance and direction in our daily lives and our ministry to the students include Awareness of God, Community, Hospitality, and Life-Long Learning.

Recently the Association Benedictine College and University (ABCU) presidents identified ten core values that flow out of the *Rule of St. Benedict* and are essential to Benedictine institutions of higher learning. They endorsed these as the 10 Hallmarks of Benedictine Education. After reviewing these hallmarks, Mount Marty College determined that these hallmarks should become a part of the existing core values of the College. The ABCU Hallmarks of love of Christ and neighbor and prayer are an expression of the MMC value of Awareness of God. The ABCU Hallmarks of community, stability, and obedience are an essential part of the MMC value of Community. The ABCU Hallmarks of hospitality and stewardship are reflected in the MMC value of Hospitality. The MMC value of Life-Long Learning is dependent upon the ABCU Hallmarks of *conversatio*, discipline, and humility.

These ABCU Hallmarks of Benedictine Tradition have been incorporated into the existing core values of Mount Marty College. These have been introduced to the faculty, staff, and students during the current academic year (2009-2010). In addition, each faculty and staff member has been asked to reflect on these values and to set a goal related

³² *MMC Mission Principles and Guidelines Manual* (2010), 13.

to the MMC core values and ABCU Hallmarks of Benedictine Education. These goals will be reviewed at the end of this, and henceforth each proceeding, academic year.

The core values of Mount Marty College are also an integral part of student orientations and activities throughout the year. We hope that these core values will continue to permeate the environment and interactions among faculty, staff, and students. They are “what we believe in and what we expect from ourselves and each other and, perhaps most importantly, what we aspire to be.”³³

³³ Ibid.