Community Living is an Essential Learning Experience

Living in community is essential to the full development and education of the whole person. The Marianist tradition values community living as the practical way in which Christians learn to live the Gospel, striving to love God, neighbor and self in daily life. In fact, all people, regardless of religious belief or faith tradition, learn essential life lessons such as self-awareness, communication, cooperation, mutual respect, courage, forgiveness, patience and trust from living in community with others.

The climate of acceptance that Marianists call family spirit presumes an attention to the quality of relationships among the people in the community. At the level of daily interaction, all members of the community treat each other with respect and speak with simplicity and openness. Over the long term, these daily habits acknowledge the value and dignity of every member of the community, and create the ground in which genuine friendships can flourish.\(^1\)

However, building community requires more than friendliness, and is certainly about more than following rules:

Such a vision of community and friendship runs the risk of being romanticized. It must therefore be recalled that friendliness and hospitality are genuine expressions of a process that necessarily includes conflict, division, and all manner of human suffering and failing. Yet, those grounded in the Marianist vision of education recognize that only precisely out of this mix of joy and sorrow can genuine communities be formed.\(^2\)

This genuine community requires maturity, commitment, self-sacrifice, and hard work. Through this kind of learning, UD students are more able to become people of great character and integrity who are prepared for assuming the responsibility of being romanticized. It must therefore be recalled that friendliness and hospitality are genuine expressions of a community as a whole. Our decisions and actions affect people on our floor, residence hall, house, campus, city, country, and ultimately the world community.

The Dignity of Every Person

This Marianist vision of community living is founded on the conviction that every person has innate dignity because all people are made in the image and likeness of God:

All women and men are endowed with a rational soul and are created in God’s image; they have the same nature and origin and, being redeemed by Christ, they enjoy the same divine calling and destiny; there is here a basic equality between all and it must be accorded ever greater recognition.\(^3\)

This awareness calls us not only to respect ourselves and others, but to love ourselves and all people because of the human dignity each of us receives from God. Respect and love for self include making personal, social, and academic decisions that preserve and improve one’s own dignity and well-being. Loving others includes the particular challenge to love and to respect those who are different from us. The presence of a wide range of perspectives, opinions, beliefs — and the diverse people who represent them — enhance the depth of the UD community and the ability of students to integrate the academic, religious, cultural, and social elements of their lives. The University Statement on Dignity states clearly:

A primary assertion of both our religious and civil traditions is the inviolable dignity of each person. Recognition of and respect for the person are central to our life as a Christian and educational community and are what allow us to pursue our common mission while being many diverse persons.\(^4\)

The Common Good

The Catholic emphasis on the common good, another principle which shapes community living at UD, emerges from this conviction about the human dignity of all people. The common good is “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.”\(^5\) This emphasis on the common good shapes values very differently from secular culture, which typically gives the freedom of the individual greater importance than the needs of others. A concern for the common good leads us to make individual choices in light of how they affect other people and the community as a whole. Our decisions and actions affect people on our floor, residence hall, house, campus, city, country, and ultimately the world community.

Furthermore, we are called to work actively to create and promote the common good at UD and beyond. This may involve challenging behavior which is harmful to others, or working to change unjust social structures which inhibit people from reaching their fulfillment.

1. Characteristics of Marianist Universities: A Resource Paper (Chaminade University of Honolulu, St. Mary’s University, University of Dayton, 1999), 36.
2. Ibid, 38.
Habits for Community Living at UD

Through participation in the distinctive living and learning community at UD, students accept the challenge of moral development which will prepare them to live as mature members of a pluralistic society. There are certain attitudes and behaviors which stand out as effective means to internalize, live out and to exemplify this Catholic and Marianist vision of community. Growth in these areas is a life-long process. As members of this community, every UD student is responsible for understanding, developing and integrating the following practices and habits into their lives.

Take responsibility for integrating learning and living at UD
How can I make the most out of my time at UD – academically, spiritually, socially, personally?
- **Learn** about the Catholic and Marianist views of life, which shape UD’s values.
- **Inform** and integrate your faith, beliefs, and moral living with your academic learning and living experiences.
- **Participate** in the quest for wisdom and lifelong learning, not just job skill development.
- **Seek out** mentors who will affirm and challenge you.

Develop your faith life
Am I willing to be a part of a faith tradition that is larger and wiser than me?
- **Take time** to reflect, to pray alone and with others, and to worship.
- **Reflect** often about how faith contributes meaning to and challenges your everyday life.
- **Study** your religious tradition to deepen your understanding, practice and commitment to it.
- **Seek growth** in awareness, respect and understanding of the religious traditions of others.

Be honest, truthful, and live with integrity
How are my choices helping me to become the kind of person I want to be?
- **Model** moral behavior and virtue.
- **Exercise** academic integrity.
- **Speak up** when you witness alcohol abuse, drug use, violence, vandalism and behaviors that harm people and damage community.

Treat yourself with respect
Do I respect myself? How does my behavior show it?
- **Seek** relationships that bring out the best in you and others.
- **Make choices** (e.g. about: alcohol, sex, drugs, integrity) which are healthy for you and consistent with your faith tradition and values.
- **Follow** the law. Don’t abuse alcohol or controlled substances.

Treat others with respect
How do my behavior and choices affect the people around me?
- **Practice** the Christian imperative to love your neighbor as yourself.
- **Be considerate** of the safety, comfort, and health of others.
- **Honor** the sexual integrity of others with your actions and words.
- **Challenge** behavior which is insulting, demeaning, harmful or destructive.

The family spirit of campus life at UD depends on the commitment each member of the university makes to the shared set of principles and habits for living represented here. In the joys and the struggles of forming genuine community, students are reminded to draw upon campus resources and the support of faculty, staff and other students to make every situation a positive learning opportunity.