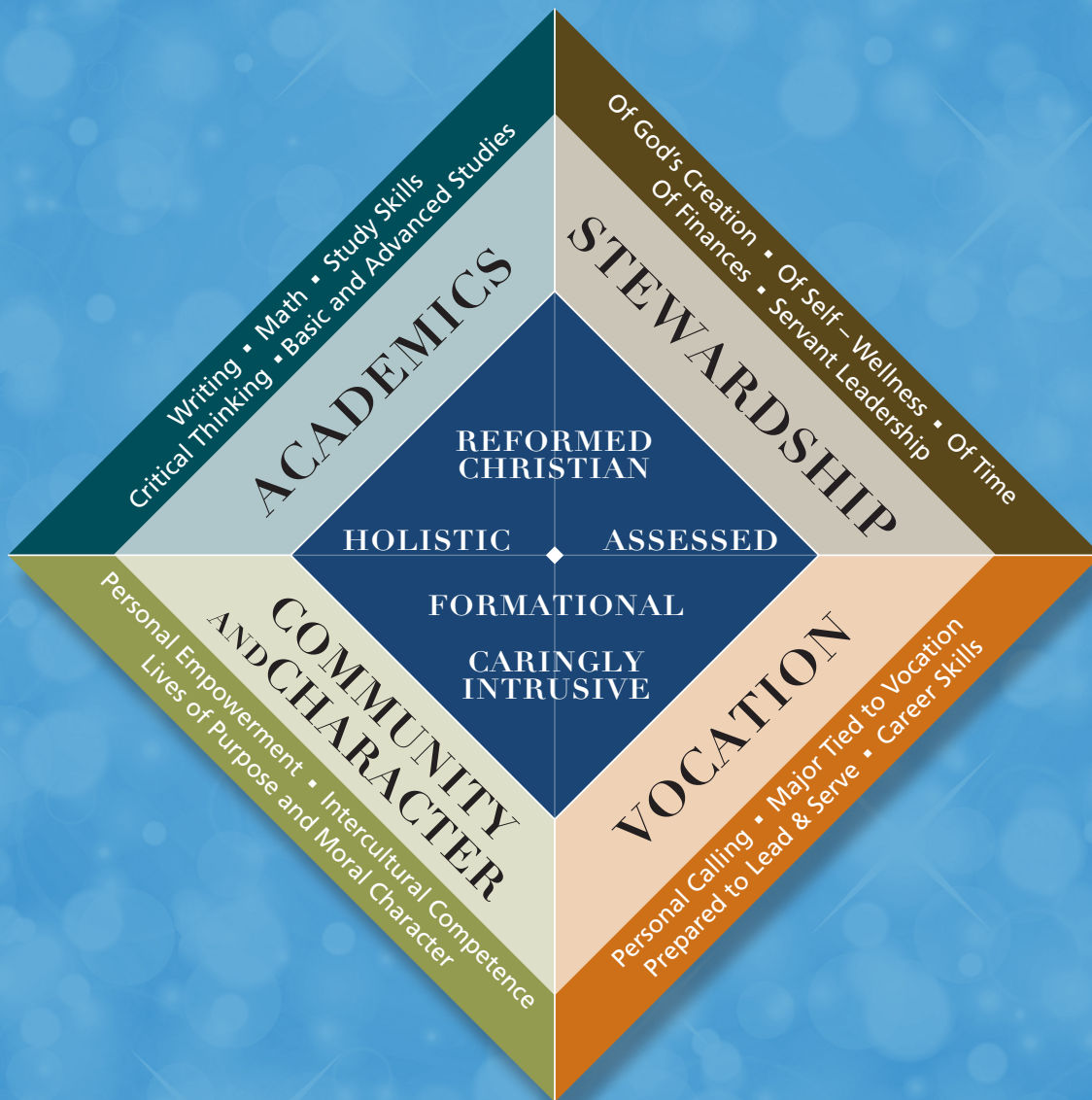


# Diamond: A Comprehensive Educational Model™

*Achieving Excellence at the University of Dubuque*



UNIVERSITY of DUBUQUE

# Diamond: A Comprehensive Educational Model™

## *Achieving Excellence at the University of Dubuque*

By: John Stewart, PhD, Special Assistant to the President



It's October 2003, and UD Trustees are gathered in the new Romona Myers Teaching Center to hear President Bullock describe "the first serious fork in the road to renewal" since the 1998 *Mission-Vision-Action Plan* was adopted. UD has progressed far enough into the transformation process to know that the standards laid out in the plan are very high. One of the hardest nuts to crack is the *Vision* section's lead-off affirmation that "The University of Dubuque will be acknowledged as one of the best small, private Christian colleges and universities."

The President announces that it will take \$32 million a year for the next 5 years to achieve this goal. Trustees believe in the *Mission*, but many wonder if it can really be done. One comments, "It seems to me we could be very successful or have a chance at success if we did something in stages where it doesn't seem so overwhelming in terms of the numbers."

"I understand your concerns," the President responds. "How about eliminating that most difficult word, 'best'? How many are in favor of changing this part of the *Vision* to read, 'Acknowledged as a pretty good small, private Christian university?'"

Nobody wants to follow that path. As one Trustee puts it, "I have no desire to be a part of just one more small, mediocre university. I say that we continue forging ahead."

Five years later, UD had achieved all the goals set by the original document, except for the Performing Arts Center. So we knew it was possible to meet even outrageously high expectations.

### **WHAT DOES "BEST" MEAN?**

But our considerable success didn't answer the central question: What exactly do we mean by "best"? Traditional higher education standards define "best" in terms of *US News and World Report* rankings, ACT and SAT test scores, and grade point averages. According to this model, the "best" schools are the ones ranked highest by high school counselors and college

deans, and those with the most academically gifted students, most famous faculty, and largest endowments. These schools tend to be populated by upper middle-class, predominantly Caucasian students from mostly nuclear families. If you read the alumni magazines from many small, private schools, you'll discover that a large percentage continue to define "best" this way.

But the *US News* and other traditional rankings have been strongly criticized for being biased, prestige-based, and for ignoring such key factors as community service and social mobility<sup>1</sup>. Even more importantly, as early as 2000, UD was well aware that US higher education was changing in ways that challenge many traditional beliefs.

The vast majority of 21st century students and their families are very different from 20th century populations. For example, the widely-documented increase in ethnic diversity in the U.S. means that more and more students of color want a college degree. And this is true not just on the coasts; Hispanics make up the fastest-growing population in Iowa.

Academic preparation is also changing. Several years ago, the ACT organization began reporting that up to 80 percent of the high school seniors who take its test nationally are underprepared in some ways for the college experience, regardless of their scores. Eighty percent! And this continues to be true.

The social mobility picture of 21st century students and their families is changing, too. Increasing numbers of students eligible for Pell-grants are applying for college, which means that private and public student loans are increasingly important, and as federal and state governments continue to cut back support for education, the debt load of many graduates is growing alarmingly. Schools are challenged to make higher education affordable for increasing numbers of students who have the most to gain socioeconomically.

In addition, first-generation students are applying in ever-larger numbers, bringing more challenges for both academic affairs and student life. These students often work 35 to 40

hours a week, a reality that affects both their study time and how they interact with student life programming. First-generation students also tend to have leadership positions in their families, which often means that, when there's trouble at home, they have to leave school to help.

As if this weren't enough, the exploding popularity of smart phones, texting, and social media means that new students from all socioeconomic and cultural groups are displaying the effects of media multitasking<sup>2</sup>. These include reduced critical thinking skills and increasingly underdeveloped motivation and ability to read, which by any measure has traditionally been *the* key academic skill.

These fundamental demographic changes mean that the traditional model of higher education no longer applies, and this requires re-thinking what "best" means. In the 21st century, there will continue to be a small population of highly-prepared students who succeed in traditional schools that focus exclusively on traditional academics in traditional ways. But, if 80 percent of the students are in some way underprepared, then the best universities will be those that both reward traditional excellence and best help this population overcome their challenges. If increasing numbers of students are the first in their family to attend college, then the best schools will be those that most effectively welcome and support this population. If most students are digitally-engaged but weak readers, the best institutions will be those that effectively develop critical thinking, media literacy, and excellent written and oral communication skills with this population. Universities can no longer be "best" by continuing to do only what higher education has done since the 18th century. Specifically, these demographic realities have taught us that 21st century college and university students need:

- ◆ Holistic education that combines both academic and formational learning
- ◆ More acculturation to college
- ◆ More resources to develop math, reading, and writing competencies
- ◆ More development of their emotional intelligence
- ◆ More multicultural competence to deal effectively with the differences they encounter
- ◆ More varied learning— rather than only teaching-based classrooms and labs



- ◆ More caring intrusiveness
- ◆ Accountable, thoroughly assessed programming.

The Diamond Initiative captures UD's comprehensive philosophy of education by spelling out how we respond to these needs in order to continue on our way to becoming "one of the best."

### **THE DIAMOND INITIATIVE AND THE WENDT INITIATIVE**

Like the Wendt Initiative, the Diamond Initiative is an effort to shape aspects of everything all of us do at UD—students, faculty, and staff. Both initiatives are ways to focus UD efforts to make a difference in the lives of everybody here, and both are ways to develop distinctive features of UD's culture—our "brand."

The Wendt Initiative promotes "intellectual understanding of, and personal commitment to, leading lives of purpose and excellent moral character." Wendt programming is designed to help students, faculty, staff, and trustees pursue this goal.

As UD's excellence initiative, the Diamond Initiative clarifies that UD intends to be "best" at responding to the

<sup>1</sup> For example, [www.nytimes.com/2012/09/29/opinion/nocera-the-silly-list-everyone-cares-about.html/](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/29/opinion/nocera-the-silly-list-everyone-cares-about.html/), and [www.washingtonmonthly.com/college\\_guide/](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/college_guide/)  
<sup>2</sup> [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/05/110502084444.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/05/110502084444.htm)

needs just summarized by developing, delivering, and assessing programming that has five primary features:

### FIVE FEATURES OF THE DIAMOND INITIATIVE

- ◆ **Reformed Christian**– Our theological commitments as a Christian university in the Presbyterian tradition frame all these features. We affirm that:
  - God is the creator of all things, and “reflecting the image of God” means that humans are intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical beings (holism and individualization);
  - Brokenness exists in every area of creation, and by God’s grace, we are empowered to choose the good (holism and character-focus);
  - Through the atoning work of Jesus Christ, human beings, societies, and the natural world are being liberated from brokenness and restored to wholeness (hope-filled engagement with the world);
  - It is our task to respond to God’s redemptive work with lives of grateful service (commitments to leadership and service).
- ◆ **Holistic**– Consistent especially with the first two elements of Reformed Christianity, we strive to educate the whole person. Academics are, of course, a key element of Diamond programming. We also intentionally develop learning in Stewardship, Community and Character, and Vocation (see diagram at right). A completely-developed Diamond University has mature programming in all four of these areas.
- ◆ **Formational**– We are committed not only to educating but also to helping form persons, specifically by developing in all stakeholders:
  - Character and ethics
  - Personal empowerment
  - Multicultural competence
  - Servant leadership
  - Learning vs. instructional pedagogies.
- ◆ **Caringly intrusive**– We care about students, faculty, and staff too much to leave them alone. Our programming is, wherever appropriate, intentionally intrusive.
- ◆ **Assessed**– We measure outcomes in all areas and use what we learn to continuously improve the quality of our programming.

The picture of a Diamond University that emerges from these five commitments looks like this:



The diamond shape indicates quality. The broad scope of Diamond thinking enhances the experience of every UD stakeholder—students, faculty, staff, administration, trustees. At the center are the five core features that promote excellence and that shape learning opportunities throughout the University. Student learning opportunities are central, of course. But the job descriptions for faculty, security personnel, residence hall staff, and support staff also identify learning outcomes related to academics, stewardship, vocation, community, and character. As a result, the Diamond Initiative includes faculty and staff professional development opportunities to strengthen each area. To cite just one example, in late 2012, education faculty members completed Intercultural Competence Leadership training offered by the City of Dubuque.

# Community & Character: Job-one—Across the Campus

By Mick Miyamoto, PhD, Vice President and Dean of Students

In his article titled “Student Learning Outside the Classroom: Transcending Artificial Boundaries,” University of Indiana student learning researcher George Kuh, recommends that two crucial ways institutions can best enhance student learning are by:

“(a) break[ing] down barriers between various units (e.g., academic departments, administrative services, student affairs) and (b) creat[ing] situations in which students examine the connections between their studies and life outside the classroom and to apply what they are learning.”

UD’s administration, faculty, and staff understand that in order to deliver on our pledge to educate the whole person, it is imperative for us to build partnerships among all of our personnel. The principle from which we operate is that student *learning* is the focus; not *instruction*. With students generally taking 15 to 17 credit hours of course work per week during an academic term, the question that begs to be asked is, “What sort of environments and interventions are created to enhance learning during the other 153 – 155 hours of their week?”

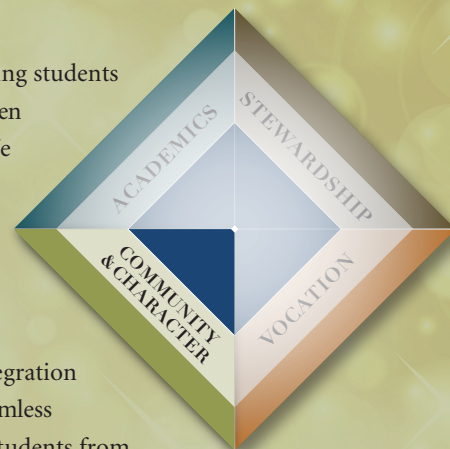
Here are just a few examples of collaborative efforts on campus designed to meet our challenge of delivering a holistic education:

- ◆ **Advising**– Academic Affairs and Student Life established a task force to identify issues and improve the quality of academic advising. Recommendations were made and implemented leading to the creation of the Associate Dean of Academic Advising position. This individual addresses

the needs of all incoming students who have not yet chosen an academic major. We plan to extend this partnership to include TRIO program advisors as well as Career Services professionals. This integration will help provide a seamless environment for our students from matriculation to graduation.

- ◆ **New Student Orientation**– Led by Student Activities staff, a revamped New Student Orientation was designed in 2011 and delivered in fall 2012. Faculty teaching in the World View Seminar series played an integral role as the Orientation activities and sessions became a required portion of the course. Assessment results indicate that this initiative was a major success. And as the literature points out, Orientation programs, especially those that help students establish a meaningful connection with an “adult” figure on campus (faculty or staff), powerfully improve retention and promote student success.
- ◆ Faculty and staff embrace our responsibility to be a community that is “caringly intrusive.” Our Campus Mom, Mental Health Counselors, and Residence Life staff consistently receive messages from academic colleagues, food service, custodial staff, and administrators when they are concerned about any one of our students. This over-arching sense of compassion and trust has led to responses or interventions that have positive effects on the lives of our students.

I’m proud to be a staff member at the University of Dubuque and proud of the fact that we have a culture on campus that is cooperative, collaborative, and creative. The task of creating environments that contribute to the formation of students will forever be a challenge, but with the spirit of our entire staff here it makes the work a joy.





## A WORK IN PROGRESS

Diamond thinking pulls together commitments that have grown out of many different university experiences.

**Caring Intrusiveness**— In 1998, Vice Presidents of Enrollment Management Peter and Susan Smith and Dean of Admission Jesse James determined that most first-generation and under-served student applicants and their families lacked detailed knowledge of university admission procedures, financial aid options, registration procedures, housing possibilities, and academic calendars. As a result, these student populations needed to be carefully shepherded through the admission process with multiple telephone calls, mailings, and personal contacts. The “caringly intrusive” procedures that UD admission counselors developed had to be adjusted early in next decade as email replaced snail-mail, and then changed again around 2008 when applicants began ignoring email in favor of texting. So it’s a moving target, but today we know that caring intrusiveness is a key part of success, not only with new students but also with every member of the UD community who experiences difficulty.

Other higher education leaders also recognize the importance of caring intrusiveness. The Lumina Foundation,

which is the nation’s largest foundation dedicated exclusively to increasing student access to, and success in, postsecondary education, identifies this feature—they call it “providing an intrusive and intensive college experience”—as critical to success with most 21st century students.<sup>3</sup>

Today, the “UD Cares Team” applies the principle of caring intrusiveness to undergraduate students. Since abundant research shows the correlation between class attendance and retention, faculty teaching first- and second-year courses take roll. When students are consistently absent, faculty notify the UD Cares Team, who contact the student in order to work the problems that are keeping him or her from class.

Caring intrusiveness is also a hallmark of the Bridge program, a feature of the athletic program’s approach to coaching, and a key element of the programming offered through the Academic Success Center.

### **Blowing on Sparks: UD’s Holistic Honors Program—**

In the late 1990s, Dean James also learned to spot talented and capable students who were under-motivated and often under-served in high school, but who were ready for extra college-level academic and leadership challenges and eager to be engaged on campus. In collaboration with the Office of Admission, Professors Paul Jensen and Henry Grubb helped a group of college faculty and administration to develop a 21st century honors program that emphasizes not only academic excellence but also critical thinking, communication competence, and leadership effectiveness. Today, in the capable hands of Criminal Justice Professor Ben Bartels, UD’s Scholar-Leader Program (SLP) is rewarding highly-motivated students with special coursework, enriched off-campus learning opportunities, expanded one-on-one time with faculty, and certification as a Scholar-Leader. The SLP is an important part of Diamond programming.

UD is also developing additional ways to keep high-performing students engaged. For example, in 2011, the Chlapaty Science Research Fellowship Program provided support for selected students to do advanced work in the sciences by providing compensation for summer research to offset what students would have earned from a summer job. In the first year of this program, Chlapaty Science Fellows met or exceeded the research goals established for their fellowships, gave 16 research presentations at scientific conferences, improved their readiness to take the Graduate

<sup>3</sup> (See Giegerich, S. (2012) “CUNY’s Newest College is Forming ASAP,” Lumina Foundation Focus, Summer 2012, p. 4.)

Record Exam by an average of 36 percent, increased their network of professional contacts outside UD by more than 300 percent, and shared their research at the offices of Iowa Senators Grassley and Harkin and Representative Braley. Chlapaty Science Fellow Melissa Englert was chosen as the only undergraduate student in the nation to take part in the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Capitol Hill Day, where she contributed to a presentation about science funding to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services. In 2013, the program doubled in size and was open to students across the College and the Seminary.

**Watering Saplings (First-Year Focus)**– The demographic realities already reviewed show that a high percentage of new students don't know their way around the college experience. If they're first-generation students or they belong to a traditionally under-served population, many haven't been involved in family conversations about semester hours, majors, residence life, or academic calendars. If they're Pell grant-eligible, economic realities may have kept them from planning to continue school. If they're under-achievers, they may have decided to attend college only recently. Many can be confused, disappointed, surprised, and intimidated by the first months of university life. A high percentage drop out.

## Vocation: Forming Leaders Willing—and Able—to Shape the Future

By Ben Bartels, JD, Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice; Director of the Scholar Leader Program

UD's Scholar Leader Program (SLP) is an innovative approach to honors programming in higher education. Honors programs typically restrict membership to students with the highest test scores and grade point averages, a practice which favors those from only some high schools, socioeconomic groups, and cultures. The SLP's mission is to develop not only the intellectual and academic, but also the leadership and communication skills of high-achieving students. Each SLP course is specifically designed to hone students' critical thinking and communication abilities. As SLP Program Director Professor Ben Bartels explains, "The SLP is about creating dynamic classroom experiences for our students. The program invites students to examine issues from a fresh perspective. I really want to push our students to

think both critically and creatively. I believe students respond best when their opinions are valued, and when they have control in the learning process."

Vincent Obah, a senior criminal justice major from Chicago, finds the approach effective: "For me, the Scholar Leader Program has been the best organization that I have been a part of on campus. In particular, the Social Justice course has been vital in my progression as a student. The course has challenged me to become a better writer, speaker, and critical thinker. It is preparing me for the next phase of my education." The Social Justice course culminates with students participating in a formal debate on gun control before a community-wide audience at the end of the semester.

The SLP's vision is to create individuals who are not only ready, but *willing* to shape the future. "I believe one of the unique features of the SLP is our emphasis on developing leaders. To our administration's credit, they recognized that many individuals lack necessary leadership skills. They made it clear that they wanted a program that addressed this need," Bartels notes. To this end, the SLP requires participants both to take a leadership course and to hold a leadership position within their community before they graduate. As one SLP participant remarked in a survey, "I enjoy [The SLP] because I love to be challenged. I've been surprised to find out how much I'm truly capable of and how I can make a difference."



This is why programming at UD that is designed to increase retention and persistence focuses on first-year students. South Carolina's National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition has developed best practices for first-year retention programming<sup>4</sup>. Syracuse University distinguished professor of education Vincent Tinto also links retention and first-year programming in his essay, "Taking Student Retention Seriously: Rethinking the First-Year of College." Tinto explains that the best programming sets high expectations, provides comprehensive support, offers consistent feedback, encourages involvement, and develops relevant learning<sup>5</sup>.

UD applies insights from these national efforts in many Diamond-supported first-year programs, including New Student Orientation, First-Year Academic Advising, Linked Course Registration, Bridge, and UD Cares. All are early-intervention programs to help first-year students stay in school so they can complete their degrees.

**Personal Empowerment**— This term labels an academic and experiential curriculum to develop both personal competence—self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation, and social competence—empathy and relationship management. It was originally developed by Twin Cities RISE!, a highly-successful poverty reduction program in Minneapolis-St. Paul. Founder Steve Rothschild discusses TC RISE! generally and personal empowerment specifically in his 2012 book, *The Non Nonprofit: For-Profit Thinking for Nonprofit Success*. He explains that personal empowerment is what distinguishes TC RISE! from similar programs, and attributes a great deal of the organization's success to this kind of skill development<sup>6</sup>.

This training empowers participants, for example, to understand the links among feelings, thoughts, and actions; present themselves with confidence; manage impulsive feelings; build trust through authenticity and reliability; meet commitments; consider fresh perspectives; commit to a larger purpose; persist in seeking goals; be attentive to others' emotional cues; mentor effectively; and accurately read key power relationships. Research has shown personal empowerment skills to be critical to professional success, interpersonal effectiveness, and physical and psychological well-being.

Currently, Director of Personal Empowerment Liza Johnson leads a team of five certified facilitators to offer personal empowerment programming in regular, 24-hour workshops for faculty and staff and a 3-credit course for undergraduates. We use a nationally-standardized instrument, the RYFF-84, to measure the outcomes of this programming, and the pre- to post-test results are consistently encouraging. This test measures changes in six key elements of well-being: personal growth, autonomy, purpose in life, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, and self-acceptance. The 2013 spring semester findings showed significant improvement in five of the six measures. We are using this assessment data to fine-tune both the workshop and the course.

**Multicultural Competence**— The demographic reality of ever-increasing cultural diversity means that all 21st century learners will need to be able to work effectively with people who are different from themselves. Many campus programs already help develop multicultural competence, including coursework in communication, Student Life programming led by the directors of international studies and of multicultural student engagement, student organizations such as the Black Student Union (BSU), diversity training offered to education majors, and the Faculty Multicultural Advisory Committee.

A multicultural competence approach to inclusion and diversity is anchored in a developmental, educational model rather than a traditional affirmative action or civil rights approach.

This programming is being designed and implemented by a diverse committee of UD faculty and staff including Alice Oleson (Sociology and Criminal Justice), Henry Grubb (Psychology), Lauren Alleyne (English), Angela Brandel (Education), Mishereen Ellis (Student Life), and Quincy Bufkin (Residence Life). This group is combining opportunities for learning about multiculturalism with invitations to explore and practice intentional, moral actions that respond to both global and local challenges. In the future, Multicultural Competence Training will also be offered to increasing numbers of UD faculty and staff.

**Servant Leadership**— As noted above, Reformed Christian theology calls everyone in the UD community to leadership and to programming that strengthens leadership abilities. The approach most consistent with UD's *Mission* is called

<sup>4</sup> (<http://www.sc.edu/fye/>)

<sup>5</sup> <http://faculty.soe.syr.edu/vtinto/Files/Taking%20Student%20Retention%20Seriously.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Rothschild also discusses UD's delivery of personal empowerment content on pp. 137-139.



# Stewardship: Everything is Held in Trust

By Peg Kerr, Associate Professor and Nursing Department Head

In their first semester as UD nursing students, Brittany Stombaugh and Laura Menta were part of classroom groups that created YouTube videos. Brittany's group produced, "Are You At Risk for Type II Diabetes?" Other student productions included "The ABCDs of Skin Cancer," "Self-Breast Exam," and "Testicular Self-Exam," which was produced by two male nursing students.

Professor Crista Weber's assignment was designed to focus the class on helping patients and clients preserve and enhance their own well-being. Laura commented, "You know, that was fun. Getting involved and interactive with a video project makes it more worthwhile. As nurses we are in the perfect position to raise awareness with our patients about being and staying healthy."

The assignment these students completed is part of our Nursing program's engagement with UD's *Mission* commitment to the "stewardship of God's human and natural resources." Historically, nurse educators have focused on teaching students how to manage illness. This is still important, but increasingly, our emphasis is on helping students teach their clients to remain healthy. In addition to training nurses to take vital signs, dress wounds, and administer medication, the UD Nursing program empowers students to "optimize patient, family, and population health and self-care"; in other words, to enhance patients' stewardship of health.

Second semester UD nursing students take a obstetrics and pediatrics class that also focuses on health stewardship. A major learning activity in this course is based on the Healthy



People 2020 initiative, a government project which provides 10-year national objectives for improving the health of all Americans ([www.HealthyPeople.gov](http://www.HealthyPeople.gov)). Students write a paper in which they identify some health disparities among the child-bearing, child-rearing, and pediatric populations and examine evidence-based recommendations to meet the over-arching health outcome goals of Healthy People 2020. In these ways, students learn to see their role as a steward of health in a broader sense, one that goes beyond individuals to encompass families and entire populations.

Students who feel called to serve others by caring for them, and in so doing, help them to optimize their own health by learning how to care for themselves, exemplify stewardship of God's creation.



servant leadership, as developed by the research, training, and practices of Robert K. Greenleaf and his associates ([www.greenleaf.org](http://www.greenleaf.org)). Greenleaf explains that a servant leader is someone who is servant first, who feels responsible to contribute to the well-being of people and community. A servant leader looks first to the needs of the people and asks how to help them to solve problems and promote personal

development? Consistent with guidelines for leaders in Isaiah 42: 1-4, Mark 9: 34-37, and Philippians 2: 4-16, this leader places the main focus on people, because only content and motivated people are able to reach their targets and to fulfill the set expectations.

Faculty-staff reading groups met in Fall 2011 to discuss servant leadership principles as they are explained in Sipe &

Frick's *The Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership*, and plans are underway to expand these opportunities. Servant Leadership is also an important element of UD's Scholar-Leader Program.

**Bridge Program**— In 2007, a Retention Task Force made up of representatives from administration, faculty, student life, athletics, and academic support, recommended the adoption

of 22 programs focused on Academic Excellence, Vocation and Career, Community, and Stewardship. Launched under Education Professor Marta Abele's leadership, the Bridge Program was a key feature of these recommendations, and it was shaped to follow research-based best practices for retention of underprepared students. The program enables students to

## Academics: Centered on Student Success

By Marta Abele, PhD, Associate Professor of Education;  
Director of the Bridge Program

When Jose Hernandez entered UD in the fall of 2008, his ACT score and high school gpa qualified him for the Bridge Program. Four years later, Jose graduated with a degree in Sociology/Criminal Justice and is now in graduate school in Illinois. How could a student with these initial scores have this much success? It's partly about determination and character. As he put it, "...I know [that] it's not going to be easy. If it was, then everybody would be doing it. I'm willing to do anything that's going to benefit me in my future. I want to be somebody in life, and not have to struggle."

UD's Bridge program was built on research-based best practices for student retention. These include an emphasis on building faculty and peer relationships, filling any gaps in basic skills, participation in campus activities, and inspiring academic confidence. As Bridge Program Director Dr. Marta Abele explains, "We believe that a particular number may not necessarily reflect who you are or what you can accomplish in life if given some extra support. The Bridge Program offers a selected cohort of first-year students an opportunity to prove that they have what it takes to earn a college degree. Those who have taken advantage of all the supportive resources on campus are indeed flourishing, showing that their strengths and abilities are, in fact, beyond what any number or test score implies. The program is working!"

The numbers support Dr. Abele's evaluation. Fall semester, 2012, 76 percent of the Bridge students had a 2.0 or higher gpa for their first college semester, and 16 percent of the cohort earned Dean's List recognition with a 3.5 or higher gpa. This pattern has been typical over the past several academic years. Over the four years for which we have data, the Bridge program has improved the 5-year graduation

rate of this high-risk cohort of students from 24 percent to 40 percent.

Bridge student comments identify several reasons for this kind of success:

"I am very glad that so many people are very supportive and helpful on campus. Nobody knows how much it means to feel so comfortable around campus and in the classroom."

"The Reading and Study Skills class helped me find ways to study better and remember what I studied the next day."

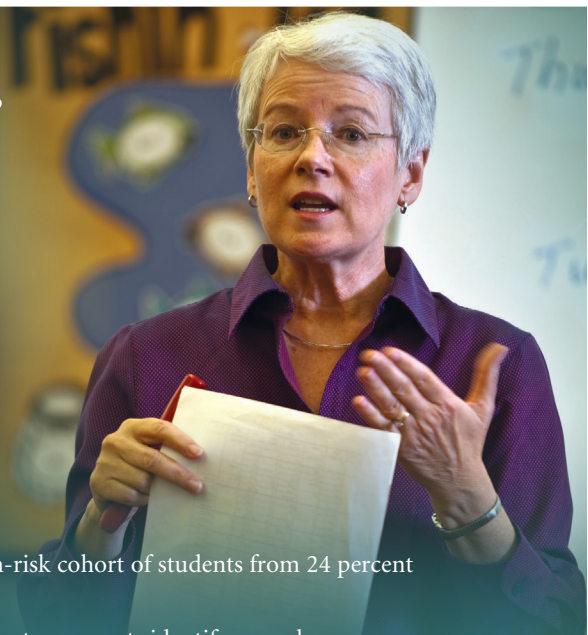
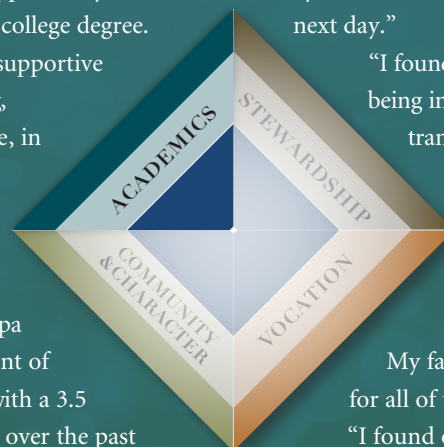
"I found the friendly atmosphere beneficial when being introduced to college life. It made the transition easier."

"The mentors are very friendly and helpful. Having people close to my age made me feel more comfortable being a part of the school."

"I never thought I would be in college.

My family is so proud of me. I want to do this for all of them."

"I found out who will be there to help me when I need it. I saw that I can succeed."



bridge the gaps that may exist between their preparation for college and the expectations of their professors. It includes programming to build faculty and peer relationships, improve basic skills, promote engagement with campus activities, and build academic confidence.

The first Bridge cohort entered the University in fall 2008. The program expanded to include a Summer Bridge experience from 2009-2011. Program assessment and student feedback, especially from the summer program, clearly indicated which specific elements were most successful in supporting new students. As a result of this data analysis, New Student Orientation for all incoming first-year students now includes several elements that proved successful with Bridge students.

Each semester, some Bridge students have earned a remarkable 4.0 gpa, and every Bridge cohort since 2008 has averaged well above the college's minimum 2.0 gpa requirement. Bridge students highly praise the program, and, although data is limited, the 4.5 year graduation rate for Bridge students is twice as high as the graduation rate for this same demographic before the Bridge program was offered.

### **ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBUQUE**

The call to “be acknowledged as one of the best small, private Christian colleges and universities” is a daunting challenge to every University of Dubuque stakeholder who takes our *Mission* seriously. Fortunately, UD has been among the first institutions to successfully confront the demographic changes that make this challenge pressing and difficult.

In 1852, Adrian Van Vliet created our school to provide access to quality higher education for an under-served population—German immigrants. Since then, our Reformed Christian heritage has kept us focused on the task of forming whole persons of moral character called and equipped to lead and serve. It turns out that these missional tasks are precisely what a significant portion of contemporary higher education needs today.



The Diamond Educational Model positions the University of Dubuque at the forefront of small, private colleges and universities who are:

- ◆ Mobilizing the power of our Reformed Christian heritage
- ◆ Intentionally responding to demographic realities
- ◆ Educating whole persons
- ◆ Forming personally empowered, interculturally competent citizens of character
- ◆ Engaging all stakeholders in the educational process
- ◆ Operating with caring intrusiveness
- ◆ Thoroughly assessing all that we do.

Other small, private colleges and universities do some of these things. The University of Dubuque's goal is to be one of the best at doing them all. ■

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