

While discussing man's inhumanity to man in a religion course, my professor made a comment which struck me as meaningful. "An education can make you smart, but it may not make you moral." In my brief time here at Augustana College, I have observed the five shared fundamental values: Christian, liberal arts, community, excellence, and service, working together not only to educate me in the ways of Aristotle and Keynes, but also to cultivate within me ways of living as an informed and empowered citizen. The college's five values work not only to educate, but also to create a context for moral reflection within students. Education can lead to career success as well as an enriched moral life as an individual who can truly question and understand the world.

The bells peal in all directions on a cold winter morning to signal the beginning of the daily chapel hour. Not only do these bells chime the hour, but they also play a hymn which can be heard from across campus. The Christian faith *does* play an important role in the actions of the college and its students. Whether one attends a chapel service, weekly Bible study, has a conversation about faith with a professor, or witnesses the prayer of others before consuming a meal in the commons, it is difficult not to see examples of strong Christian faith walking, talking, and learning in this place. The strong spiritual presence on campus gives one the opportunity to mature and grow in faith, through worship and learning. The welcoming of all faiths on campus plays a key role in the way others are shaped through faith and work. A valid basic assumption on the campus is that all religions, no matter the denomination or background, need to have the ability to question tenets of others' beliefs. In the Augustana community, one quickly learns that faith is not frightened of questions, but that questions are at the very heart of

one's faith. At Augustana, it is evident that faith is related to all aspects of work, whether learning, service, or fellowship among brothers and sisters in Christ.

As a phone representative who calls prospective students, I often tell high school students the benefits of attending a liberal arts institution such as Augustana. In this place, all aspects of learning through the liberal arts, both those inside and outside the major, are of equal importance to an Augustana education. The various areas of liberal arts learning truly take scholarship to the next level, where one, for example, can find a balance between the seemingly contradictory areas of religion and biology, viewing both in a new light. Being able to find connections between course areas which seem distances apart, such as Western civilization and microeconomics, led me to become interested in these two subjects on a deeper level. Seeing the common questions raised through the study of each subject and using my knowledge to draw conclusions about their similarities has helped me to understand both areas of scholarship. Studying the liberal arts means more than studying a wide array of subjects, but naturally studying oneself as a human being, and what it means to live as a human being today. Learning where the human race began, how it has developed from ancient days, and how science and technology effect the future are all part of the human liberal arts experience.

When surrounded by proficiency, one strives to be competent. Combining the wisdom of Augustana faculty and students most certainly empowers me to strive for excellence in and out of the classroom. The ability of professors to challenge the ideals, beliefs, and thoughts of students leads to excellence in thought and the formation of individual ideas and beliefs. As a student of Augustana College, I observe that the bar of academic, moral, and ethical excellence is held extremely high for students. Students are

seen as having high potential and great capability by faculty and staff. This level of excellence and rigor rubs off on the whole community and challenges me to use intellect to achieve the high level of excellence for which Augustana is known.

If you ask someone what makes Augustana such a special place, they are most likely to say it is all about the people. The Augustana community is a unique aspect of the college which facilitates a strong support network for learning not only about coursework, but about what it means to respect differences among equals. Being comfortable discussing serious political, religious, and relational issues with friends in the Commons, reaching out to an acquaintance in need, supporting each other through study groups, projects, and tutoring sessions, or just by waving hello as I meet a floor mate near the library, I experience the presence of the Augustana community shaping me as an individual. At freshman registration, I watched a video presentation of the way the Augie community builds lifelong friendships. Using these strong ties of friendship, I see myself gaining confidence and receiving support in my everyday work.

As the campus organization acronym states, Service And Learning really do fit hand in hand Together. The possibilities for students to serve one another, members of the greater Sioux Falls area and beyond are endless on campus. Whether serving at The Banquet, volunteering to read at a local school, donating money or gifts for the less fortunate during the Christmas season, worshipping with the inmates at the State Penitentiary, or donating blood, serving allows me to realize how valuable I can be when I help others. Most importantly, in serving others, it becomes easier to realize how fortunate and blessed I am not only with material possessions, but also with the gift to

serve others. This in turn helps me to grasp a better sense of the world around me, a few blocks toward downtown, or a few thousand miles away.

A few months after arriving at Augustana, I received a request from a former teacher asking me to discuss what I think would have given my high school learning experience greater benefit. After a short time, I concluded that I wish my high school instructors would have reached beyond the multiple choices, true and false, and fill in the blank questions and actually provoked me to think more deeply into the subject. Maybe it is for the best that my wish is only coming true here at Augustana, where the five core values carefully work together to mold and shape the scholarly work of myself and other students by creating a need and desire to think, to reason, and to develop thoughtful answers to not only the questions of subject material, but more importantly, the questions of life.

For example, in my introductory religion class, we studied the book of Genesis. As a student, I was not asked to name the lineage of Abraham, but as a scholar, I was asked to take a biblical story and create my own *midrash*, or interpretation of what is implicit within the text. I did not have to recall facts, but was forced to read, find meaning, interpret, elaborate, and communicate my ideas effectively. This helped me to become an active scholar, discovering what *I* thought to be important and providing evidence to support my arguments. This exam essay was my own work, created from my own mind, using my own God-given talents and resources. I learned something not only about Genesis, but also what it means to be a human being.

In my opinion, one of the main reasons the values are effective in achieving their goal is the way in which the faculty and staff embrace the values in their instruction, allowing

students to mature to their full potential. I know as a graduate of Augustana College, I will have more than a college education. I will have developed ideals of moral and ethical thought, values based on the quest for knowledge, and most importantly, I and my classmates will be able to become lifelong people of character.