



DONNELLY COLLEGE
DIGEST

A publication for alumni & friends WINTER 2016 Volume 10, Issue 2

Faith
in
ACTION

What it means for Donnelly College
to be a Catholic institution



Faith in ACTION

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR DONNELLY COLLEGE TO BE A CATHOLIC COLLEGE?

During the late 1940s, in a neighborhood just west of historic Strawberry Hill in Kansas City, Kansas, a mission was quietly being crafted that would change the community forever. This mission would seek to educate and inspire generations through an accessible and affordable Catholic higher education for all, including the many low-income, first-generation students and immigrant families living in area. Led by Sister Jerome Keeler of the Benedictine Sisters of Mount St. Scholastica and Bishop George Donnelly of the Diocese of Kansas City in Kansas, Donnelly Community College launched in 1949. In the nearly 70 years since, Donnelly College has remained an integral part of the community and continues to be devoted to the promise of a quality, accessible and affordable Catholic higher education for anyone who wishes to pursue it.

At the heart of the Donnelly College experience for our students is a foundational liberal arts curriculum that allows them to explore life's greater purpose, to discuss controversial issues facing society today and to develop a broad knowledge of the world. This curriculum, along with our supportive

and inclusive environment, prepares students to become independent thinkers, ethical leaders in any field and to live up to their fullest potential – becoming the best version of themselves.

At our nation's 260 institutions of Catholic higher education, students are encouraged to consider their faith and purpose in life, both in and out of the classroom. This type of environment provides challenging academics that encourage students to think critically and explore their own faith traditions, whatever those might be. While each institution exists independently of the Church and has distinct program offerings and operational models, they all share core values that guide the education they provide.

These values include (1) Scholarship: high-quality academics, (2) Fidelity to the Gospel: a person-centered approach, (3) Witness: a values-based environment and (4) Service: social justice and service learning.

At Donnelly, these values – and the resulting transformation of our students – can be witnessed daily on campus and in our surrounding community. Here are a few examples.



SCHOLARSHIP: HIGH-QUALITY ACADEMICS

LECTURES TO LAST A LIFETIME

High-quality academics are not only about a rigorous curriculum. They can also be about helping a student to understand the world around them on a very practical level, and helping them develop into an ethical leader prepared to encounter the world after college.

Carol Marinovich, one of the many skilled educators guiding Donnelly students on their educational journey, excels at this approach. Marinovich has been teaching American Government and Political Science at Donnelly

College for nearly six years.

“It is important for students to connect what they are learning in the class to the events of today,” Marinovich said.

As a former educator with Kansas City Kansas Public Schools for 23 years and the former Mayor and CEO of the Unified Government of Wyandotte County and

Kansas City, Kansas, Marinovich, like many Donnelly instructors, uses life experiences to guide classroom lectures.

“Each class begins with a discussion of current events – linking it to what we are learning about government,” she said.

With the recent presidential election, Marinovich said she noticed an increase in political interest from her students.

“We discussed at length the development of their own political philosophies,” she said. “Many of them are interested in immigration reform – but not limited to that.”

While courses are only four months-long, the goal is for classroom lectures to last a lifetime.

“Civic responsibility and engagement of students in this subject matter is important,” Marinovich said.

But it’s not just the students who are learning. Marinovich says her students teach her the millennial perspective. “As a baby boomer, I believe it’s important to develop an understanding of our future leaders’ perspectives,” Marinovich said.



Carol Marinovich, Adjunct Professor, uses life experiences to guide classroom lectures.

FIDELITY TO THE GOSPEL: PERSON-CENTERED APPROACH

CREATING AN ENCOURAGING AND MOTIVATING ENVIRONMENT

You will hear it said on campus that Donnelly College is an institution that takes students from *where they are* to *where they want to be*. Each department, faculty and staff member attempts to focus on the whole person, addressing their social, academic and spiritual needs. Students often find comfort in the classroom in unexpected ways, fulfilling a need they did not know existed.

Take, for example, Niesha King. As a child, King only attended school through the third grade. King's mother did not believe in women having a formal education. But by the time she was 17 years old, armed with a desire for an education but lacking the preparation that her peers received in middle school and high school, King set out to get a GED. Today, King is a successful Donnelly student on track to graduate in May, 2017.

"The way that I look at it is, the time is going to pass anyway, so what am I doing with the time?" King said. "I just want my life to have meaning. I don't want to be



King (right) was one of the four featured student panelists sharing their stories at SHINE 2016.

another number or statistic, or just kind of blend in with the masses?"

Through intensive tutoring and support services offered at Workforce Partnership in Kansas City, Kansas, King prepared for six months and then passed her GED exam.

After receiving her GED, King attended a local community college, but found a large and impersonal institution not suited for her. Through a friend, she found her way to Donnelly in 2016, and even applied for and received a Bloch Scholarship (the Bloch Scholarship, named for co-founder of H&R Block and Donnelly College benefactor Henry Bloch, provides two years of free tuition and books at Donnelly College plus two additional years at UMKC).

King says it's the atmosphere at Donnelly that she finds encouraging and motivating. "I'm not a very religious person, but the first thing that was super impactful was that Sister Marie Kathleen Daugherty opened her class with prayer. We're in the heart of Wyandotte, and there's just so much stuff going on, trying to pull me away from going to school. Being able to sit in a classroom feels safe. Prayer is being said. It just really makes me feel at home.

One of Donnelly's mottos is 'become the best version of yourself' and that is so valuable and magnificent to me. It's just a really great platform for me to actually express myself and be the best version that I can become," King said.

WITNESS: VALUES-BASED ENVIRONMENT

A MEAL THAT MATTERS



Deb Robinson with the Gateway to College program serves students during the annual Thanks & Giving celebration.

Thanksgiving was upon us as the smell of turkey, ham, sweet potatoes and pumpkin pie filled the campus halls on November 22, as it does each year around that time.

For more than 30 years, a unique Donnelly tradition has provided an opportunity for our students to experience community, conversation and service on campus – at a time of year that holds special meaning for so many of us.

Thanks & Giving, initiated in the mid-1980s by long-time English faculty and Humanities Department Chair Dolores Podrebarac, began as a prayer service, an

offering of thanks, and offering of canned goods for local food pantries. In the mid-1990s, a shared meal was added that brought the campus community together. The tradition continues today with a prayer service and Thanksgiving banquet for our students prepared and served by staff and faculty. This year, three separate meals were served: day students, evening students and nursing students.

This approach to serving provides an opportunity for Donnelly to place the institutional values of community and inclusiveness into action, alongside the broader Catholic and Benedictine

SERVICE: SOCIAL JUSTICE AND SERVICE-LEARNING

MORE THAN AN ASSIGNMENT

With a desire to merge Catholic social justice teaching with literacy education, Lisa Stoothoff, Director of Preparatory Education, received a grant from Target in 2012 that has evolved into an annual service learning project.

Better known as Project L.O.U.D., Literacy Outreach in Urban Districts, the project benefits both Donnelly's Preparatory Education students and students from the urban core of Kansas City, Kansas.

"It was a way for our students, who are working to increase their proficiency in reading and writing, to practice their public speaking skills, to be more proficient in reading and writing and to give back to the community in a way that shows the students that reading and writing is a lifelong skill," Stoothoff said.

After six-weeks of intensive reading and writing preparation with Assistant Professors Lisa Stoothoff and Gretchen Meinhardt, a class of 28 Donnelly students attended Our Lady of Unity School on October 5 to read their own original poems to kindergarten through fifth grade students.

Donnelly freshman Marlene Torres

was one of the students who read to the young students.

"We wanted to encourage a lot of children, starting at a young age, to read and encourage them to practice creative writing skills by reading them these poems and being an inspiration to them," Torres said. "They can really start to spark their imaginations and be able to be more creative and start to pick up on some writing skills, which they usually start to learn around first or second grade. It's really good to expose them to this – especially because there are a lot of bilingual students."

The students that attend Our Lady of Unity School and those that attend Donnelly are not that different. Many are of a similar demographic group.

"Our population at Donnelly mimics the population at Our Lady of Unity and I think that connection was important for both to see," Stoothoff said. Because of this, the students are receiving much more than simply a special guest reader in class.



Donnelly College Preparatory Education students read original poetry to students at Our Lady of Unity School on Oct. 5.

It's a win-win situation because the elementary school students see role models: 'Hey, he looks just like me, he speaks like me, maybe he went to school here and look what he's done with his life – he's going to college now,'" Stoothoff said. "It shows them this is a step. Not, it could happen – it will happen. You will go to college someday."

Donnelly College Preparatory Education classes have read to students at both public and private schools within the urban core of Kansas City, including M.E. Pearson Elementary, McKinley Elementary and Resurrection Catholic School.

values of hospitality and solidarity. Donnelly students come together for a family-like feast in a peaceful environment that invites and celebrates all cultures. During this year's event, three students shared prayers from their Muslim, Christian and Brazilian traditions.

While the event provided students with a hot meal in an inclusive space, the aim was to provide much more. During the meal, a video message of

encouragement and hope showcased ten faculty and staff members who shared messages of what they appreciated about Donnelly students.

"Every day, I get up and come to work and I'm excited to come to work, because I get to meet with our students," said Megan Jordan, Academic Adviser. "They're inspiring, they're hard working, they're dedicated, they're brave – they're everything I aspire to be."



WATCH THE THANKS & GIVING VIDEO ONLINE
www.youtube.com/donnellycollege

CAMPUS MINISTRY

At Donnelly, we provide the tools students need to explore various ways of thinking, regardless of their own faith tradition. The diversity in religious backgrounds provides engaging conversations and opportunities to explore other traditions.

- Daily Mass, celebratory Masses and annual Convocation Mass
- Sacramental reconciliation, devotions and bible studies
- Spiritual direction and counseling
- Ecumenical prayer service and activities
- R.C.I.A. (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults)
- Icath: An informal discussion session on Catholic belief