



**NEW  
STUDENT  
EXPERIENCE  
READINGS**



ESSAYS FOR NEW STUDENTS AT BAYLOR, 2010 - 2011



**BAYLOR**  
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# BAYLOR

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Dear Students,

**WELCOME TO BAYLOR**, to our New Student Courses, and to a new and significant journey. The academic life is most definitely a journey and in many ways, we are not naturally given to it. Human beings, left to our instincts, often look for easier paths. The journey we must make to develop the mind as we prepare to be of service in the world is very challenging. It requires much from us - a willingness to be stretched and shaped, a capacity for setting some things aside in order to acquire other things, an awareness of how we learn and learn in particular, an ability to persevere and to cope. It isn't an easy path but it is the path you've chosen. Research shows that students who participate in transitional experiences with a mentor and a smaller group of students are more likely to succeed and succeed early in college life. That's why we have experiences and various courses for our new students. We want to help each of you to make a smooth transition and provide you with tools for success in your first year at Baylor.

The essays in this packet are focused on spiritual values, practices, or dispositions that can help you as you move into academic life and do so in a context and a community where you are more than just a grade at semester's end. Reading and thinking on these essays with your fellow students will not only impact your success in the classroom but will help you to become aware of what is taking place in your life. To that end, **you will need to read all of these essays this summer**. Then read them again each week as the semester begins in order to be prepared for the sessions in your particular New Student Course. Please spend some quality time with this material, read reflectively, take notes, and then you'll be ready to reflect with your group during your time together. The experience your group can have depends upon your participation and your academic success depends upon your comprehension of both the philosophical and the practical dimensions of these issues.

Your first days at Baylor will make you dizzy with all the opportunities before you, the activity around you, and the demands upon you. These readings offer an invitation to take a deep breath here at the beginning and gain some needed perspective and guidance. College is here. It's time to begin and begin well.

Again, welcome to this unique place and to this good journey. As you take your first steps, may God's peace and guidance be yours,

Burt Burleson, *University Chaplain*

Elisa Dunman, *Director of New Student Programs*

Kevin Jackson, *Vice President for Student Life*

Sinda Vanderpool, *Assistant Vice Provost*

# New Student Experience Readings

## ESSAYS FOR 2010 - 2011

EACH OF THE ESSAYS in this packet will be used in various new courses to prompt discussion amongst new students about academic life and the Baylor experience. The sessions in University 1000 (for most freshmen) and BU 1000 (for most transfers) will use the essays in the order below during the first six weeks of the semester. Students in BIC, the School of Music, and the School of Engineering and Computer Science will engage this material in the context of those unique settings.

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# In Between

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## A blog for students about our New Student Experience Readings

by BURT BURLESON, UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN

**IS IT ODD** to think of spirituality as important to the academic life? Most people don't associate classrooms, homework, test taking, and paper writing with the spiritual life. At Baylor however, we think our faith can speak to our education, and that healthy spirituality and learning are deeply connected. The essays we're asking you to read explore some of those connections as we consider spiritual values, practices, and dispositions that can have a positive impact on an academic journey. Our hope is that early on in your time at Baylor you will begin to awaken to these significant connections.

Emily Dickenson wrote, "I dwell in possibility." We all do. It's always true but perhaps never more so than during the college years. You are setting foot into possibility... right into the thick of it... it's your new address. You'll be dwelling there, in possibility. Look around! All that possibility is what our new student courses are designed to help you see, embrace, and explore.

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Our first essay is written by Dr. Elizabeth Davis. Dr. Davis has served for the past two years as our Interim Provost. At Baylor, the Provost is our chief academic officer and as such carries a tremendous responsibility for shaping the academic mission at the university. In addition to her current duties as Provost, she is a Professor of Accounting in the Hankamer School of Business. She's a Baylor alum and also a graduate of Duke University where she received her Ph.D. Dr. Davis and her husband Charles, (the chair of the accounting department), have two children, Chad and Claire. She is a deacon at Calvary Baptist Church here in Waco and also the pianist for the children's choir.

As you read her essay and answer the questions that follow, be aware that the focus of this essay, Baylor's unique mission, will be discussed during Welcome Week with your group.



To respond to Dr. Burleson's blog or the essays  
in this booklet, visit the Spiritual life website

[www.baylor.edu/spiritual life](http://www.baylor.edu/spiritual life)

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# The Mission of the University and Its Role in Your Academic Journey

*How Baylor's past will impact your present and future*

by ELIZABETH DAVIS

I AM DELIGHTED to offer a word of welcome and reflection as you begin your journey at Baylor University. My Baylor journey started 29 years ago at Welcome Week. I knew of Baylor through family friends at my church in New Orleans, and I had visited the campus twice during the two previous homecomings. I can't say that I was well versed in Baylor history — I knew it was a Baptist university with a good academic reputation. Let's start your Baylor experience with a better understanding of our university than I had. The following is from our mission statement:

## **The Mission of Baylor University**

The mission of Baylor University is to educate men and women for worldwide leadership and service by integrating academic excellence and Christian commitment within a caring community.

Chartered in 1845 by the Republic of Texas and affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Baylor is both the state's oldest institution of higher learning and the world's largest Baptist university. Established to be a servant of the church and of society, Baylor seeks to fulfill its calling through excellence in teaching and research, in scholarship and publication, and in service to the community, both local and global. The vision of its founders and the ongoing commitment of generations of students and scholars are reflected in the motto inscribed on the Baylor seal: *Pro Ecclesia, Pro Texana* – For Church, For Texas.

*Pro Ecclesia.* Baylor is founded on the belief that God's nature is made known through both revealed and discovered truth. Thus, the University derives its understanding of God, humanity, and nature from many sources: the person and work of Jesus Christ, the biblical record, and Christian history and tradition, as well as scholarly and artistic endeavors. In its service to the church, Baylor's pursuit of knowledge is strengthened by the conviction that truth has its ultimate source in God and by a Baptist heritage that champions religious liberty and freedom of conscience. Without imposing religious conformity, Baylor expects the members of its community to support its mission. Affirming the value of intellectually informed faith and religiously informed education, the University seeks to provide an environment that fosters spiritual maturity, strength of character, and moral virtue.

*Pro Texana.* Integral to its commitment to God and to the church is Baylor's commitment to society. Whereas that society in the mid 1800s was limited to Texas, today Baylor's sphere of influence is indeed the world. The University remains dedicated to the traditional responsibilities of higher education—dissemination of knowledge, transmission of culture, search for new knowledge, and application of knowledge—while recognizing the global proportions these responsibilities have assumed. Moreover, within the context of an ethnically and culturally diverse community, Baylor strives to develop responsible citizens, educated leaders, dedicated scholars, and skilled professionals who are sensitive to the needs of a pluralistic society. To those ends, Baylor provides expanded opportunities for civic education and for church and community service at home and abroad.

*Pro Ecclesia, Pro Texana.* Baylor University is committed to excellence at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels. Within the undergraduate programs, the University seeks to familiarize students with the principal bodies of knowledge, cultural viewpoints, belief systems, and aesthetic perspectives that affect the world in which they live. Within the graduate and the professional programs, the University provides advanced educational opportunities to develop ethical and capable scholars and practitioners who contribute to their academic disciplines, professional fields, and society. Baylor encourages all of its students to cultivate their capacity to think critically, to assess information from a Christian perspective, to arrive at informed and reasoned conclusions, and to become lifelong learners. Beyond the intellectual life, the University pursues the social, physical, ethical, and spiritual development of each student.

Aware of its responsibility as the largest Baptist educational institution in the world and as a member of the international community of higher learning, Baylor promotes exemplary teaching, encourages innovative and original research, and supports professional excellence in various specialized disciplines. Advancing the frontiers of knowledge while cultivating a Christian world-view, Baylor holds fast to its original commitment—to build a university that is *Pro Ecclesia, Pro Texana*.

That might sound a little grandiose, a little loftier than you want to think right now. Your biggest concern may be how to get from the 3rd floor of the BSB (Baylor Sciences Building) to Burleson Quadrangle in less than 15 minutes so you aren't late for class. My thoughts weren't too far from yours all those years ago. So let me take you back to my Baylor experiences and give you a little context on what was happening at that time.

My first semester at Baylor, I took a Fortran class offered by the computer science department. My professor was very forward-thinking: he didn't require us to write our programs using the punch card machine. Instead we used terminals that batched our programs and sent the output to one printer. If the program had a mistake in it, we didn't find out until it was printed. We were the fortunate ones — another section of the course had to program on punch cards and the terminal, just in case the whole concept of typing computer programs directly into the computer didn't take off. Do you even know what I'm talking about? By the following year, I had found my niche in the business school. Besides bonding with other students over various projects, I recall the impact that so many faculty had on me. It was not uncommon for me to drop by a professor's office to discuss a course-related topic and end up talking about career goals, life plans, whatever. It was evident to me that these folks were professors not just for a love of their disciplines, but for a love of students. My Baylor experience was excellent, but given that I had no other college experience, I thought it was typical.

Three years later, when I was ready to leave my first job and potentially change careers, I called one of my favorite professors. In fact, I flew to Waco so I could talk to him and visit with some friends in Waco. By the end of the visit, he had convinced me that I needed to become a professor, took me to the home of the dean of the business school, and the two of them advised me about where I should go to grad school.

Fast forward to today — I'm back at Baylor because of the experience I had as an undergraduate here and because I believe in the complete educational experience that Baylor provides. When I was interviewing for faculty positions right out of grad school, a department chair at another university cautioned me about going to Baylor. He said, "those students will be in your office all the time and will never let you get anything done." What he didn't know is that I had been one of those students who had benefited from being welcomed in faculty offices. What he saw as a negative was actually one of the positive, life-shaping aspects of my educational pilgrimage. Obviously, I ignored his warning.

Well, 20-plus years is a long time. Baylor has changed a lot. Higher education has changed a lot. Can Baylor deliver the same personalized service yet stay abreast of changes in the various disciplines? I say yes we can because that is what we want to do. Baylor is not willing to sacrifice teaching excellence and faculty-student interaction. How do we ensure such a thing? We are very careful about who we hire. We ensure in the interview process that a candidate's professional goals are consistent with Baylor's mission.

Student-faculty interactions are so important because your mind needs to be engaged beyond the classroom. These years, as you strive to seek what you are called to do, will be filled with excitement and for many of you, uncertainty. You will likely have questions about how your God-given gifts, both intellectual and psychological, can be developed and used to be the person you want to be. Where will you go for answers? Doesn't it make sense to ask the very folks who are stretching you intellectually, those folks who have similar intellectual gifts to your own? I suspect that when these questions arise, you will be ready for conversation that doesn't fit neatly into the 18 hours of classroom time per week.

So for today, be sure you find your classrooms. Remember to check your email using your Baylor account. GO TO CLASS! And while you are navigating your way around a Baylor that was established for you over 160 years ago, keep in mind that you are called to live out a life that glorifies God. We are not here to make you into something that you are not; instead, our purpose is to enable you to bring to fruition, that is, to be, what you already are.

Warmest regards for a wonderful semester and fulfilling Baylor experience.

Elizabeth Davis  
Interim Provost

*In addition to her duties as Interim Provost, Dr. Davis is a Professor of Accounting in the Hankamer School of Business.*

# Reflections

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## Questions about the essay on Baylor's Mission

### QUESTIONS

1. Why did you choose to come to Baylor?
2. How aware were you prior to enrolling at Baylor of our heritage and vision?
3. In a nutshell (in one sentence) how would you explain Baylor's unique mission to a friend at home who doesn't know Baylor?
4. How was Dr. Davis's experience and calling influenced by Baylor's mission?
5. Talk about mission and vocation (calling). Are they the same? How are they different?
6. You find yourself in a Christian university that is trying to nurture both academic excellence and a sense of vocation for the sake of the world. How might this mission and vision change your experience at Baylor? How might it impact your learning, your investment, and your involvement? Reread Dr. Davis's last paragraph. How might the practice of service have an impact on what and how you learn?

### PRACTICE AND ASSIGNMENTS

- Choose one person for whom you will perform some act of service. Choose to be a servant to this one person in some very specific way. Be mindful of how this influences or has an impact on your day.
- The assignments for next week in preparation for Session One are to read the essay on **Humility** and answer the questions. Be ready to discuss your responses with your group.

**HAVING A MISSION** changes everything because to have a mission means that you will come to care and care in certain ways for certain things. To have some sense of who you are and what you're about creates a particular passion in your life, a desire for this particular thing and not that thing, which... is a very freeing thing. To know who you are and what you're about changes things.

Dr. Davis has reminded us that Baylor has a mission. We care about some things and some things in particular, namely impacting the world and the Church. She went on to describe the impact Baylor's mission had on her own life and the way her mission seemed to... *find her*, which seems to be the way it most always happens. Something "calls" to us. There is a distinct grace that is yours and we expect it will emerge at Baylor in your story and provide you with a unique way of serving the world.

Remember Dr. Davis's challenge, "*Keep in mind* that you are called to live out a life that glorifies God." Keep this "in mind." Keep this *IN YOUR MIND*. You must remain mindful of this and it seems so easy now in these first days. But staying focused on this mission will be challenging through your college years. There are lesser aims out there. But you have a mission. You are made for something larger. You really are. Keep this in mind.

Dr. Susan Colon's essay on humility, for those of you in BU or University 1000, will be read in preparation for the first week of class. Dr. Colon has been at Baylor since 2002 and is currently an Associate Professor of English Literature in the Honors Program. Her husband, Carlos Colón, is a freelance composer from El Salvador. They have two amazing twin girls, 9 year olds, named Elise and Monica. She likes playing games with her daughters, baking, and hiking when she gets a chance (wimpy trails only). She especially enjoys teaching First-Year Seminars in the Honors Program; most recently, she taught a FYS on pastors and priests in literature. Her favorite place to eat in Waco is probably the Clay Pot. She is the faculty sponsor for *The Pulse* (a biannual journal of undergraduate scholarship at Baylor) and a member of DaySpring Baptist Church.

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# The Place of Humility... and an Open Mind in Your Academic Journey

*How to know that you don't know*

by SUSAN COLON

THE BIBLE TEACHES that God gives grace to the humble (Prov. 3:34, 1 Pet. 5:5). But I think it would be a mistake to imagine that God has a humility meter he uses on us, doling out grace to those who deserve it by their superior humility (if there is such a thing). Rather, we should understand that there's a natural and direct connection between humility and the capacity to receive the gifts of God and of other people: humility enables us to receive from others, whereas pride blocks us from doing so. The Christian gospel is saturated with humility.

Humility entails the recognition that we're not perfect, and never will be in this life. It's a necessary disposition for approaching God and for having healthy relationships with others. That's why Proverbs teaches, "Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him" (Prov. 26:12). A fool, who is at least open to realizing he may be a fool, can be taught; but someone who is wise in his own eyes cannot.

We're all aware of some of our imperfections, but what we sometimes forget is that we also all have blind spots: imperfections that we are too immature to see as imperfections. Once my five-year-old daughter argued with me vehemently about how to spell a word. What showed her immaturity the most was not that she misspelled the word, but that she was unable to realize that my knowledge on the subject was more reliable than hers.

This sort of thing can happen at the university level too. When students object to curricular requirements, for example, they are essentially saying that they know better than the professoriate what they need to learn. Someone may ask, Why do I have to learn a foreign language I'll probably never need to speak? Why do I have to take Great Texts for my engineering degree? Why do I have to take a lab science if I'm going to be a history teacher? They're like the character in *The Karate Kid* who was furious at his teacher after three days of being made to paint the fence, wax cars, and sand the floor, not knowing that his teacher was using those chores to train his muscles and reflexes in ways necessary for vital karate moves. Fortunately, the kid had enough humility to follow directions he didn't understand. Do you?

Pride lurks in unexpected places. You probably have no trouble acknowledging that you don't know everything, that you have much to learn. But chances are there are certain things you think you do know — a sort of common sense you've learned to take for granted about the way things are, and what life is about, and what you're doing here in college. To give a personal example, as a college student, I was sure that Baptists had the right ideas about all things religious, and that other faith traditions were in error wherever they differed from mine. I remember visiting a Methodist church once and sitting in the pew thinking I had to be on guard against whatever heresies might be taught! I was wise in my own eyes about my denomination, and I couldn't even see it.

There are other examples of unquestioned assumptions. I regularly meet students who take it for granted that the purpose of their life is to be successful according to the American dream: to enjoy a high standard of living and a set of pleasant relationships. Or that books older than their grandparents don't have anything to say to people today. Or that poetry, or philosophy, is useless. Or that the most efficient way of doing something is always the best way.

Whether we like it or not, our culture infuses us with assumptions we're hardly aware of. Today's culture makes humility easy in some ways and difficult in others. Since bigotry and chauvinism are "out," and tolerance and diversity are "in," you probably find it natural to learn from people different from yourself. It's probably easy for you to acknowledge that your point of view is limited and particular, and that people from different backgrounds will think differently about things, and that they are not necessarily wrong.

But in another way humility may well be difficult to practice. Along with the toleration of diverse points of view you may have imbibed some skepticism of any claims to authority. Our culture seems to have decided that authoritative truth claims are bigoted or arrogant: how can someone say what is true or good for someone else, since everyone has a different point of view? The result is that people are left with little else than their own powers of reason for finding truth. At first blush this seems humble: I wouldn't dream of dictating what is true for anyone else. But it masks a dangerous hidden pride: The ego — my ego — is made supreme over matters of truth for me. This leads to taking your own reason or common sense or conscience as the highest guide to truth, while distrusting authorities outside yourself.

Instead, I invite you to assume the posture of a learner. This might seem obvious, or even redundant: students are learners by definition, right? Not necessarily. Our culture tends to define as "real" what is understood economically, and in that light university students are apt to be seen, and to see themselves, as consumers of a product and as future employees. These roles carry certain expectations. For example, in the role of employee-in-training, you might assume that you only need to learn things that are directly applicable to your expected future job. If you see yourself as a consumer, you might feel it's your prerogative to pick and choose which classes to attend, which professors to listen to, and which assignments to do your best on.

If you are a learner, however, you will abandon the mentality that you are your own highest authority, and intentionally humble yourself under the teaching of others. You will accept that teachers have authority to teach you, and will consider yourself obliged to take seriously what they say, even if it challenges your assumptions. You will be open to thinking of education not just in terms of career preparation, but also in terms of disciplined formation of the soul.

How can you practice the humility of a learner? Like all the habits we're considering in these New Student Courses, humility is formed by practice, which means by deliberate, repeated acts of body and mind.

Humility requires that you learn to recognize the mental impulse to reject an idea as wrong. When you catch yourself in that impulse, make a point to listen first and listen longer. Ask questions to fully understand the idea being presented. Challenge the idea by all means, but give respectful consideration to the arguments raised in response to your challenges.

At some points in this essay I may sound like an unreformed hippie, urging you to question everything you believe and consider nothing sacred. At other times I may sound like an unreformed totalitarian, requiring conformity with a given program. This tension arises because humility is about being suspicious of the wrong authorities and deferential toward the right ones. Who are the wrong ones? Yourself, for starters, and those (like advertisers) who want something from you, and will tell you what you want to hear in order to get it. To take yourself and these appeals to your ego as authorities is the opposite of humility.

The right authorities, to whom you should humbly yield, are those whose moral character, Christian journey, and intellectual preparation have equipped them to speak with authority about things that matter. And not only *individuals* with these qualities, but also *institutions* with these qualities, should be regarded as authoritative. Be discerning about whom you trust. Look at the character as well as the competence of potential mentors. When you find someone you can trust, be willing to be vulnerable to him or her, to be challenged, and to be guided.

Humility makes it possible to seek truth above all, because only for the humble does finding truth become more important than being right. In seeking truth, be suspicious of messages that gratify your ego, because you are more likely to be misled by those than the messages that demand self-denial. Even more important, demand truth from yourself. Peeling back layers of self-deception is one of the most humbling things you can do.

I offer in conclusion two concrete starting points for cultivating humility.

- Read the book of Proverbs. Read one chapter a day and you'll finish it in a month. It's not a bad idea to repeat that reading every few months. Proverbs has a lot to say about the disposition of a good learner: one of the most salient characteristics of a wise person in Proverbs is that he or she is open to instruction. I'm sure you'll find plenty in Proverbs that relates to the other practices discussed in this course as well.
- Get to know at least one of your professors this week. Make an appointment to visit with him or her during office hours. You can chat about what you're learning in class and about what you hope to get out of the class. You could ask the professor's advice about how to be successful at Baylor. Have a question or two in mind as well, like, "What would you do differently about your own college education if you could do it over again?" You'll not only be getting to know the professor and letting him or her get to know you, but you'll also be learning how to be a learner.

*Dr. Susan Colon is Associate Professor of English Literature in the Honors Program.*

### QUESTIONS

1. Can you think of someone you know who is “wise in his/her own eyes”? How is that attitude manifested? How do you experience that person?
2. Give an example of either 1) a “blind spot” you used to have — that is, an idea you used to hold firmly that you now see as immature; or 2) a teacher or mentor who changed what you think about something. In either case, how did the change come about?
3. What aspects of our culture make authority difficult to swallow? What might be some of the costs of this commonly held impoverished view of authority?
4. How can you learn to discern what persons and what institutions to regard as authorities?
5. What’s the difference between being a humble learner and a blind follower?
6. What does taking on the posture of a learner look like?

*In preparation for Session Two of U/BU 1000 during the first six weeks.*

### PRACTICE

For this week, seek out one professor and have a conversation with her or him and be ready to report on it next week. You may want to ask the following questions:

- What two or three things can I do to succeed academically at Baylor?
- What are some common academic obstacles for which students should be prepared?
- What are expectations for students in your class?

### ASSIGNMENT

- The assignments for next week are to read the essay on **Generosity** and answer the questions.

# In Between

## A blog for students about our New Student Experience Readings

by BURT BURLESON, UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN

**YOUR GENERATION** has been called by some, “Generation Me” or “iGen.” Jean Twenge has written a book by that title that lots of folks my age are reading and wondering if it’s true. Are you a “me” generation? She reminds us that when you were in preschool we taught you to sing (to the tune of Frere Jacques) “I am special, I am special, look at me, look at me. I am very special, I am very special. Yes I am. Yes I am.” I suppose we wanted you to sing this because we were convinced that if you believed it deeply enough you might skip some of the pain we (your parents and teachers) had gone through. Did it work?

My sense, just from spending lots of time with lots of students (and reading books like the one I mentioned above), is that it really hasn’t worked and you (and your generation) will have to live into a sense of authentic selfhood like we all do and that usually happens after life cuts us down to size a bit. Life seems to... the world seems to... demand that we begin at a more humble place, a smaller place, where we look out at the world, sigh, and admit, “I’m really, really small.” Or maybe we look up at the night skies like the Psalmist did and we say with astonishment, “I’m nothing! Who am I that you, God, know me?” (Ps. 8)

Dr. Colon suggests this smaller place is a place with which we should become familiar in order to become a learner. *You can only begin to know when you come to know that you don’t know.* (Better read that one again... now again... slowly... now out loud.) Shakespeare probably said it better. “The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool.” Jesus said it best in the 9th chapter of John, “Because you think you can see, you’re blind. If you knew you were blind, you could see.”

On to our next essay by Dr. Wade Rowatt who completed his Ph.D. in Psychology at the University of Louisville in 1997 and started teaching at Baylor that Fall. His favorite courses to teach are social psychology and the psychology of religion, which focuses on faith development, religious-spiritual experiences, and links between religion and mental health. His wife, Dr. Tammy Rowatt, is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience. They have fraternal twin daughters (2nd graders) who enjoy school, basketball, tennis, swimming, and rock-climbing at the SLC. Dr. Rowatt plays basketball in the WNBA (weekly noon basketball association) — a group of faculty, staff, and graduate students who assemble about noon MWF mostly to fellowship. The Rowatts are active members of Seventh and James Baptist Church and often frequent independent restaurants in Waco like 1424, Bangkok Royal, Elite Grille, and Siete Mares. If you are in BU or University 1000 you will need to read the essay on **Generosity** for the second week of class.



To respond to Dr. Burleson's blog or the essays in this booklet, visit the Spiritual life website

[www.baylor.edu/spiritual life](http://www.baylor.edu/spiritual%20life)

# The Place of Generosity... and an Open Heart in Your Academic Journey

*How differences change what you will know*

by WADE C. ROWATT

BAYLOR IS A DIVERSE COMMUNITY of students, faculty, staff, administration, alumni, friends, and visitors. As you walk across campus or experience class this semester, look more closely for evidence of diversity. You'll see people who vary with regard to age, gender, ethnicity, and many other personal characteristics. Some aspects of an individual's diversity may be less detectable, such as social class, learning ability, political leanings and so forth.

## A Place of Generosity...

Generosity, kindness, care, and compassion orient us toward others. Generosity can be extended to others conditionally or unconditionally (i.e., no strings attached). According to many scholars, the practice of unconditional love (*agape* in Greek) is the foundation of moral and spiritual life in all the major world religions and in most successful groups. Generosity is a character strength. People with this strength endorse statements like, "Others are just as important as I am" and "All human beings are of equal worth."

## Examples of Generosity: Clues from neuroscience, the New Testament, and our school newspaper

We may find it easy to be generous and hospitable to our close friends and family, those in positions of advantage, or any with whom we readily identify. Radical generosity stretches us to extend hospitality to the disadvantaged and others with whom we may disagree or be different. This kind of generosity is more challenging, perhaps because it is less natural or instinctive.

It's fairly easy to love neighbors who are similar and well-behaved; but what about neighbors who are dissimilar or rude? How do we react when we see a homeless person, or someone beaten-up and left-for-dead, or someone who violates our comfort zone? For some clues, I turned to a psychology-neuroscience text, the New Testament, and the Baylor *Lariat*.

From the textbook I learned that when we first see a new person who is different from us, areas of the brain implicated in the experience of fear become active. Using this *reflexive* neural system, in part, we quickly assess whether a person is safe or a threat. Even lizards have these old brain structures that operate automatically (essentially without awareness or conscious control). Unlike lizards, humans also have a *reflective* neural system that allows us to control what we're thinking and doing. It takes effort to stop, think, plan, and exercise self-control. We can decide. We can decide what to eat or not, what to wear, and we can decide whether to respond with or without prejudice, even when our reflexive neural system sounds an alarm.

According to the New Testament, another way to practice generosity and hospitality is to love your neighbor. "And who is your neighbor?" When a lawyer asked Jesus this question, Jesus replied by telling the Parable of the Good Samaritan (see Luke 10:29-37). In this parable a priest and Levite (a lay associate of the priest) pass by a man stripped, beaten, and left for dead on the side of the road. A Samaritan (a foreigner not expected to help) extended

compassion and mercy to the victim. At the end of the story Jesus said to the lawyer, “Go and do likewise.” The reflexive brain system might lead us to behave as the priest or Levite. That’s our instinct but it’s also possible that we might rise above our primitive instinctive impulses, exercise self-control, and choose to respond with generosity.

The university newspaper documented another example of what I interpret to be fairly radical generosity and kindness. This past Spring (April 6, 2010) visitors in a group named Soulforce came to Baylor’s campus. According to this organization’s website, their vision is in part to “seek freedom from religious and political oppression for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people.” Soulforce’s vision and Baylor’s current policies about sexual conduct could not be more different. However, according to an editorial available on the *Lariat’s* website (April 9, 2010), Claire Taylor wrote, “Baylor made a positive statement by allowing Soulforce on campus and welcoming them under the doctrine of Christian love.” Taylor also wrote that, “Some members even attended Dr Pepper® hour, where they were able to engage in dialogue with a senior Baylor administrator about equal rights issues. This is not something you see every day at Baylor and proved to be a positive message on campus. It showed that even though the university and many on campus may not agree with the message Soulforce brought, as Christians and academics, we are able to accept those with different beliefs.”

Individual differences are reality. I challenge each of us to work together to make Baylor a place of generosity – a place where people who hold different views than you or I, or the majority of us may hold, can come, be heard, be respected, and be affirmed about who we are at this time and place in life. At the end of the day, we may still disagree, but by responding with generosity and openness, we plant a metaphorical seed that may germinate and help us to be a better version of ourselves and create a more vibrant community as a campus and in the world.

*Dr. Rowatt is Associate Professor of Psychology & Neuroscience and Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Department.*

### QUESTIONS

1. In what ways is Baylor diverse? In what ways could Baylor be more diverse?
2. Describe a time when someone else was generous or hospitable to you? How did that affect you? How did that change your view of the person who was compassionate to you?
3. In what ways is openness important for a successful academic journey?
4. In what ways could you be more open to the diversity of others or ideas?

*In preparation for Session Three of U/BU 1000 during the first six weeks.*

### PRACTICE

- For this week, be mindful of your tendency to guard or brace or avoid those who are different than you. Simply take note. Don't condemn yourself... just take note of your reaction.
- If you can, try to take a step towards the one who you perceive to be different than you in some way.

### ASSIGNMENT

- The assignments for next week are to read the essay on **Attention** and answer the questions.

# In Between

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## A blog for students about our New Student Experience Readings

by BURT BURLESON, UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN

MARTIN BUBER SAID, “All real living is meeting.” That’s a bold statement, don’t you think? If it’s true, then to stop meeting, to stop saying hello, is to cease to live. “All real living is meeting.”

That’s a very bold claim but one that our religious forbearers knew to be true. That’s why welcoming the stranger or the foreigner or the “other” was a sacred duty and a sign that you truly knew God. It was certainly the generous and just thing to do, to respond to those who were vulnerable and strangers in the land. But also, it was always assumed that these strangers just might be angels... or messengers from God. Jesus says this explicitly in Matthew 25 when he says that he was literally present in those who were poor and hungry and in prison and, in general, the “other.” There were many who were very surprised to hear this because they assumed they knew where God was and what God was doing. They were mistaken and missed a great gift because of it.

There’s a reason we don’t do Baylor online. It’s because we need the other, the one whose difference prompts us toward growth and toward a better conversation and towards truth and towards the mystery that is often found in the most surprising places. We need folks around us to give us occasion to think with that other “mind” that Dr. Rowatt teaches us about. Our small reptilian mind sees everything and asks, “Should I run from it, eat it, or mate with it?” We do have a better mind, though. I believe it is the “mind of Christ” that does not see differences as something to fear.

Dr. Rowatt has challenged us “to work together to make Baylor a place of generosity — a place where people who hold different views than you or I... can come, be heard, be respected, and be affirmed...” This is the challenge of every university and every good student... and also the measurement of mature faith. “Anyone,” Jesus says, “can love those who are like them... even those who don’t know God can do that.” The real yardstick for real faith is found in our capacity to love those who are unlike us.

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Darin Davis, Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Director for the Institute for Faith and Learning at Baylor, is the author of our next essay. Darin and his wife Brenda have three daughters (6, 3, 1) and two dogs. He has been at Baylor for four years and loves teaching his class on Happiness and the Moral Life. Dr. Davis also teaches Sunday School at Columbus Avenue Baptist Church. If you’re in BU or University 1000, you’ll need to read his essay on **Attention** in order to prepare for week three of your course.



To respond to Dr. Burleson’s blog or the essays in this booklet, visit the Spiritual life website

[www.baylor.edu/spiritual life](http://www.baylor.edu/spiritual life)

# The Place of Attention... and a Good Aim in Your Academic Journey

## *How to deal with all the distractions*

by DARIN DAVIS

WE LIVE IN A WORLD of distractions, some of our own making, others present because our world is, as William James aptly described, “one great blooming, buzzing confusion.” Even as I write these words, distractions surround me: frenzied violin music playing in the background; a ringing cell phone; the tone from my computer alerting me that I have new e-mail messages; a friend’s voice, asking me to join him for lunch; my colleague asking me to do something that cannot wait; my grumbling, hungry stomach; the realization that the eleven things on my “to do list” likely will not be accomplished today; my longing for a weekend when I can finally set aside some of these distractions and relax; my worry that I will not relax because I will be distracted.

In this world of distractions, consider the ways we must be attentive every day just to get along in the world. If I am not properly attentive to the traffic lights that tell me when to stop, go, and be cautious, I have diminished my chance of arriving safely to my destination. More complicated are the ways that we must be attentive to the persons around us. My best friend may say she is fine, that her day went well, that she in fact has never felt better, yet I sense something different in the tone of her voice and her downward glance as she speaks. Something, I can tell, is just not right with her. This kind of attention is of a different order than appreciating the difference between red, yellow, and green lights at the intersection. Being attentive to my friend requires my willingness to be present to her now, to watch and listen and speak to her, instead of all the other persons and things that vie for my attention.

People often talk about the need for time management skills and joke that if only they had thirty-six hours in a day, they could do all the things they need and want to do. But maybe what they really need is the discipline of attention. If we are not properly attentive to the important things around us, allotting thirty minutes here or three hours there makes little difference. What matters is whether we are attentive in the time we have — and what we are attentive to. But what is the discipline of attention, and how is it a spiritual discipline? And what is its relevance for the academic life?

Simone Weil (1909–43, pronounced “vay”), a French philosopher and religious writer, considered these questions in an interesting little essay titled “Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God.” Exploring how Christians might understand the proper aims of academic study, Weil points out the profound connection between attention and prayer, namely that prayer is a form of attention, requiring us to turn ourselves away from distractions and towards God. Put another way, prayer consists of rightly directing ourselves to see, to listen — indeed to wait for God. “The quality of the attention counts for much of the quality of the prayer,” Weil explains. “Warmth of heart cannot make up for it.” Attention does not simply allow us to shut out the “blooming, buzzing confusion” around us; it draws us closer to God.

The spiritual discipline of attention, however, is not confined to prayer; it likewise applies to the scholarly work of teachers and students. Weil believes that when we devote ourselves to learning, for instance, Latin, trigonometry, music, history, chemistry, literature, or physics — indeed any discipline — we are developing the same discipline

Simone Weil, *Waiting for God* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1951), 105.

of attention that is indispensable for seeking God. As we concentrate on the meaning of a difficult poem or try to solve a tough calculus problem, we are increasing our grasp of truth; that is, we are cultivating our capacity to realize, though only in part, the way things really are. In fact, even during those occasions when our intellectual efforts seem futile — perhaps we spend an entire Saturday afternoon toiling over organic chemistry homework that we cannot seem to get a handle on — we are still building capacities of attention that make us better able to know the world around us. As long as we sincerely strive towards understanding, no effort of attention is pointless.

And while we do not often recognize a connection between prayer and study, Christians should realize one important similarity: both seek the same end. Just as prayer draws one closer to the Divine, so does learning in the academic disciplines. For Christians, the pursuit of truth, regardless of the road traveled, leads ultimately to God, who created and sustains all that is. Both prayer and study require the attitude of one who watches, listens, waits, and seeks to understand with patience and humility. Such genuine attention brings us closer to knowing the Divine.

Yet the question remains: given that our world is full of distractions, how do we strive to become attentive to the most important things in our lives?

This summer I participated in a weeklong retreat at a remote venue in the Texas Hill Country where physical beauty abounds, but where there is no access to the Internet or cell phone service. For the first two days of the retreat, I confess to feeling uncomfortable about being disconnected from the larger world. I had no access to news reports and sports scores, and I could not check my e-mail. Others at the retreat confessed similar distress, even slight annoyance, from not being “plugged in.” But once the initial shock to our systems subsided, many of us suddenly realized that some of the ways we “plug in” actually complicate our lives, sap our energy, and turn our attention away from things that really matter.

I relate this experience not to suggest that cultivating the discipline of attention is as simple as occasionally abstaining from cell phones or Facebook or removing our iPods from our ears. Nor can we return to a pre-technological age. The better cure for distraction may be found by asking a single question: what are we aiming to achieve?

We cannot possibly know what things count as distractions without first knowing what we are seeking to do. Indeed, none of the examples of distraction that I mentioned above always count as distractions. The violin music I hear in the background is no distraction if listening to classical music is what I intend to do, and if I seek to be in the company of friends, there is no more welcomed sound than my friend’s voice. So a proper description of intention — of what we aim to do — is necessary. Of course, there are various ways to inquire about intention. Consider, for example, these questions:

- Why are you reading this essay right now?
- What do you hope to achieve by taking this New Student Experience Course?
- Why are you at Baylor?
- What are your highest hopes and aspirations?

Asking questions about intention introduces the concept of having a goal. To have a goal is to recognize something as genuinely worthy of pursuit and then to act in a way that will realize the goal. The Greek philosopher Aristotle, for example, begins his *Nicomachean Ethics* by proposing that every action leads to something that we see as worthwhile, and that the sum of all our actions might lead to a ‘highest good,’ what he later identifies as happiness or flourishing, the state of living and doing well over a complete life. Living intentionally, of course, need not require us to pause before each and every action and ponder how it will contribute to our overall good; it simply means that we live reflectively, deliberately, and with purpose. It means that we keep in the foreground of our consciousness

questions about the ultimate meaning of our lives. Like a compass, the discipline of intention helps us get our bearings and keeps us from going astray.

Only when we practice *intention* will *attention* be possible; only when we set out towards a worthy end will we be in a position to avoid the obstacles that impede us from living truly good lives. Christians see their lives as replete with meaning for a special reason: life is a gift from God, full of Divine purpose. The spiritual disciplines of intention and attention bring us closer to a realization of the particular ways that God calls us to lead the lives given to us.

We live in a world of distractions, some of our own making, others present because our world is a blooming, buzzing confusion. As you begin your studies at Baylor, may you be encouraged to strive to avoid the distractions that sometimes inundate our lives and find the time and space to consider your own queries about meaning and purpose. To pose these questions is never quick or easy, nor will it guarantee a good grade or a six-figure salary when you graduate.

It is, nevertheless, among the most important things you can do while you are here. And it just might change your life.

*Dr. Darin Davis is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Institute for Faith and Learning.*

# Reflections

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## Questions about the essay on Attention

### QUESTIONS

1. Name the top three distractions in your life.
2. When you try to pay “attention” are there things towards which you drift?
3. Does attention come naturally for you... for anyone? Is it voluntary?
4. How are attention and intention related according to Dr. Davis?
5. Do you have any experience where your intention created attention?
6. There are different learning styles. Have you noticed yet, as a learner, what helps you to pay attention, to focus? Are you aware of what blocks you?
7. What do you hope to achieve by taking this New Student Experience Course?

*In preparation for Session Four of U/BU 1000 during the first six weeks.*

### PRACTICE

- Return next week with one goal written out for this semester and answer the question, “What environment helps me focus my attention as I study?”
- Make sure to read and refer to “Setting SMART Goals”(pp. 20).

### ASSIGNMENT

- The assignments for next week are to read the essay on **Temperance** and answer the questions.

## *setting SMART goals*

- **SPECIFIC** — Specific goals are easier to visualize and will promote more directed behavior than vague and general goals. “I will earn at least a 3.2 GPA my first semester at Baylor.” is better than “I want to be a good student.”
- **MEASURABLE** — This is probably the most important aspect of goal setting. It is difficult to stay motivated and to measure your success if you do not have a clear way of assessing whether you have reached your goal or not. “I will study for at least three hours for every hour spent in class.” is better than “I will study more than I did in high school.”
- **ACHIEVABLE** — There is an important difference between challenging goals and unrealistic goals. Goals that are beyond one’s reach can be demoralizing.
- **RELEVANT** — Goals need to have a connection to the larger life goals. For instance, the goal of having the most “hits” on Facebook or Myspace does very little for your long-term goal of going to graduate/professional school.
- **TIME TABLE** — Every goal needs to have a well-defined endpoint. The academic life is naturally divided into semesters and years of study. Consequently, academic year or semester goals are a natural. Long-term goals should be divided into succinct, well-defined goals that work toward the success of the long-term goal.

# In Between

## A blog for students about our New Student Experience Readings

by BURT BURLESON, UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN

“NO EFFORT OF ATTENTION IS POINTLESS.” Dr. Davis’s claim (echoing Simone Weil) ought to be encouraging to us all. Paying attention to anything can help us develop the capacity to pay attention to everything and especially to the things that are most important to us. Paying attention driving on I35 can help you stay focused on a calculus problem when the time comes. Not letting my mind wander during a sermon may help me stay focused during a lecture and vice versa. It’s the same muscle we’re exercising. And it has to be well exercised and well trained in order to do well in the academic life. Focusing our attention is nonnegotiable!

Some of us have an easier time with this than others. Some of us drift and drift constantly. I joined DA (Drifters Anonymous) a long time ago. There are plenty of us who find this really challenging, which may be the mark of a creative mind or it may be an indication that we really aren’t *intending* anything. We have no aim. An aim can be a powerful thing. Having an aim focuses our energy... even creates energy. Experiment with this and you’ll find it’s true. Have an aim today and see what happens.

Our next essay is written by Dr. Jonathan Tran who has been married to his wife Carrie for 12 years, and dated for 8 years before that! (i.e. That means they have been together for over half their lives, and they’re not even THAT old.) They have three little strangers living in their house: cat Cubby (10 years old); daughter Tahlia (6 years) and son David (3 years). Dr. Tran’s hobbies include, in this order: Playing Basketball, Watching Basketball, Talking about Playing Basketball, Planning to Watch Basketball, Reading about Basketball. His favorite courses to teach are Introduction to Christian Ethics and Bioethics. When asked about favorite places to eat in Waco he says, “Anywhere with my family (being a father means one’s personal preferences no longer matter). If it’s up to David, McDonalds. Olive Garden for Tahlia. Carrie loves 135 Prime (a very nice steak house, but a bit of a strange choice considering her husband doesn’t eat land animals — maybe one’s personal preferences stop mattering at marriage?).” Dr. Tran and his family are members at Calvary Baptist Church.

Dr. Tran has written about **Temperance** and done so from his vantage point as a Christian theologian. These ideas and perspectives may be very new to you. Remember our previous essays on humility and on being open to what may be foreign to you. If you’re in BU or University 1000 you’ll need to have this essay read and the questions answered for the fourth week of the semester.



To respond to Dr. Burleson’s blog or the essays in this booklet, visit the Spiritual life website

[www.baylor.edu/spiritual life](http://www.baylor.edu/spiritual%20life)

# The Place of Temperance... and a Bit of Balance in Your Academic Journey

*How play, worship, and a good nap may raise your GPA*

by JONATHAN TRAN

HAVING GOTTEN INTO BAYLOR, you probably do lots of things well. Resting may not be one of those things. Outstanding GPA? Check. A long list of extracurricular activities? No doubt. Keeping the Sabbath? Huh? Getting regular sleep? Hmmm. Stopping to smell the roses? Uh-oh!

Success in life isn't usually measured by Sabbath keeping. Some even believe that the less rest one gets, the more success one can achieve. And by some measure, this might even be true. I've heard "really successful" people say things like, "I don't need but four hours of sleep a night." Wow. I guess most of us won't be "really successful." (Maybe that's a good thing?) On the other side, I've heard it said that success requires rest. And when you think about the schedules of most Baylor undergrads (studying for the upcoming History midterm, preparing for next week's Baylor Buddies meeting, editing a Lariat editorial, completing O Chem equations, running laps at the SLC, financing your college education, taking LSAT prep courses, emailing-IMing-texting-tweeting-Facebooking-blogging, meeting with intimidating professors, leading a church small group Bible study, Skyping Mom and Dad, applying for summer internships, raising money for a retreat, hosting study groups, rushing a sorority, doing 10 hours of work-study a week...Woosh, sounds exhausting doesn't it?) maybe success really does require more than 4 hours of sleep. Perhaps rest is the Gatorade of the academic journey.

Or, maybe rest is not *for* anything, and maybe that's the point. Maybe rest is for rest. Maybe we ought think of rest not as a means but as an end. Maybe rest is less about helping us get things done (for sure, rest does) and more about who we are. Instead of a quandary that pits "No Rest = Success" against "Rest = Success", we might think of rest as good in itself. And in doing so, we join the great theological and philosophical tradition.

## "Be Still"

For Christians, God certainly calls us to rest too. He even sets the example himself after 6 days of creating. Rest *is* something that makes good work possible, but primarily, rest is *itself* the result of work, namely God's work (Gen. 2.2; John 19:30). God's faithfulness makes possible genuine rest. For the early church father Saint Augustine of Hippo, the soul's journey begins in and returns to God's rest. According to the great ecclesia teacher Saint Thomas Aquinas, rest as temperance is a mark of the well-ordered life. The 20th century theologian Karl Barth thought Sabbath was the whole form of the Christian life; for Barth, Sunday both *began* and *ended* the Christian week. For these theologians, the urging from the Psalmist had particular insight:

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him. (37:7 NIV)

For me and many others around here, this might be one of the most difficult challenges we face. Anyone who's walked in the shoes of a Baylor undergrad knows "being still" is not easy. In a world where poverty kills

34,000 children each day, doesn't rest sound like a luxury we can no longer afford? When the intense pressures of undergraduate life demand all of our energies, aren't things like play, worship, and a good nap quaint but unrealistic notions?

The great danger tempting all of us today is not laziness but urgency (i.e. laziness is often the consequence of being overwhelmed by urgency). As Christians, when we don't rest, we suggest to the world that God has not been faithful so it's up to us to make sure things turn out right, to take care of our own lives. When we rest, we let the world know God is good, trustworthy, and delightful. In this way, rest is one of our most powerful modes of evangelism for it tells a world crushed by burdens that God lightens our burdens. Because God is responsible for making things turn out right, we are not: by rest we know God is good, and because we know God is good, we rest. This is not license to do nothing but the freedom to do everything. God's rest rescues us from the paralyzing fear that results from being overwhelmed. Because we don't have to do everything, we are freed to do anything.

### **The Goodness of Naps**

Plato thought that the best way to test a student's character was to take him to drinking parties (see Plato's *Laws* 638b-650c). Drink too much or too little and one lacks the temperance that characterizes the balanced and virtuous life. Well, Baylor professors won't be hosting any such drinking parties. But one might think similarly about napping. To be sure, one can nap too much (or sleep in too late!). But one can also nap too little. A brief 20-minute nap in the middle of a workday may just demonstrate the peace and patience of Psalm 37, the balanced life of work and rest, faithfulness and worship. Studies show that productivity is actually increased by regular napping. But beyond the question of productivity, naps speak of God. It says, "I can afford to take a 20-minute nap, to get enough sleep, to enjoy friends, to read Holy Scripture, to pray, and to enjoy God because I am not in charge of the world or my life. I can rest because God's work makes my rest possible."

### **Making Room for God**

Rest is not something to be done. And that is the point. You may be familiar with the Mary and Martha sisters in Luke 10. Jesus comes to the home of Martha and Mary. Wanting to impress their important visitor, Martha thinks it necessary to rush about in an effort to be a good host by tending to his comfort and needs while Mary chooses to rest at Jesus' feet. Martha was right to want to be hospitable to Jesus, but she, like we often do, went about it in ways that left no room for what was most needed. In her efforts, she forgot that God does not need our hospitality. God enjoys and loves us; He does not need us. We are not tasked with getting things done for God but instead ordering our lives more appropriately for God's work to be done.

One of the problems with our restless natures (call it the Martha-Needs-Gatorade Tendency) is that it makes no room for God. In a hurry to get things done, we make no room for those things that matter most. Thinking we are serving God or doing good, we leave little room for the close-quarter discipleship of being served by God. The Martha-Needs-Gatorade Tendency rears its ugly head in ugly ways. Our schedules too maxed out, we don't sleep. Overburdened by schoolwork, we (as one undergrad said) "don't have time for socializing." Too bent on the future, we don't have time for the present (much less treasures from the past). Too intent on saving the world, we don't let the world (strangers, children, the needy, the hungry, the wounded) in. Poorly ordered, life can undercut itself.

### Sabbath Keeping Habits

How might we — like Mary — welcome God? How might we rest in ways demanded and promised by Psalm 37? Let me offer a few practices with which you might begin your Baylor career. Some of these are keepers. Some are not. Experiment with them and discover how you specifically rest. Don't worry, you'll figure it out. You have time.

- Take advantage of the many sacred times and spaces on campus. Baylor has set aside places where the pressures of university life are kept at bay. Find these spaces and take time to rest. These include morning and evening prayer at Robbins Chapel in Brooks College, the prayer room at Bobo, contemplative spaces in almost every residence hall and most university buildings, or maybe just a quiet, pretty spot you christen as uniquely yours. Approach Chapel as an opportunity to let go of the busy-ness of life for a brief time. Sometimes Chapel will mean learning, sometimes singing, sometimes it may mean not speaking to anyone or reading anything but just gathering yourself; these 30 minutes are precious; honor them as such.
- Find others committed to your rest. For Christians, it is something God has mandated as a mode of worshipping him; to God it is no less important than praying for enemies and not stealing. Your professors will keep you accountable for studying, Your parents will keep you accountable for finances. Your bosses will keep you on time. Find people who will keep you accountable for resting, who encourage you get enough sleep, exercise, eat well, friends who help you enter into the restful presence of God.
- Play. Rest as play and play as rest orient you to what matters most. Eat a tasty meal, watch a wonderful film, listen to good music. Take hours to listen to a friend tell her story, asking questions as ways of searching out God's goodness. Take a weekend where you and your friends read through Exodus or grab a guitar and some folks and lead spontaneous worship in your dorm room. Find the goofiest uniform imaginable and join the Baylor dodge ball tournament. Go and cheer on our Baylor Bears. Take a road trip! Plant a community garden. Attend to God's amazing creation, which will remind you that all this was created for rest; tend God's earth and you will attend to God's peace.
- Slow down. I am often amazed how rushed students can be. In a hurry to get to the next thing, they often lose sight of what *anything* is about. Remember, after graduating you will have years (decades!) to do whatever it is you plan on doing. Don't rush to get there because in rushing, you might just miss out on what you were after in the first place.
- Most importantly, rest. Don't just plan on it; don't just talk about it, but rest. Make rest the shape of your life, its beginning and end, the basis of everything you do. It is who you have been and are being made to be.

Will things like worship, play, and a good nap raise your GPA? I'm willing to bet they will. Having gotten into Baylor, you've already done lots well. At Baylor, you will learn to do more things well. Make rest one of those things.

*Dr. Jonathan Tran is an Assistant Professor of Religion.*

### QUESTIONS

1. Prior to arriving at Baylor, what has “Sabbath keeping” meant to you? Have you ever kept a Sabbath? What did it look like? Jesus says that Sabbath was made for us, not us for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). What does it mean to you that Sabbath was made *for* you?
2. Would you say you rest well? For example, if you had to grade your ability to rest, what grade would you give yourself? Who do you know rests well, who has achieved a good balance between work and rest?
3. As you begin your Baylor academic career, what do you worry about most? What are you most in a rush to accomplish? How might you develop greater peacefulness regarding these worries? What would it mean for you to “slow down” and smell the roses while seeking those accomplishments?
4. Above, the author states that, “by rest, do we know God is good, and because we know God is good, we rest.” How does knowing God’s faithfulness free you to rest? How does rest teach you about God’s faithfulness?
5. The sky is the limit, what would a perfect day of rest and play look like to you? What would you do? Whom would you spend it with? How can you achieve versions of this perfect day of rest over the first year of your new life at Baylor?

*In preparation for Session Two of U/BU 1000 during the first six weeks.*

### PRACTICE

- Schedule a time for one of the following: play, a nap, a date, a worship experience. Follow through with the commitment. Be mindful of how your mind may be in a debate with itself about the value of these types of activities.

### ASSIGNMENT

- The assignments for next week are to read the essay on **Perseverance** and answer the questions.

DR. TRAN has prophetically held up a very challenging ethic regarding the way we spend our time and its origins in our faith tradition. These are ancient teachings and you are probably aware that the Sabbath teaching (rest) has always been resisted... and especially by college students. And you're probably aware also that balance seems to be hard for us... and especially hard for college students. And I'm sure you are aware that temperance, moderation, has not been a long suite for humanity... and especially not for college students. I hope you'll also be aware that these virtues and values can be nurtured into any life... even in the life of a college student. It is not inevitable that your lifestyle while in college be unmanageable or unhealthy. Begin now practicing the virtue of temperance. Self-restraint is essential to healthy life, spiritual maturity, and academic success.

Elizabeth Vardaman began teaching at Baylor in 1980 and now serves as Associate Dean for Special Academic Programs in the College of Arts and Sciences. Her husband, Dr. James Vardaman, was a faculty member in the history department for 33 years and is now retired. They are both Baylor grads and have both been blessed by the opportunity to teach and be administrators at their alma mater. The Vardamans have worked overseas for Baylor in Britain, in China, and in The Netherlands and are active members of Seventh and James Baptist Church.

The Vardamans have a wonderful library, and Dean Vardaman loves to have a cup of tea early in the morning in that room. She says, "Learning about teas has been fascinating to me. I am pretty proud of my ability to make a proper cup. On Saturdays, I often read, pet our cat, write in my journal, or watch the way light and shadows move across the grass in our garden."

One of her responsibilities as a member of the dean's staff in the College of Arts and Sciences is to represent Baylor for the Rhodes, Fulbright, Marshall, Truman and other national scholarship competitions. Students submit to her many iterations of proposals and personal essays, and in the process find their writing skills are honed in new and important ways.

She has worked closely with many, many students through the years who have overcome challenges to succeed and do so in significant ways. You'll read about some of these in her essay on **Perseverance**. If you're in BU or University 1000 you'll need to have this essay read for the fifth week of your new student course.

To respond to Dr. Burleson's blog or the essays  
in this booklet, visit the Spiritual life website  
[www.baylor.edu/spiritual life](http://www.baylor.edu/spiritual%20life) 

# The Place of Perseverance... and a Determined Will in Your Academic Journey

*How to deepen the conversation about who you are and where you are going*

by ELIZABETH VARDAMAN

MY OFFICE WINDOW in Burleson Hall faces the Quad, and one of my great pleasures early in the fall semester is to watch students and faculty members moving past, unaware of the privilege I am taking to study them. Some students often rush or even run down the sidewalks. Professors stroll, seemingly exhilarated by the last lecture or the promise of things to come. Many undergraduates plod past, talking on their phones, texting, or listening to iPods. They do not notice the couple holding hands in the green-and-gold swing under the large oak tree (but I do!). The faces of students may be turned up toward the clouds or down toward the announcements chalked on the sidewalks — you know the postures—but every person seems intriguing and compelling from my vantage point in this room with a wonderful view.

Of course, we do not get to know one another when there is a panel of glass between us. But you will not have such barriers in the classroom, and as the unique, multi-faceted person you are, the responsibility is yours to determine when and where you wish to be known. Some students are very private or perhaps shy; they may be fighting a hard, personal battle or have other reasons to maintain distance, while a significant percentage of entering students open conversation with their professors and fellow classmates readily. Many faculty members at Baylor are willing and even eager to visit with you during their office hours. Our past experience assures us that we will be enriched by meeting you, and you may also be glad you came to see us. We are here to clarify academic issues and help you succeed in our courses, first and foremost, as you experience your initial semester here. But beyond those important introductory interactions, many members of the Baylor staff and faculty are also concerned that you think about how your interests, talents, and skills might intersect meaningfully with specific majors and how those majors might equip you for the profession and career that seem to fit your heart and mind. Our overarching aspiration as a community is — to use our marketing phrase — that you will “find yourself at Baylor.” That will entail much hard work on your part inside but also far beyond classroom activities

## Living the Questions.

The still, small inner voice does not compete well with all that is “drive-by” or cacophonous. So you may find that the greatest insights into understanding yourself are revealed through quiet conversations with trusted friends, or at times when you slow your world down, meditate in church, or engage in reflection, contemplation or prayer. How will you mobilize the courage, the tenacity, and self-scrutiny to become the fullness of the insights you gain? How will you transform the initial failure you experience on a quiz in your favorite class into proactive planning that will ensure better performance on the next quiz? You will spend much of your formative years living out such large and small questions. As Rainer Maria Rilke so famously explained in *Letters to a Young Poet*:

Have patience with everything that remains unsolved in your heart. Try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books written in a foreign language. Do not now look for the answers. They cannot now be given to you because you could not live them. It is a question of

experiencing everything. At present you need to live the question. Perhaps you will gradually, without even noticing it, find yourself experiencing the answer, some distant day.

You will, if you are vigilant, ultimately grow into the answers, for college is full of questions and is the privileged time you are being given to begin finding out not only what you want to do with your life but why you are choosing this direction or that profession. If you miss that vital aspect of the journey you are embarking upon here, you will have missed the larger and broader distinctive of a college education at Baylor.

### **Maximizing Your Resources.**

Some students, of course, have encountered significant challenges or turmoil and known the need to be seriously introspective about who they are and where they are going long before entering college. One of our recent engineering graduates is a case in point. When he was in high school, his family was very supportive but because their finances were severely limited, they did not always have the money to pay their electricity bill. Thus, this young man studied by the light in the car many nights. Juan entered Baylor on a Gates Millennium Scholarship and never seemed to get his priorities mixed up. He bid for national scholarships and won two prestigious awards in science and engineering, the Goldwater and the National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship. His definition of fun consisted of weekends filled with not only completing his assignments but also reading supplemental materials and thinking about principles that might apply across disciplines.

Juan also spent time talking to his professors, weighing their advice, and filling out applications for summer programs. His efforts were rewarded handsomely, with five options for summer internships one year (he accepted the option to M.I.T.). He began graduate studies this year at Berkeley after maximizing every day, every night, at Baylor. For Juan and many others, college was not about checking off a list of requirements; college was a gift he would not squander. Here he linked his life to the profession he wanted to enter and built strong friendships. He was given opportunity to use his skills on an international mission trip to Honduras where he and others installed a generator and brought electricity to a village. He also played lots of pick-up basketball with friends. His research garnered accolades, and he left here not only with a degree but with intellectual property, self-confidence, and a very bright future indeed.

Through my years in the dean's office in the College of Arts and Sciences and in my work with various national scholarship programs, I have had the privilege of coming to know well many students who have maximized their academic journeys here, perhaps failing at something that was the catalyst for discovering their passions, utilizing their best skills and affirming their calling or purpose through prayer, meditation, and determination. One young woman who won a major award was a journalism and international studies major here. She spent 2009 - 2010 in Armenia as a Fulbright Scholar studying social media and blogs there. She spoke to my University 1000 class before she left for Armenia, encouraging them "to learn about all the different departments, projects, programs and organizations on campus" and to get involved early in a wide variety of programs and service. She stressed that students will not be able "to maintain a perfect balance between the social, academic, spiritual, physical and emotional aspects," so even they (and you) should strive for balance. Only participating in that program at which you can be perfect may paralyze you and stifle your creative energy. Ashley has figured out how to manage the perfection gene and is studying this year for a master's degree in journalism at Columbia.

Another 2009 - 2010 Fulbright Scholar, an ethnomusicologist, spent a year in Nepal, helping establish a music curriculum for the schools and a music association for the teachers. He found his calling in music and culture. I am certain no ambassador for the United States could have done more to serve a country than this remarkable young

man did through music in Nepal. Other students have attained equally astonishing results in business, languages, medicine, education, mathematics, social work, international studies, environmental science, literature, linguistics, and other fields. The point is — they have begun the hard work of becoming the selves they were created to be.

### **Finding Your “Self” at Baylor.**

The poet-priest Gerard Manley Hopkins understood how important it is for each of us, in the sanctity of our own heart, to probe for and value our unique place in the larger scheme of things. He says, in “As Kingfishers Catch Fire”:

Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:  
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;  
Selves — goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,  
Crying *Whát* I do is me: for that I came.

Í say móre: the just man justices;  
Kéeps gráce: thát keeps all his goings graces;  
Acts in God’s eye what in God’s eye he is —  
Christ — for Christ plays in ten thousand places,  
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his  
To the Father through the features of men’s faces.

Those aspects of your selfhood that enable you to extend grace or justice to others will push against your fears, imperfections, pettiness, self-deception, and burdens. This is a life-long tension. We cannot see your internal battles as you enter or leave our classrooms. Your heavy backpack, scholarly airs, or happy-go-lucky façade may be masking a very insecure woman or man, but faculty know that you are human; therefore, we know you struggle, just as we all do. (We were young once, too. We made mistakes. We traveled down wrong paths on our way to the right ones!) And we understand your inner being is a motley assortment of strengths and developmental needs. Sometimes the needs can be very serious, almost overwhelming. We hope you or your circle of friends and family do not experience great personal loss or illness while you are a student here, but when tragedy strikes, Baylor has policies and resources to help and many trained professionals extend love and counsel. When I was an undergraduate here, my best friend, my mother, died, and my world turned upside down. My professors, my church, and friends helped me, over many months, to stay the course and eventually begin concentrating again on completing my degree and finding my future.

Baylor is, finally, a special place where you may mature, discuss your faith tradition with others if you wish to, search out your inner callings, and make progress toward your professional dreams. Not everyone maximizes these facets of our school, but many do. Through prayer, through journaling, through encounters with others, through stepping outside your comfort zone, and through wrestling with the challenges presented by scholars and teachers in every division of the university, you may come to a place where you begin to appreciate your own best gifts and ways of being. This is the place to become your best self. Aim high. Even the spires on our buildings are cheering for you. We offer you experiences, relationships, and skills that will become cherished tools for your journey both into the known and unknown.

Here are four suggestions that may provide insight into your skills, talents, values, and character, as well as bring success to your academic experience if you persevere in them. Successful students here have asked me to share these with you:

- **Do not put off your studying until late at night. Find a place where you can immerse yourself in your work and not be interrupted for at least two hours at a time during the day.** Some students choose libraries where they can spread their materials out on big tables. Others say our coffee shops are the best places to work. There are many attractive, quiet spaces in Sid Richardson Bldg. And if you have trouble disciplining yourself, make appointments with the Success Center staff just down the hall; they can help you become proactive in all of your courses. Many successful students also keep a record of how much they study each week, making sure they are staying caught up in all their assignments. Another group of experts who can help you immensely are our librarians. Talk to them about your research assignments. They are eager to help. You will be amazed how many resources they can and will provide you.
- **Learn to write, speak, and listen well.** The Writing Center on the Garden Level of Carroll Science Building is open to everyone. If you take rough drafts of your assignments there, experts will help you think through the way you have the material organized, the sources cited, the content developed for various audiences, and the clarity of your grammar. Notice the successful writers in your classes and learn from them as well. Also, push yourself to enhance your ability to make oral presentations. Many of the principles that are essential for effective written work serve you well when you are called on to draft a speech. By practicing your delivery and volunteering to make presentations in classes you will enhance your communication skills immeasurably. Consider joining organizations that will motivate you to take leadership positions and provide you opportunities to learn how to speak effectively, how to listen, and how to mature as a communicator.
- **Read, read, read.** You are a citizen of an increasingly complex society and polarized world. Among your classmates are people who will become voices for civic responsibility, discover medicines and cures, minister to victims of human trafficking, ignite our imaginations in problem solving, serve in our nation's military corps, create new and more efficient business systems, produce insightful movies, design better technology, cleanse our waters, direct new artistic endeavors, educate our children, improve our state and federal agencies, effect new laws, feed the hungry, lead our churches, lift our spirits, and inspire us once again. Whew! To do these things, we urge you to read deeply in the classic texts that demand concentration and commitment. Read newspapers and journals that agree with and contradict your prejudices. These years at the university are your last best chance to expand your capacity to think, to open your mind to new and diverse ideas, and to immerse yourself in the great books of all times. Czeslaw Milosz reminds us in "And Yet the Books" that long after he is gone, "Books will be there on the shelves, well born, /Derived from people, but also from radiance, heights." He died before Facebook or Twitter. But I hope he is right.
- **Make another appointment to meet another professor.** Don't allow yourself to communicate only by email with your teachers. There is a smorgasbord of academic delights your teachers can introduce you to. Perhaps you will want to find out how to become involved in research or what summer internships are available in your field. There are so many things your professors know that will enrich your first year here! And there are so many ways to find yourself at Baylor! Ask us about some of the students we stay in touch with. Almost all professors at Baylor continue to cheer for and advise students whom they have

mentored. The poet James Wright expresses in “Blessing” what so many of us feel when we reminisce about “our” students and this place: “Suddenly I realize / That if I stepped out of my body I would break / Into blossom.” (Green and gold blossom, of course.)

*Elizabeth Vardaman is Associate Dean for Special Academic Programs in the College of Arts and Sciences.*

### QUESTIONS

1. You've been at Baylor for a month, what are the things that tend to discourage you? Day in and day out, what is most challenging?
2. On a scale from 1 to 10, 10 being completely sure of yourself, how confident are you right now in your ability to navigate college and academic life?
3. Do you think of yourself as someone who perseveres? How has that developed in your life? What inspired it? If it's not a strength for you just now, can you reflect on why that is?
4. What kinds of things encourage you? What does the author believe about the relationship between perseverance and mentors? What might you have to overcome to develop a relationship with a professor at Baylor?
5. How can you maximize your time at Baylor?
6. How can you find yourself during your time at Baylor?
7. Is perseverance a spiritual matter? How so?

*In preparation for Session Six of U/BU 1000 during the first six weeks.*

### PRACTICE

- Dean Vardaman alluded to “your heavy backpack.” We are all carrying some things that burden us and weigh us down. While shouldering burdens is a part of adulthood, a backpack that is too full can rob us of life and certainly hinder an academic journey. It may be time, early on in your journey, to name what is in your “backpack.” What baggage are you carrying? Can any of it be released? Take some time this week to journal about your baggage. Write down what is burdening you. Naming a burden can give you some measure of power to deal with it. And following Dean Vardaman’s guidance, if your burden is too much to bear, seek help from a friend or your chaplain or someone else at Baylor (U/BU1000 facilitator, Baylor Counseling Center). Seeking help is a spiritual virtue and practice. We are not made to navigate life by ourselves. Learn to seek help for difficulties.

### ASSIGNMENT

- The assignments for next week are to read the essay on **Integrity** and answer the questions.

# In Between

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## A blog for students about our New Student Experience Readings

by BURT BURLESON, UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN

**PERSEVERANCE**, Dean Vardaman has reminded us, is a work of great grace. While grades are always looming and mistakes always have consequences and life always seems to be throwing us curve balls... we get “do-overs” even on an academic journey. Always be willing to begin again and know this... you will have to begin again and again and again. And while, in the midst of some discouragement, you may not be able to imagine “making it” you will find second winds, and a third and fourth winds that come to you by sheer grace.

I hope you also heard Dean Vardaman declare that perseverance is a group project. One way we try to manifest our faith at Baylor is to create an environment that is compassionate and supportive. We don't manifest these qualities with perfection but we're trying and at every turn you will find folks available and ready to walk alongside you during your time with us. You are not alone and, if you are willing to ask for help, you will find encouragement in the tough times and you can accomplish great things at Baylor.

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Our last essay is written by Dr. Blake Burleson, another Associate Dean in the College of Arts and Sciences. He is also a Senior Lecture in the Religion Department (and older brother to the University Chaplain... much older). Dr. Burleson and his wife Sandy are both Baylor alums and actively involved at Seventh and James Baptist Church where he teaches Sunday School. His hobbies are backpacking, hiking, and snow skiing. His favorite class to teach is World Religions and his favorite restaurant is D's Mediterranean Grill.

This essay on **Integrity** should be read in preparation for the last week of BU and University 1000. Be sure to answer the questions and spend some time becoming familiar with the Policy on Academic Integrity. This is vital to your faithful participation as a member of the Baylor Community.



To respond to Dr. Burleson's blog or the essays in this booklet, visit the Spiritual life website

[www.baylor.edu/spiritual life](http://www.baylor.edu/spiritual%20life)

# The Place of Integrity... and a Moral Community in Your Academic Journey

*How to move beyond codes to character*

by BLAKE BURLESON

BLAINE M<sup>C</sup>CORMICK'S *Ben Franklin: America's Original Entrepreneur* concludes that so much is known about "Franklin as founding father, framer, statesman, scientist, philosopher, master of the epigram, and fount of earthly wisdom that it is small wonder we have little room left for recognition of his talents as entrepreneur and businessman" (xiii). If Franklin is America's original entrepreneur, what is his key to making money? Late in life after becoming one of the Western world's most well-known figures, Franklin wrote *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* which became a manual for aspiring young people who desired success. In that book he said that the most important quality one can possess in order to make money was "Integrity."

## Is Ben Franklin right? Is the surest way to find success in life through integrity?

On first glance, we have to question this proposition. When we see successful executives making millions through unscrupulous means, less-than-truthful politicians winning elections, and sports heroes cheating in order to ensure victory, we have to ask if Franklin really understood the American culture. Is integrity really the most important quality a young person can possess on the way to the top? Doesn't intelligence, good looks, determination, persona, superior genes, skills, and the right circle of friends matter more than integrity on the path to success?

What is integrity anyway? And what does integrity have to do with winning at the academic game? What does it have to do with attaining a degree? Of getting into law school? Or medical school? What does it have to do with getting a first job out of college? Or making a good grade on a mid-term exam?

The American Heritage Dictionary gives three definitions of integrity. **First, integrity may be thought of as "steadfast adherence to a strict moral or ethical code."** Students and faculty members are expected to follow particular codes which bind them together as members of communities within the larger Baylor family. For example, students living on campus adhere to the "community covenant" which states that "as members of this community we will be known for respect, openness, community, learning, citizenship, and responsibility." The "five values" of Baylor student service or social organizations are "respect all persons, be vision-minded, demonstrate active care, demonstrate good stewardship, and intentional influence." Faculty are bound by various professional standards such as the Statement on Academic Freedom of the American Academic of University Professors which reads, in part, "Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject." Student-athletes at Baylor are expected to follow coaches' instructions; if Coach Kim Mulkey's star Lady Bear isn't playing hard-nosed, tenacious defense, she will be provided a seat on the bench. So there are various moral and organizational codes to which members of the Baylor family are expected to adhere.

The one code, however, that applies to the entire Baylor community is the Academic Honor Code which states: "Baylor University students, staff, and faculty shall act in academic matters with the utmost honesty and integrity." Examples of violations of the Honor Code include but are not limited to: plagiarism, cheating on an exam, misrepresenting facts about an absence or a disability, altering a transcript or grade report, and failing to report

observed cheating. (Sixteen examples of Honor Code violations are attached to this essay.) In summary, this first definition of integrity addresses the need to live honestly within our various communities. This is especially the case for an academic community which is founded on the pursuit of Truth.

**The second dictionary definition of integrity is: “the state of being unimpaired; soundness.”** If we say that “the bridge over the river has lost its integrity,” we mean that it’s not any good; it’s dangerous. We shouldn’t drive a car over a structure that has lost its integrity. A house that has lost its structural integrity will tend to collapse in a violent earthquake. There are many reasons why the integrity of a house might be compromised; perhaps a wall has termites, the roof leaks, or the foundation is shifting. Jesus’ parable about the man who built his house on sand and lost it in a flood indicates a foundation which was not sound. That house had no integrity.

What does it mean to be a “sound” student? In order to graduate from Baylor University with integrity you must possess and successfully demonstrate the skills of one who has attained an education, some significant portion of which will be “liberal education” (sometimes called a liberal arts education). What are the skills of a liberally-educated person? First, you must have thought critically about your own religion, nation, and tradition. Your professors are a part of a culture of dialogue, deliberation, and dissent; you must join this culture. Second, you must engender the ability to think as a citizen of the entire world not just your corner of it. You will be asked to rid yourself of stereotypical projections. Third, you must demonstrate imaginative thinking. Your education at Baylor will provide you with the opportunity to cultivate empathy for those who are different from you. The bottom-line is that in order to have integrity as a student you must not only be moral, you must be a sound product of a University that values a liberal education.

**The final dictionary definition of integrity is: “the quality or condition of being whole or undivided; completeness.”** *Tag*, the Sanskrit root word for integrity, means to be touched or handled. Thus, “tag, you’re it!” While in college you’re being touched, handled, manipulated, and shaped by your professors. Sometimes you might feel like you’re being pulled apart by your professors. The Latin word *Integ* means untouched or not handled. There is a sense in which we have to be left alone in order to be aware of and maintain our own integrity as a complete person. The second definition of integrity leads to the conclusion that we must develop as students; that we are in process; that we are becoming. This third definition suggests that we are already complete; that our value is not dependent upon a degree. Thus, we have a paradox.

Each of you brings to campus your own peculiar intelligences. There is no other person exactly like you. In order for you to have integrity as a student at Baylor you must not only be moral (don’t cheat), not only develop (become liberally educated) but you must acknowledge and honor your own individual identity (trust in your God-given self). Always keep in mind that academic life is not real life but, rather, a game. A serious game, an expensive game but still a game. Grades, while important, can never ultimately define you as a person. Grades can never be the final measure of the range of your various intelligences-intellectual, emotional, sensual, intuitive. In short, you will not have integrity if you take the academic game too seriously.

In summary, academic integrity can be summarized in three words: honesty, openness, and trust. Be honest in all of your interactions with others. Be open to the world of ideas. Trust that you are of immense value, just as you are. Was Ben Franklin right about “integrity” being the most important quality an aspiring young person could have on the road to success? I challenge you to test his theory during your time at Baylor.

*Dr. Blake Burlison is Associate Dean in the College of Arts and Sciences and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Religion.*

### QUESTIONS

1. Dr. Burleson states that, “Students and faculty members are expected to follow particular codes which bind them together as members of communities within the larger Baylor family.” Do you think most incoming students know there is an honor code? Do you think they have read it?
2. What’s the relationship between a code and a community? How does this “bind us together”?
3. Dr. Burleson contends, that having integrity as a student isn’t just about being honest but being “sound” and challenges us to incorporate the values of a liberal arts education, which are centered in the capacity to be self critical. Work with this. What would it mean for you? Complete this sentence, “To be a sound student, I will need to \_\_\_\_\_.”
4. In definition three, we are invited to remember our own uniqueness, our specific intelligence that is simply in us as gift. Do you know yet what this is? Can you name it? What do you have a knack for? Are you relationally intuitive? Is there a physical intelligence? Do you have an ability to reason or perhaps to observe details? Be ready to talk about this with your group this week.

### PRACTICE

- Your New Student Experience Course is over now. But remember, “practice makes perfect.” Keep going through the good motions that will help you become the kind of student you want to be.

# In Between

## A blog for students about our New Student Experience Readings

by BURT BURLESON, UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN

A LIFE OF INTEGRITY is developed one decision at a time. A life that lacks it is developed in the same way. We inch our way towards what is true and good and right and towards instincts that help us respond in the right way when the pressure is on. We can also inch our way away from these good things.

Baylor's deep longing and mission is to send graduates into the world who have integrity. More than simply knowing and following the rules, becoming a person of integrity involves a deeper quest as Dr. Burleson's essay has helped us see. It is a quest to become a person who is integrated... a person whose beliefs emerge from deep searching and that are expressed in ways that are authentic to that person's true self.

Well, we have come to the end of our collection of essays. Mission, Humility, Generosity, Attention, Temperance, Perseverance, Integrity... this is a lot to take in, isn't it? Perhaps you'll be able to come back to these writings from time to time and read them again from a different point in your academic pilgrimage. In some very real ways, you'll be a different you a few years from now and because of that you'll see things you can't see at this point in the journey. For now, our hope is that in these days as a new student you've received the guidance you need — both practical and beyond practical — to get started on the right foot at Baylor. And we do hope you've made some new friends and have found in your leader a resource for the weeks and months to come.

And I'll look forward to seeing you in Chapel along the way. Like all staff and faculty at Baylor, I hope to get to know many of you. Be patient with me, there are about 4000 of you in Chapel each semester, but do reach out and don't ever hesitate to contact the Office of Spiritual Life, especially when you're in a crisis.

I hope your first weeks at Baylor are filled with great joy and blessing.

God's Peace,

Burt Burleson



To respond to Dr. Burleson's blog or the essays  
in this booklet, visit the Spiritual life website

[www.baylor.edu/spiritual life](http://www.baylor.edu/spiritual life)

# Let Us Take What's Been Given

*A Hymn for Entering Students in the Fall of 2010*

by BURT BURLESON AND RYAN RICHARDSON

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Gifts set before us  
Beauty inside  
New life emerging  
Doors open wide.

*So... let us take what's been given  
Let us bless what we hold.  
Let us share what's been broken  
That the world might be whole.*

Dreams to awaken  
Prayers to be prayed  
Paths to be taken  
Plans to be made.

Struggles that break us  
Hunger that's deep  
Challenge that changes  
Truths that we keep.

Blessed to be blessing  
Gathered to go  
Graced to be giving  
Love that we know.



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