

## Incorporating Faith, Service, and Vocation

As a senior at St. Norbert College, I have been participating in service events for many years. My experience leading the FLV-sponsored trip to Albuquerque, New Mexico was definitely different from all of the others because it was based around the spirituality of service. Our group reflected each day on the service we did and how it related back to our faith lives. In doing so, I found myself constantly thinking back to my vocation and how I could incorporate my love for God and my passion for service in a life where I could be working full time and supporting a family.

Our group had the opportunity to meet with the Norbertine Oblates at the Santa Maria de la Vid Priory where we stayed. We met with four amazing women who have careers and families but are also affiliated with the Norbertine Order. They make promises, much like the Norbertine priests do, and take on a habit. Their stories were inspirational and we not only heard how being an Oblate had affected their faith lives, but also saw how they benefit the Order. The Norbertines believe that the Oblates are a necessity, rather than a luxury. The priests told us that these women help them to gain a better understanding of the people they serve, and without them, they do not have that outside perspective.

After meeting with these amazing women, I began to reflect on my own life. While I'm not taking on the task of launching a De Pere branch of the Oblates, I am considering the importance of my faith life in the choices I make after college. These women knew that they wanted to be more involved and they took it upon themselves to make that change. I have wondered how I will keep my faith life going after I graduate from college, and I have often felt that it will be next to impossible to balance work, family, and faith. It was so inspiring to see how these women incorporated their faith into all aspects of their lives, and meeting with them helped me to realize that it can be done.

This service trip provided a wide variety of service, and I felt that I experienced the most direct service I have in all my years of service combined. Each site provided great experiences, and I really felt that I was making a difference in the area. I thought about what this might mean for me after graduating, and I realized the importance of incorporating service into my life. We met so many amazing men and women who took time out of their busy schedules to help out at hospitality centers, soup kitchens, and women's shelters. In talking with these people, I truly understood what it meant to be able to share your blessings with others.

My time in Albuquerque was not only an opportunity for me to serve others, it was a chance for me to grow in my faith and consider how I can incorporate service and faith into my vocation. I am open to God's call for me, and because of this wonderful opportunity, I know that I will be able to learn from the example of these amazing men and women and live a life of faith and service.

Alexa Hollnagel '10  
ALIVE Team Member 2006-08

## *Business as Vocation at St. Norbert College*

In fall 2007, I entered the Study Group on Vocation with a few questions I wanted to explore: 1) how can we help raise student expectations for themselves; 2) how do I help students to look beyond salary; and 3) how can students make the best use of their time at St. Norbert College. Too often I had heard students either developing unrealistic expectations about themselves, such as “I am going to be a millionaire by the time I am thirty,” or students who had too low of expectations and just wanted to get whatever job came along. The study group experience spurred me to think about how I could contribute to improving those business students’ preparation for the world of work. In my role as professor, I have focused on three areas of influence: integrating vocation in the classroom, getting students exposed to alumni visions and realizations of meaningful work, and presenting to my field about the importance of vocation to a business education.

Recently, I got an email from a student updating me about what he is doing and he recalled some vocational issues we discussed in the Senior Business Capstone. He wrote, “Last week I began writing a personal statement for Optometry School applications and I drew on my personal strategy statement that I wrote for you at the end of the Spring semester last May. ‘The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work that you need most to do and that the world most needs to have done...The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.’ --Frederick Buechner's definition of vocation. Over the past few months I have kept reminding myself of the quotation, and using it as a guide to keep me on track towards my goals.” In this class we have conversations regarding readings from *Leading Lives That Matter* that seem most relevant to them such as Matt Damon’s screenplay from *Goodwill Hunting* in discussing if students should follow their talents in deciding what to do when they graduate. Overall, we try to help students examine their meaning systems and life narratives with readings and discussion on business as a vocation. This is something I help introduce with the expertise of FLV Director Julie Massey to my Foundations of Management class where mainly sophomore business majors and minors get a first exposure to thinking about their gifts, passions, and the needs of the world in terms of what their work in business might become.

I think it is also important for students to connect to alums of the college to share in what they have learned about how to create meaning in their work in business. For the past three years, I have chaired conferences and a speaker series to get primarily business and economics students to be thinking of business as a vocation. From the first conference, we had 154 students attend for an alumni speaker panel who addressed finding passion in their work and how businesses can help address the needs of the world. Some alums at the conference lunch said they wished they had had this experience when they were students and several hoped we would continue to do this. Some student comments:

From a female sophomore IBLAS major: “I LOVE the conference today!! It was very inspiring, informative and enjoyable. I talked to my friends after lunch today and we all agree that it would be so great, if we could have a conference like this every semester or every year!! It was such a great opportunity for me to be able to participate in all the sessions and getting to hear the direct experience from the alumni. I’d like to thank you and all the professors who organized the conference.”

Based on comments like these, I made sure we developed a speaker series that could be sustainable over time. I handed this program to Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) who now run this speaker series to address a broad array of vocational and career issues. I advise SIFE, which is a student club on campus that tries to empower people economically and entrepreneurially to make others’ lives better. We have had four speakers this year and feedback has continued to be very positive.

Finally, taking what I learned from readings and discussions in class on business as vocation, I presented a paper at the Business as Agent of World Benefit Conference in June of 2009 to show how an undergraduate business capstone class could and should be incorporating discussions of business as vocation to improve the state of business education. It is my belief that corporate scandals and executive hubris can be checked while the positive impact of business be enabled only if we as business educators help students envision their role in making the world a better place.

Jason Senjem  
Assistant Professor of Business Administration



**Spring Book Discussion**  
***North of Hope, by Jon Hassler***

The novel opens with Frank Healy, then sixteen years old, going to the movies in Linden Falls, Minnesota, his hometown. The film is *A Portrait of Jennie* and it's the first movie "in at least ten years to make Frank cry." In the film Jennifer Jones tells Joseph Cotton, "There is no life until you find love, Eben. Then life cannot be lost." Frank takes that message to heart as if it were gospel. But he spends the next several decades of his life trying to determine what love he is meant to live. Is it with Libby Girard or is it as a priest? How should Frank determine what his true calling is? And what should he do if he feels equally drawn to both?

Along the way, Hassler introduces us to a cavalcade of characters. There's Monsignor Adrian Lawrence, the priest whose nickname is "loving kindness" and who serves as a mentor and surrogate father for Frank. There's the meddling Eunice Pfeiffer whose life dream is for Frank to be a priest. There's Libby's very troubled daughter, Verna, who's trapped in self-destructive cycles. There's Judge Bigelow, the crude and malevolent proprietor of The Homstead Tavern. And then there's the weather. Throughout the novel, everyone comments on how cold it is, wondering if the warmth will ever return.

Note: All available complimentary copies of the book have been distributed.  
If you would like to borrow a copy from the FLV library, please contact our office.

The two discussions will be held Tuesday, April 6 at noon (in the Union 101A) and at 3:30 (in TWH Room M44)

**Check out our new Vocation Profiles page on our website at  
[snc.edu/vocation/vocationprofiles](http://snc.edu/vocation/vocationprofiles)**



The alums currently profiled are:

CHRISTINE BROWN '93

ANDREW MCILREE '06

ANN HILLMAN '04

CAITLIN FROEMMING '09

LINDA MAIER '09

If you know any of our college alumni who might have a vocation story to tell, please contact DeEtte Radant or Julie Massey.

*Retreat Seminar 1 will be held June 8-10.  
Look for registration announcements soon!*

*We're moving!*  
The office of the Program of Faith, Learning &  
Vocation is moving to Todd Wehr Hall  
the week of March 8.



### ***Intersections***

is an occasional newsletter published by the Program of Faith, Learning, & Vocation.  
The editor invites your comments, suggestions, and contributions.

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