“Devoted to Your Success!”

“Devotion” is appealing! Even without reference to a higher power, we all appreciate the idea. It conveys closeness, steadfastness, loyalty. It usually entails a friend or loved one. We feel a deep appreciation when someone is devoted to us.

For our University’s patron, “devotion” has an even broader meaning: it’s the goal of life itself! Four hundred years ago St. Francis de Sales wrote what has become a religious classic, the *Introduction to the Devout Life*. In that book, what he means by a “devout life” is one that reaches its full meaning by living out whatever your state-in-life is (your career, vocation, duty) to the best of your abilities. And for our patron, education is a principal means for moving toward this happiness.

This sense of “devotion” lies at the heart of Salesian spirituality. Today, it provides the foundation for the educational mission at DSU, namely “to provide men and women with quality higher education according to the philosophy of Christian Humanism as developed by St. Francis de Sales and his spiritual heirs.” And that mission is what undergirds the General Education Core that even our ACCESS students must complete.

Of course, there are numerous “humanisms” or different ways of looking at the world and at life. Some consider the world to be just material stuff, history to be random events, and people to be free to decide whatever they want. A Christian Humanism sees everything in the world as good, history as being guided by a divine plan, and people as having an inherent dignity.

Beyond those overarching perspectives – which have obvious implications for all our fields of study – Salesian Christian Humanism provides the impetus for the curriculum requirements you have to fulfill. In fact, three combinations come into play no matter what your major is.

The first – education in both *knowledge and talents* – reflects the division between the specific requirements of your major and those of the general education core. Our aim is to provide you with not simply training, but education. Each major seeks to provide you with the skills necessary for a career in a particular field. But education is much more. It involves learning about yourself and others and the world around us. It hopes to advance your abilities to think and read, write and speak. It seeks to stir in you the desire for learning that is life-long. This is why we require that you learn “modes of thinking” beyond that in your major.
The second goal pairs together community and individual. Each of you has the opportunity to “individualize” your learning by selecting a major in which to concentrate and by choosing electives that suit your interests. But we also strive to incorporate you into the wider body of scholarship that includes both the past (the “history” of western civilization and the “great works” of art and literature) and the present (the “contemporary values seminar”). In this way we hope you will combine learning on your own and learning with and through others.

The third and final combination – faith and culture – reflects our core belief that human happiness includes both the designs of this world and a destiny beyond. While some people believe the secular and the sacred (science and religion) are opposed, Salesian Christian Humanism contends that faith and culture interact in a mutually beneficial way. This is why we require everyone, even our ACCESS students who are already established in this world, to study philosophy and theology and to learn about other cultures. In these areas, people ask and answer the bigger questions of life (and of death), the sort of questions that usually have the greatest impact on us all, even far beyond our years in the classroom (or online!).

It would certainly seem more to the point if we could just learn what we need to advance to the next stage in our lives. In that perspective, the general education core requirements appear to be unnecessary. But we are devoted to you beyond your degree ... which is why we have shaped (and are re-shaping) the core elements of our educational mission that we hope will lead to your success and happiness in life.

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