

It's an appropriate topic for academic institutions, but a bit antiquated and even embattled in today's society.

For Christians in our modern world, however, *academic excellence* is something to honor because it furthers our ability to understand and appreciate our place in the world, it enhances our ability to lead a world that desperately needs good moral leadership, and it helps establish the moral quality of personal discipline.

1 Academic Excellence Helps One Understand and Appreciate the World. Perhaps at the very heart of our concept of liberal arts here at Milligan, we believe that the more we learn about the classic disciplines of humanities and sciences, the more we learn about what it means to be human.

And as we learn what it means to be human, we can better find our place in the world in a way that will be more fulfilling, more productive, and ultimately more effective — both in our personal lives and in our public interaction.

The last few years I have given a final lecture in our Humanities course which addresses this general subject: *What Does It Mean to be Human?* I approach the subject from a frankly theological stance, yet seek to apply it to the wide span of subjects which make up our curriculum at Milligan.

Briefly stated, I argue that to really understand our humanity, we must grapple with the concept "image of God," for the Bible opens with the fact that humans were created in the image of God, and in many ways closes with that fact — Jesus is the perfect image of God,



In praise of academic excellence

by Dr. Mark Matson, Academic Dean
mmatson@milligan.edu

and we as Christians are asked to grow up into Him who has shown God's nature to us most fully.

Well, what is the image of God? There are numerous aspects of humani-

ty's uniqueness that can claim to be facets of God's image — the power to manage the world; the ability to create new things — from rudimentary tools to jet engines; the ability to communicate and use language to express our innermost ideas and feelings; the constant drive to seek meaningful relationships, which of course includes our families, but also includes communities, societies, and all the other social interactions that make us more than simply individuals.

Each of these features of our innate humanity reflects God's own nature: His absolute power to create and rule the world; His own use of language perhaps most vividly seen in His speaking the world into existence, and the fact that His son is known as the Word who was made flesh; and His own love for relationships that led Him to send His son to die in order to express His absolute love for us.

Each of these features of humanity, however, has been abused by us. We have used our power to despoil the earth and enslave our fellow human beings, even as we have found untold riches and productivity in the deepest parts of the earth and in the soil we till.

We have created destructive technology, even while we push back the bounds of knowledge in order to save lives. Our use of language has been used to divide, inflame, and lead astray, even though we have produced lyrical poems and thrilling plays that help us understand the impulses that drive us. And we have twisted our desire for relationships so that we often use others, even while we seek to create more functional communities.

As Christians in an academic environment, we have the opportunity — indeed the responsibility — to explore the history of our successes and failures to better understand who we are as humans. Can we understand the impulses that drive us to distort the image of God, so that we can learn to avoid them? Can we understand the positive forces in our society that find the likeness of Christ emerging in our very midst so that we can amplify and encourage them?

This, it seems to me, is the bright hope of teaching the liberal arts, of exploring the humanities, of mastering the disciplines of the natural sciences. By learning more of our history, by exploring the creative impulses of art and literature, by understanding the secrets of the molecules and the complex organisms, we learn more about our place in this world. And this will make us more fully human, more fully aware, more engaged with the world and appreciative of the very gift of life that God has given us.

Excellence in studying these subjects opens up ways of understanding that would simply be closed off if we only drift into life with our eyes and ears closed. And the greater the effort, the greater the focus on these subjects increases the payoff for a lifetime of liv-

ing, of working, of loving the manifold gifts that God has graced us with.

2 Academic Excellence Prepares Leaders to Shape Culture. Secondly, and closely related to the foregoing example, academic excellence in particular furthers the goal of Christian leadership. As I have already suggested, the image of God in our human existence is easily bent to negative ends.

I believe it is our role as Christians to lead the world toward a positive view of human potential, one which is guided by His word. We have attempted to summarize this in a vision of what our task at Milligan is: "Changing lives and shaping culture." These are very bold words. But we do believe that a Christian education can do just that — change lives and shape culture, towards a God-shaped view of humanity. This is what we hope you — our students and alumni — will do with your education — go out into the world and change it for the better.

But if you are going to engage the powers that be in this world, the powers that would distort the gifts of God, then more than simple platitudes will do. It will take critical thought, an ability to engage in the world of ideas, the ability to speak boldly, to write clearly, to know

why you think the thoughts you think. Only when you are prepared to engage the world with the best tools of the critical mind can you truly lead the world, and be able to influence it for the better.

And here is where academic excellence serves the Kingdom of God. As you focus on your studies in this cloistered environment, you are gaining skills in critical thinking and communication. You are gaining the tools you need to become leaders and shapers of culture. Academic excellence is not just about achieving good grades, then. It is about equipping yourselves with the very armor of God.

3 Academic Excellence Develops Personal Discipline. And finally, the pursuit of academic excellence helps each of us as individuals to learn the value of personal discipline, a quality which will have long-lasting benefits in a lifetime of "real world" pursuits. Even if academia is somewhat removed from the rough and tumble of daily work schedules, jobs and careers, it actually provides necessary character traits that serve well for a whole lifetime.

As you have undoubtedly discovered, good grades do not come easily. They require work, time management, the ability to stick to the task of juggling

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Faculty News

Bert Allen (psychology) was the keynote speaker at the Veterans Celebration at the VA Medical Center in Johnson City.

Nancy Beverly (director of financial aid) was named president elect of the Tennessee Association of Financial Aid Administrators for 2002-03.

Kellie Brown (music) attended the American String Teachers' Conference at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, and performed a recital at Emory & Henry College.

Jim Dahman (communications) wrote a cover article accepted for publication in a Moody magazine, "Loving Your Enemies," taught a two-part seminar, "What Would Jesus Do with the Media," for the Imitators of Christ men's group at Hopwood Christian Church; and hosted the local chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists at Milligan.

Linda Doan (HPXS) was the keynote speaker for the Plainfield (IN) Christian Church Women's Retreat.

Joy Drinnon (psychology) presented research on "Creating a course out of a community-based research project" at the National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology.

Carlene Eastridge (music) presented "Music across the curriculum" at the Arts in Education Conference at the Adelphi Center in Johnson City. She and **John Wakefield** (music) presented a joint recital featuring works by Guilant, Post, and Ives.

Phyllis Fox joined the Milligan community as program director of the Partnership for Youth in Ministry, a collaborative program between Milligan and Emmanuel School of Religion, funded through the Lilly Endowment. The program will challenge high school students to explore their faith and how it relates to today's culture and their vocational aspirations. For more information, contact PFox@milligan.edu.

Don Jeanes (president) attended the Southern Association of College & Schools annual meeting, the Council of Christian Colleges & Universities annual president's meeting, the Appalachian College Association Financial Aid Summit, the Wharton Institute for Research on Higher Education Forum, and the Mountain States Health Alliance board meetings.

Phil Kenneson (theology and philosophy) delivered a paper at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Denver, CO; led a conference for Presbyterian ministers in Dallas, TX; presented "Which Public? What Kind of Presence?" at the Public Presence Symposium at the Church of God Theological Seminary in Cleveland, TN; delivered the opening address to the annual conference of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission; was feature speaker at the Christian Campus Houses annual southeast conference; and co-led a study on "Children and Prayer" at Munsey UMC.

Charlene Kiser (humanities) co-designed the new Writing Across the Curriculum website for the Appalachian College Association.

Jill LeRoy-Frazier (humanities/English) presented "Talking Heads and Intuition: Godel's Theorem and Strong AI in William Gibson's *Neuromancer*" at the Twentieth Century Literature Conference at the University of Louisville.

Jeff Miller (biblical studies) attended the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature and led workshops on the book of Revelation at both the Iowa Christian Convention and the Tennessee Christian Teen Convention.

Bruce Montgomery (communications) was appointed to the board of directors at Minnesota Bible College.

David Runner (music) attended the annual Church Music Workshop sponsored by the University of Tennessee and the Knoxville Chapter of the American Guild of Organists.

Rick Simerly (music) was the opening concert act for jazz legend Dave Brubeck at the Grove Park Inn Jazz Festival and was chosen to conduct the 2002 Tennessee All-State Jazz Band in Nashville. He conducted clinics and concerts at Furman, Brevard, Cumberland, and the University of Miami, Ohio, and published a recent article on jazz education in the North Carolina Music Educators Journal.

John Simonsen (HPXS) attended the annual meeting of the Southeast chapter of the American College of Sports Medicine in Atlanta.

John Wakefield (music) attended the winter board meeting of MacMurray College in IL.

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multiple subjects and requirements. As many students find, innate intelligence is probably less important in college than learning how to do the work. We increasingly are finding that a high school g.p.a. is a better predictor of student success than ACTs or SATs. Why? Because it probably tells more about a student's work habits — habits which become even more important in the college environment.

Academic excellence is usually a sign of discipline, of hard work, of attention to detail, of following through on assignments and tasks. I am reminded that in my Ph.D. program, my advisor noted that many bright graduate students never complete their degree because they cannot finish the dissertation. The dissertation is 90 percent perspiration, and only 10 percent inspiration. In the same way, your pursuit of academic excellence is doing as much to prepare you by causing you to perspire. And this discipline of hard work will pay off in a lifetime of efforts — personal and professional.

So to you students and alumni who have shown that you can achieve *Academic Excellence*, I say congratulations. You have chosen the better path. You have laid the foundation for a fulfilling, effective, and disciplined life. You have, I would suggest, heeded the admonition of the author of Proverbs:

My child, if you accept my words and treasure up my commandments within you, making your ear attentive to wisdom, inclining your heart to understanding;

if you indeed cry out for insight, and raise your voice for understanding;

if you seek it like silver, and search for it as for hidden treasures —

then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. ■

Mark Matson holds a Ph.D. from Duke University and previously served as assistant director of administration at Duke's Sanford Institute of Public Policy. He has taught at Duke, Abilene Christian University, Milligan and Emmanuel School of Religion. He has been academic dean and vice president for academic affairs at Milligan since 1999.

Prayer Council

Please keep Milligan College in your prayers! If you would like to join our prayer council and get regular updates about the college's specific needs and the exciting things God is doing here, please let us know by emailing your name to us at prayercouncil@milligan.edu.

Regular requests and updates will be sent via email. A prayer calendar is also available at:

www.milligan.edu/prayercalendar/

Campus News

Milligan & Standard Publishing to recognize "Leaders in Christian Service"

■ Milligan and Standard Publishing are recognizing individuals who are making a difference in their workplace through their Christian example — be they doctors, teachers, reporters, or businesspeople. Nominations are due March 30 and recipients will be recognized at the North American Christian Convention in June. Regional "Leaders in Christian Service" are also being recognized at an April 16 convocation service. For more information, visit www.milligan.edu/leadership.

"Milligan's mission is to prepare Christian leaders for service in various vocations, and we feel that this is an opportunity to recognize leaders who provide outstanding examples of just that — Christian leadership in the workplace and community," said President Don Jeanes.

Nursing grads maintain 100% pass rate

■ For the third year in a row, Milligan's graduating BSN class received a 100 percent first-time pass rate on their national licensure exam. The Tennessee Board of Nursing, which granted Milligan full approval of its program in December 1999, requires that 85 percent of an institution's nursing graduates pass the exami-

nation on the first attempt to be fully approved by the Board of Nursing.

"We have not only met the 85 percent requirement by the TBN, we have far exceeded it," said Melinda Collins, director of Milligan's Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. "We are one of a few programs in the state to reach the 100 percent mark and receive commendation from TBN."

Collins noted that the NCLEX is practice-based, and professors weave principles on the test throughout their curriculum. An additional course component was also added to the curriculum three years ago, providing the senior nursing students with focused preparation for the NCLEX.

The success of the program has led to an enrollment that will double the number of graduates ready to enter practice over the next several years.

19 named to Who's Who

■ Nineteen Milligan students have been selected as national outstanding campus leaders and named to the 2002 edition of *Who's Who Among Students in American Universities And Colleges*. The following students were selected based on their academic achievement, service to the community, leadership in extracurricular activities and potential for continued success: Natalie Black, Kevin Bobrow, Daniel Dabney, Laura Danhauer, Pedro Figueira, Misty Fry, Courtney Gardner, Rebecca Gootee, Ashley

Greer, William Hauck, Christina Hensley, Regina Holtman, Nevan Hooker, Anna Lee Johnson, Rebecca Luetscher, Portia Morrison, Andrew Parker, Kent Pettit, and Natalya Klinova Seals.

College receives Lilly planning grant

■ Milligan received a \$50,000 planning grant from the Lilly Endowment of Indiana to develop a comprehensive plan for its students to more thoroughly explore the theological concept of vocation. The goal will be to develop an implementation proposal for Lilly by September 1. In that proposal, the college may request as much as \$2 million to improve its core ability to train a new generation of Christian leaders for the church and society.

"Our goal is to provide a cohesive way for students to consider their vocational choices in light of their faith as they grow intellectually and spiritually," said president Don Jeanes. "We want students to explore their vocational choices from the perspective of a calling to ministry — regardless of the specific field they will ultimately enter."

This program will be a strong complement to the \$800,000 "Youth in Ministry" Lilly grant that Milligan is already implementing in partnership with Emmanuel School of Religion. That program is aimed at reaching high school students with a similar emphasis of viewing their vocational calling as ministry.