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Learning to Lead in the Liberal Arts

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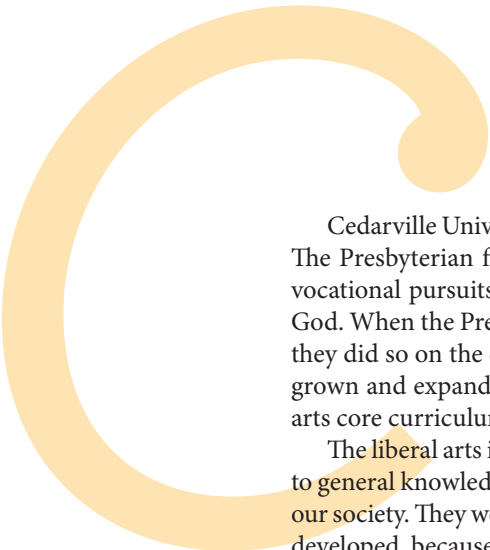


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Learning to *Lead* in the Liberal Arts

by Thomas Mach '88 and Kevin Sims '74



Cedarville University began as a college to prepare young men and women for ministry. The Presbyterian founders quickly broadened the school's focus to include a variety of vocational pursuits as well, all centered on the liberal arts and grounded in the Word of God. When the Presbyterians turned the school over to the Baptist Bible Institute in 1953, they did so on the condition that it remain a liberal arts institution. While Cedarville has grown and expanded its scope over the decades since, its programs still include a liberal arts core curriculum and integrated biblical principles.

The liberal arts include the humanities and the sciences — fields that introduce students to general knowledge and develop the basic intellectual skills that are needed to succeed in our society. They were the focus of the earliest universities, long before professional training developed, because of their universal applicability. The liberal arts core courses and major programs enable students to develop skills in communication, information management, problem-solving, and integrating biblical principles with learning. Employment data suggest that today's graduates will change career paths four to six times in their lives. Cedarville is committed to equipping all of our graduates with the skills needed to make those transitions.

Equally important, while we seek to prepare our graduates for success in making a living, we also want to equip them for a life of critical thinking. Repeatedly, Scripture admonishes us to test what we see in the world against the Word of God. A Cedarville education is infused with the liberal arts to encourage students to develop the analytical skills required to discern truth and respond to error. These skills have application as Christians in our private lives, as members in our churches, and as citizens in our society.

Well Prepared

Cedarville's faculty members believe in the value of the liberal arts. We want our graduates to be educated individuals, not just trained employees. We recognize that in this economically challenging environment, being well prepared for the workforce is essential. Too often, however, prospective students and their parents believe the myth that only professional and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) programs prepare graduates for careers. Even more, some think that the path to leadership influence for Christ lies in those same fields. U.S. Census data, a survey by Georgetown University, and a joint study by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, however, suggest that this is simply not

accurate. While the professional programs are a vital part of the economic landscape, and Cedarville provides excellent majors in those areas, liberal arts graduates are highly sought by employers, make as much if not more over the long term as STEM graduates, and develop the skill base essential for effective leadership.

Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce found that liberal arts majors are competing quite well in the marketplace. A recent report by the American Association of American Colleges and Universities and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems study noted that unemployment

Gates argued for focusing education in the technical fields, Jobs noted that he purposefully hired humanities graduates because they provided the creative input necessary for Apple to produce innovative new products. Google reports a similar predilection for these graduates — of the approximately 6,000 the company hires each year, around 4,800 come from the liberal arts. Finally, a recent study commissioned by the Association of Colleges and Universities found that 70 percent of employers want colleges to place more emphasis on the skill set developed in the humanities curriculum, an important part of any career preparation.

Highlighting the importance of the liberal arts to employers, a new study by the American Association of Colleges and Universities found that while average starting salaries in the professional fields still outpace those in the liberal arts, starting pay for such graduates is on the rise. Of equal significance, a recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* noted that over the long term humanities and social science graduates tend to outearn professional graduates, especially if they go on to earn graduate degrees.

Well Rounded

The importance of the liberal arts is only underscored when considering the process of preparing the next generation for leadership. At Cedarville, preparing young Christians for leadership positions is central to our mission. A cursory Google search reveals a spate of articles highlighting the key skills leaders need, including many engendered by the liberal arts. These skills include critical thinking, creativity, communication, and decision-making. A recent study by Grinnell College professor Mark Peltz found that leaders in government, business, and nonprofit organizations were five times more likely to come from colleges offering humanities and science-based programs than their graduation demographics would predict. With the moral decline of American society at all levels, how much more appealing will Cedarville's graduates be, equipped with their liberal arts background, when they can bring biblical ethics to the workplace.

Every Cedarville program includes a general education curriculum based in the

liberal arts. In addition to the required core, students can choose from a variety of liberal arts programs. Recognizing the reawakening of employers to the benefits of liberally trained graduates, Cedarville has recently introduced a liberal arts major. This challenging, interdisciplinary major offers students the opportunity to study courses in math, science, history, political science, English, literature, music, art, theatre, philosophy, and Bible. Students can then select a concentration area for focused study. The program includes a travel-study experience that enables students to participate in a cultural



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rates for recent liberal arts graduates was 5.2% compared with 6.7% unemployment in the overall economy. More and more employers are looking to the liberal arts for quality employees. The famous debate between Bill Gates and the late Steve Jobs demonstrated that there are differences of opinion, but recent data is starting to tip the scale in favor of Jobs' point of view. While



and academic experience outside of the United States. It supplements the required Bible minor and produces graduates who are capable of incorporating a liberal arts education into the qualities of effective communication, critical thinking, and decision-making. The student's further ability to integrate a Christian worldview into his or her education produces an outstanding leadership prospect in career fields that include premed studies; graduate studies in business, theology, and law; and traditional liberal arts territory such as theatre, music performance, and research in history, literature, and the sciences.

Well Educated

The University has long provided top students with the opportunity for advanced liberal arts study through the Honors Program. Honors students take a 10-credit-hour freshman course sequence titled "The Making of the Modern Mind." This interdisciplinary sequence is taught by professors from various fields and examines the development of events and ideas in history, philosophy, theology, and the arts over the course of human history. The program includes innovative seminars for upperclass honors students and an integrative capstone course sequence. Recognizing the talents of these students, the Honors Program seeks to develop their skills for future leadership roles in both the Church and society.

While these two programs are uniquely

focused on the liberal arts, they are only two of the more obvious manifestations of Cedarville's commitment to such traditional fields. We believe they are essential to producing well-educated Christians who can impact the world for Christ. While many schools recognize the importance of the liberal arts, Cedarville is distinctive in its belief that the inerrant Word of God provides the necessary parameters for learning in the liberal arts. Contrary to the secular understanding of the humanities where all ideas are equal and all perspectives valuable, the Bible provides the essential guidelines for discerning truth from error. With that foundation, Cedarville's liberal arts curriculum provides students with beneficial preparation for vocation, leadership, and life. 🏰

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\$129,212 RAISED

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Alumni, friends, parents, and faculty and staff members joined forces on May 15 and rose to the challenge!

- Nearly **700 alumni and friends** gave.
- We raised more than **\$129K**, including challenge gifts.
- The Cedarville family came together and showed that we are Jackets, and we want to make sure that a Cedarville education is **affordable** for future students.

We are so excited that we hit our goal! It's not too late to get involved and help students.

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**5-15
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