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### Behind the Scenes with Mark von der Ruhr (Economics)

Mark von der Ruhr

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## Behind the Scenes with Marc von der Ruhr (Economics)

*Long-time SNC professor of economics Marc von der Ruhr has one daughter enrolled at SNC and a second entering this fall. Here, he discusses the surprising experience of viewing the college through the eyes of a parent.*

I recall when a grad school friend – Mike Ryan '94 – informed me of an opening in St. Norbert's economics discipline as I was entering the job market in 1998. SNC was exactly the kind of school where I wanted to be. I was educated in the liberal arts tradition and wanted to find myself contributing to that kind of experience wherever I landed.

When the college offered me a tenure-track position beginning in the fall of 1999, my wife and I were thrilled. Twenty-three years later, our older daughter, Emily von der Ruhr '23, is a third-year student majoring in communication and media studies, and minoring in art and philosophy, while our younger daughter, Sarah von der Ruhr '26, will be a first-year student this coming fall, still deciding on her course of study.

As a teaching economist, I love being in the classroom, sharing my passion for economics and for teaching. I love to challenge students and help them negotiate learning what often can be difficult material. A nuanced part of that process is to also mentor students. This part of teaching is often overlooked by prospective students and their families.

As a student, knowing that your faculty care about how well you learn their course content is important. However, knowing that your faculty also care about your growth as a person means so much more. Students I have taught as early as the fall of 1999 have stayed in touch with me, and many have become friends of my entire family. These types of relationships grow so organically here at St. Norbert because of the faculty's desire to be of help to their students – not only over their four years on campus, but whenever our insights may be helpful, even after graduation. I have seen this in my own life at the college, as well as in the actions of my colleagues.

Having said this, nothing prepared me for the way my heart swelled while watching Emily's first semester on campus. Her faculty's dedication to her development as a person, not just as a student, is amazing. I am convinced that this is part of the DNA here at St. Norbert. It's the *communio*. I acknowledge that we invoke the term *communio* quite a bit. In fact, a skeptic may interpret it as just a gimmick to set us apart from other colleges. I am here to say it is not.

When Emily did her college search, we toured other campuses. After each visit, I became prouder of what we do at SNC. Since my wife and I wanted Emily's choice to be her own, independent of our preferences, it became increasingly difficult not to advocate for SNC with each campus visit. The day she decided to enroll at SNC made us both very happy. The same goes for the day Sarah decided to come to SNC.

Of course, I realize that I may be biased. To add some credibility, I can share the following story. The college goes through an accreditation process on a regular basis to ensure that we actually offer the education we say we do. Towards the end of one accreditation cycle, the accrediting team had an open forum for the faculty. They asked us questions, and at the end of the forum they asked if we had any questions for them. One colleague asked them what was most surprising about their visit. Without hesitation, the lead on the team said something to the effect of: "You live your mission." He then went on to comment on the many schools that they visit that talk about mission, but don't actually live it. He said the entire team agreed that we have created an environment that lives our mission.

While I believe my colleagues and I contribute to St. Norbert's mission, it is an entirely different experience and validation to see your own child benefit from it. I am grateful my daughters are part of St. Norbert and its mission, and I hope they live their lives in a manner that honors it. I am so proud to teach here.

March 8, 2022



### About Marc von der Ruhr

Marc von der Ruhr (Economics) is trained in international trade, macroeconomics and econometrics. His research and teaching interests focus on the interdisciplinary and applied nature of economics, where he explores international issues related to trade and foreign direct investment, as well as factors that impact personal policy preferences regarding trade and immigration.

Von der Ruhr is a recipient of St. Norbert's prestigious Leonard Ledvina Award for Excellence in Teaching and Donald B. King Award for Distinguished Scholarship.

### Also in This Issue

This article first appeared in the March 2022 issue of Parents of St. Norbert College. Other features in this edition included:

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