

## Dominican University College: Bright Future for Ottawa's Ancient Order of Learning

Ottawa is host to a number of specialized colleges and universities providing education in bilingual programs that compete with the city's larger institutions. The regal Dominican University College (DUC), a hidden treasure of academia, atop Lebreton Hill on Empress Avenue, offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in philosophy and theology. While Dominican University College (DUC) is heir to a long tradition of teaching that dates back to the 13th century, it has positioned itself at the forefront of philosophical and theological thought by offering an exceptionally modern and specialized learning environment.

Smaller institutions, such as DUC, demonstrate that learning centres focusing on particular disciplines offer students the truest sense of concentration and immersion in their programs. DUC's students are taught analytical thinking, effective communication, and organizational skills. They graduate armed with creative minds combined with a developed sense of justice and love of truth. Many seek postgraduate degrees in law and education. Notable alumni include Geneviève Dubois-Flynn, Director of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's Ethics Office, Chantal Beauvais, Rector of Ottawa's Saint Paul University, and Lorraine Caza, former leader of the Notre-Dame Congregation.

Dominican University College maintains an ancient heritage of pedagogy, philosophy, and theology. In 1215, visionary Dominique de Guzman (Saint Dominic) recognized that a dedicated system was required to



PHOTO: SYLVAIN MARIER

unite traditional education with new philosophical and theological ideas. He founded the Order of Preachers, commonly known as the Dominican Order. In 1260, the studium generale was established, exerting a beneficial influence on the first universities. Since its foundation, the Dominican Order has been acknowledged for its contribution to education and exploration of the humanities. During the 19th and 20th centuries, it engaged in an array of charitable works throughout the world.

In 1900, the Dominicans brought their School of Theology to Ottawa. The stately 19th century DUC campus is constructed of limestone and initially served as a House of Studies, where young Dominican Friars received their training. Over a century later, DUC continues to provide an auspicious and balanced program of study. This includes the College's stewardship and contact with a number of very ancient texts (the oldest was printed in 1488).

The Dominicans remain a vital component of the College. Their number, though diminishing, still accounts for 20 per cent of the faculty. Each day, students interact with their

teachers in a peaceful and stimulating environment conducive to learning, research and the sharing of ideas. The Dominican tradition emphasizes a thorough knowledge of philosophical and theological sources combined with a genuine openness when approaching vital contemporary issues such as health, justice, peace, poverty, and faith.

"Our students engage first-hand contact with the important texts," says Gabor Csepregi, DUC's President and Regent of Studies. "They gradually develop a versatile and critical mind that allows them to face the challenges of our globalized and rapidly changing world. They are not followers, but mature, independent, and imaginative thinkers. They gradually become aware of complex issues, and are not afraid of proposing changes and new solutions." Csepregi underlines that "most importantly, they are able to apply abstract and theoretical knowledge to concrete cases. We teach them to think well, speak well, and write well (a major objective). Individual mentoring is also offered."

A polyglot author, Csepregi has published articles and essays on



The stately 19th century Dominican University College campus initially served as a House of Studies for young Dominican Friars. LEFT: Gabor Csepregi, DUC's President and Regent of Studies.



LEFT: Students attending a class at Dominican University College in Ottawa RIGHT: Dominican University College has a number of very ancient texts. The oldest was printed in 1488.



education, music, and sport. His latest book is entitled *The Clever Body*. Before setting out on an academic career, he was captain and, later, coach, of the Canadian Water Polo Team and participated in the 1972, 1976, and 1984 Olympic Games.

DUC students enjoy personalized teaching in large classrooms with vaulted ceilings, hallowed halls and committed educators who favour discussion and the exchange of ideas. Students from across Canada and abroad come to the college to savour this unique study experience. DUC's student housing is affordable and its tuition fees are among the lowest in Ontario (\$1,645 per semester in the undergraduate program and \$1,780 in the graduate program). With public service playing a central role in the Capital, the College provides a bilingual education.

If full or part-time study is not an option, DUC also offers a variety of interesting community programs and lectures. In November, Sr. Eileen Schuller, Professor of McMaster's Department of Religious Studies, presented *Women in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, one of the Anne Tanenbaum Lecture Series featured at the Royal Ontario Museum. On February 25, 2010, College faculty member Dr. Louis Roy will question whether faith can integrate individual beliefs, practices and behaviour with traditional 'obedience' in his presentation, *Does Christian Faith Rule out Human Autonomy?* For more information

visit: [www.dominicancollege.ca](http://www.dominicancollege.ca).

DUC has received significant financial support from the Dominican Order of Canada and from other generous benefactors but, as the College grows and develops new programs, Regent Csepregi has to look for alternate sources of funding. Fortunately, a local industry leader has stepped up. "Larger academic institutions have a long history of financial aid coming from the corporate world. It is wonderful to see that some other important companies, like the Assaly Group, take an interest in smaller and specialized university colleges. They realize that the study of philosophy and theology (and humanities in general) has a profound ethical and spiritual effect on people. Leaders of the business world are increasingly aware of the lasting value of that sort of impact."

In an October announcement, The Thomas C. Assaly Charitable Foundation ([www.assaly.org](http://www.assaly.org)) set a target for an \$800,000 Dominican University College annual endowment. The Foundation assists organizations and charities raise much needed financial support through their AID Program. The program combines the benefits of real estate and the ability to donate that real estate through a deed of gift. The investor/donor enjoys excellent returns through ownership while funding charities with endowments. The Foundation has embarked on the DUC endowment initiative in a joint venture with the Assaly Group of

Companies ([www.assaly.com](http://www.assaly.com)). The Assaly Group is known for real estate development in the National Capital Region such as, Les Suites Hotel, The Novotel Hotel, and the Albion Place Executive Tower.

"The Assaly Group has been building communities in Ottawa for over half a century," explains Thomas Assaly, Assaly Group CEO. "With the accumulation of this expertise, we can offer a real estate investment opportunity that simultaneously builds wealth for our investors and funds the growth of DUC's programs. By purchasing our prime real estate and donating 20 years in the future, investors can maximize their tax credits, have minimal equity invested, and virtually no debt in the investment. The cash flow produced from the prime real estate gives the investor a minimum 10 per cent return and DUC an equal cash flow to fund their programs."

The majestic Dominican University College invites interest in its mission and programs and welcomes visitors to the beautiful campus off Somerset Street. In addition to its current philosophy and theology courses, the college endeavours to offer expanded programs of study in the future. DUC is praised for its contribution to the advancement of knowledge, its commitment to serve society, and the formation of exceptional students adept in critical thinking, intelligence of faith, ecumenism, ethics, and aesthetics. ■