

February 1985

Catholic Liberal Arts Colleges for Strong Pre-Med Preparation

Gerard Senecal

Follow this and additional works at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/lnq>

Recommended Citation

Senecal, Gerard (1985) "Catholic Liberal Arts Colleges for Strong Pre-Med Preparation," *The Linacre Quarterly*: Vol. 52 : No. 1 , Article 3.

Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/lnq/vol52/iss1/3>

Catholic Liberal Arts Colleges for Strong Pre-Med Preparation

Rev. Gerard Senecal, O.S.B.

Father Gerard Senecal, O.S.B., Ph.D., president, Benedictine College, Atchison, Kansas, is a former chairman of the boards of directors of both the Kansas City Regional Council for Higher Education and the Kansas Foundation for Independent Colleges. Chairman of the department of physics at Benedictine from 1965 to 1970, he held a National Science Foundation faculty fellowship for post-doctoral research in 1970 and 1971 at the University of California at Berkeley. He earned his doctorate in physics at Kansas State University.

Presidents of America's liberal arts colleges are basking in praise from the leaders of business and industry for the success these institutions are enjoying in preparing young people for leadership roles in the marketplace. The large number of these presidents who head Catholic institutions sometimes feel that not enough is being said about the role of their colleges in preparing men and women of their faith for critical roles within the Church. Of particular interest are solid Catholic liberal arts colleges for the technical, ethical and moral preparation of those entering the medical profession.

W. John Swartz, vice-chairman, Santa Fe Southern Pacific Corporation, recently told educational leaders in Kansas that he had been intrigued by results of a survey among chief executive officers of Fortune 500 companies showing that six out of ten chief executive officers in the 50 largest firms of finance, life insurance, merchandising, transportation and utilities had received their undergraduate education at private colleges.

According to a recent editorial in *Chemical and Engineering News*, a General Motors study of its own employees found that liberal arts graduates had done so well within all aspects of the company that it had launched a program to attract "sizeable numbers of college graduates whose analytical and language skills have been honed in a liberal arts program."

The same editorial cites a Chase-Manhattan study in which liberal arts graduates with BAs had, as a group, a greater success rate than MBAs.

Recently, it was my privilege to welcome astronaut Sally Ride to the Benedictine College campus in Atchison, Kansas. This gave me an opportunity for a commentary on the changing roles and requirements for these roles in our society. Graduates with narrow technological training will grow obsolete very quickly. "What is needed," I added, "is a graduate educated to think, to analyze, to evaluate, and to adapt to new situations. Above all, it appears that qualities of moral leadership will be as essential as they always have been."

Shortly thereafter, Secretary of Education Terrell H. Bell released a 1984 study of the nation's colleges and universities, expressing concern for growing weaknesses. From those findings, he selected key points to dramatize to the press. For example: "More students are pursuing degrees in increasingly narrow fields, avoiding the liberal arts and sciences, avoiding subjects that challenge their verbal skill, and moving more into professional and vocational programs on the undergraduate level."

Parallel assessments of Catholic higher education have charged that not enough attention has been paid to traditional Catholic values eroding from classrooms of Church-related institutions of this country.

Any combination of these losses has to be of concern to those entrusted with counselling Catholic men and women entering the health professions — especially through state and secular schools of medicine.

Catholics who choose medicine as a profession in the years ahead will face some of the most difficult moral and ethical choices which have risen in the entire history of medicine. This calls for Catholic physicians of our society to collaborate more intimately in the preservation of sound institutions still providing the theological and philosophical grounding essential to such decision-making. It may take considerable time to work out mechanisms for direct involvement with the scientific side of the Catholic liberal arts college in order to insure quality pre-med preparation. Catholic doctors should not wait to involve themselves immediately in finding existing colleges which do provide both successful pre-med preparation and value-oriented education based on sound Catholic theology and philosophy as required ingredients of the bachelor's degree.