

The Aims of Education

By President James L. Doti

Preface: For the 1993-34 academic year, I decided to initiate an annual Aims of Education Address to be delivered to our new students during orientation week. What follows is the address I gave on August 23, 1993. While the initial address is mine, in future years I will ask members of the Chapman faculty to present subsequent addresses that will present different perspectives relating to the aims of education. I look forward to publishing these addresses in future years. As friends of the university, I invite your comments as well. Please feel free to write or call me in the President's Office.

It gives me great pleasure to officially welcome our newest students to the Chapman community. In the past, you have been what we refer to as "prospective students," but now that you have taken the plunge, you are past the point of no return. Please know I look forward in the weeks, months, and years ahead to personally meeting all of you. I also am pleased to have the opportunity now to discuss what we aim to do with you (notice I said with you and not to you) while you are herewith us as part of the Chapman community.

In reflecting upon the message I wish to bring to you, I couldn't help but feel envious of the Chapman journey on which you are ready to embark. Right now, you may be wondering why anyone should be feeling envious of you when you are likely to be harboring feelings such as: "I'm scared... I shouldn't be here... I don't know anybody... I don't like the food... I'm going to flunk... I'm feeling sick... I'm ready to throw-up."

Since Chapman is a new and unfamiliar home, I can well understand why you may harbor those feelings of anxiety. But perhaps if I tell you what we aim to do with you, you may begin to feel a little more secure.

What we aim to do at Chapman is build a foundation...for the kind of fun that will last a lifetime.

During your stay at Chapman, I hope you will have fun. Fun is good. In economics we call it "utils." The more utils you have, the more fun you have. It's good to have fun. I have nothing against having fun. But fun is

temporary. It comes; it goes.

What we aim to do at Chapman is build a foundation not for the fleeting kind of fun but a foundation for the kind of fun that will last a lifetime.

We centrally aim to do that with you by building inquiring minds. Not the kind of inquiring mind that reads *The National Enquirer*, but the kind that discovers the beauty in the sound of a haiku or a Mahler symphony, the kind that discovers the outrageous humor in a play by Aristophanes, the kind that discovers the subtle complexity in a poem by

T.S. Eliot, the kind that discovers the black humor in Joseph Heller's *Catch 22*, the kind that discovers the poignant view of humanity in a novel by V.S. Naipaul, and the kind that discovers the provocative philosophical perspective of an Albert Schweitzer, Chief Joseph, Confucius, and Martin Luther King.

Please excuse me for my self-indulgence in passing along some of my personal favorites, but the true mark of Chapman's success in delivering on our aim of building inquiring minds is whether you will someday be able to wax

eloquent about the works of literature that touched your lives as you passed through this venerable place.

As Thomas Huxley stated, "Literature of all sources of refined pleasures, and one of the great uses of a liberal education is to enable us to enjoy that pleasure."

An inquiring mind, however, is more than discovering truth in works of literature. It is learning how to use the social sciences and humanities to reveal a rich pluralism in the way people think and act, or how to use philosophy and religion to help one understand spiritual, moral, and ethical values through reason and judgment, or how to use the natural sciences and mathematics to alert one to the interdependence and rationality of our physical world.

So fun is good. It's good to have fun. I have nothing against having fun, but I hope we succeed in our aim of building inquiring minds.

During your time here at Chapman, I hope you will have some causes. Causes are good. It's good to have causes. I have nothing against causes. But most causes are temporary.

They come; they go.

What we aim to do at Chapman is provide one with the opportunity to study, analyze, and mold beliefs and value systems that give substance and meaning to the kind of causes that will last a lifetime.

Causes are good. It's good to have causes..But most causes are temporary. They come; they go.

We centrally aim to do that with you by building ethical lives. And we will do that with you by providing the tools, skills, and alternative views that foster a value

perspective. Not a "value-free" perspective but a perspective that makes abundantly clear the ethical values that should permeate our personal and professional lives. These ethical values certainly include but are not limited to honesty, fairness, compassion, respect, and service to others.

You will soon, I am sure, sense a new birth of freedom

===== that is part and parcel of a higher
But with that new birth of education experience. But with
freedom comes that new birth of freedom comes
responsibility...of what to responsibility. I refer here not
do and how to act in a just to the kind of responsibility
variety of circumstances. where one knows when to get
out of bed in the morning. More
important is the responsibility

of knowing what to do and how to act in a variety of circumstances. The decision you make given those circumstances is ultimately a moral act that requires an ethical foundation. So as you are buffeted by events or pulled hither and yon by people, an ethical foundation will be the basis for a morality that gives direction and guidance in your life.

So causes are good. It's good to have causes. I have nothing against causes, but I hope we succeed in our aim of building ethical lives.

During your time here at Chapman, I hope you will eventually earn a degree. Earning a degree is good. With a degree you will likely earn more money. It's good to earn

money. I have nothing against earning money. But money is temporary. It comes; it goes.

What we aim to do at Chapman is to help you to earn the kind of things that will last a lifetime

We centrally aim to do that with you by building productive lives. That certainly includes the lifetime contributions one makes to society in successfully pursuing a chosen career, but it also includes the voluntary or humanitarian efforts that touch other people's lives. And we will do that with you by creating opportunities for you to experience and ultimately be rewarded by the personal fulfillment, the satisfaction, and for those of you who still remember, the utils that come from helping others.

We are blessed at Chapman that living a life of service is a very important part of our university's culture and ethos. Our church-relatedness with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is not symbolized by dogma, creed, and ritual.

Rather, it is made real by care-giving to others.

Last year a group of our students and other members of the Chapman community participated in a Disciples-sponsored mission in Honduras where students might live, work, and grow together as part of a community in a Latin American nation. How their lives were touched and challenged by this experience provides compelling evidence

that by helping others, we can make a significant difference in this world; by helping others, we find that love can extend beyond an immediate circle of family and friends; and by helping others, we can transform an impersonal world into a global community.

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As you explore the world =====
village that is Chapman's, we aim to prepare you for global citizenship. The importance of this educational aim in increasing your productivity as an individual is growing in

inverse proportion to the speed with which our world is shrinking. So we encourage you at Chapman to open yourselves to people who have come together to this place not only from different parts of the nation but different parts of the world. We encourage you to share in the rich and varied cultures and traditions of a diverse but connected

world. We encourage you to

I have nothing against earning money and degrees, but I hope we succeed in our aim of building productive lives...

share in the camaraderie of human interaction. In discovering differences among people, there will also be a discovery of shared values as well.

So earning money and degrees is good. It's good to

earn money and degrees. I have nothing against earning money and degrees, but I hope we succeed in our aim of building productive lives, lives that understand well the message of Chapman's guiding spirit, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, when he said, "Search and see whether there is not someplace

where you may invest your humanity."

Now I would like you to take a pop quiz! I am

pleased to be the first at Chapman to give what I know will be a long line of pop quizzes while you are a student here. If you have been daydreaming and not listening to a thing I have been saying this morning, that's okay. The quiz is not based on my talk but rather on the following information that also happens to be a true story.

For the last couple of years, Dr. Essie Adibi, a professor

in our School of Business and Economics, has given me the

a traditional display celebrating the Iranian new year called "Narouz." Upon receiving the goldfish, I would throw them in a small pond in my backyard. It wasn't

and I noticed that the goldfish began to grow prodigiously to sizes never observed in traditional fish bowls. One behemoth, for example, was easily more than six inches long. Now

remember, when first thrown in the pond, these were just ordinary little goldfish.

And now for the quiz. In listening to the story that I just related, did you spend most of the time:

- (A) Wondering what a behemoth goldfish looks like?
- (B) Wondering what I'm doing with a pond in my backyard?
- (C) Wondering if being part of a new year display is a magic growth elixir?
- (D) Wondering what in the world does this story have to do with the aims of education?

If you answered "D," let me try to explain. I still have to work out the details, but my highly scientific methodological

orientation has led me to conclude that the size of a goldfish is a positive function of the size of its container. It's still not clear to me whether we are dealing here with a linear, exponential, or quadratic function, but the following

Chapman...is like my backyard pond-that larger environment that will allow you to expand and grow.

goldfish that happened to survive being included as part of

conclusion is unmistakable: **If** the container is small, the goldfish are small; **if** the container is big, like my pond, the

goldfish are big.

If you were wondering what my fish allegory has to do with the aims of education, I hope the answer is clear. Chapman, in a sense, is very much like my backyard pond—that larger environment that will allow you to expand and grow.

So, my little goldfish, I invite you to bring the fun, causes, and yearning for a degree with you to the pond. But I hope you come to know what Chapman means by its stated and shared mission of providing personalized education of distinction that leads to inquiring, ethical, and productive lives as global citizens.

I bid you all a hearty welcome, my fellow denizens of the deep, to the pond we call Chapman University.