



An Open Letter to My Parents

Three Years Later, Thank You for Your Advice

By David Langley ('15)

Dear Mom and Dad,

Three years ago I was wrapping up high school and getting ambitious about studying chemistry. Around that time I had the opportunity to do some medicinal-drug research work on the Rare and Neglected Diseases project started by the World Health Organization. I wanted to pursue that line of scholarship, so I applied to MIT and was accepted.



I was eager to enroll, but you said I should go to Thomas Aquinas College first, in order to be better prepared to study a more specific branch of science later on. At the time, I didn't understand why that would be true, but I trusted your advice. Three years later, I am glad that I did.

Because I came to TAC, I am now a better Catholic — or at least a better-informed one. Reading Aristotle's account of nature and St. Thomas's *Summa* has provided me with overwhelming evidence for the truth of what we believe. Surrounded by tutors, priests, and friends who have a genuine love for truth, goodness, and beauty, I have developed a keener sense of what it means to live a virtuous life. As I prepare to move on to the next stage of my life, I have no doubt that, at some point, I will need to give reasons for what I believe to be true and to stand up for our faith. I am now well-prepared to do so.

I think I am also a better listener and a better learner. Through all the classroom discussions here, I have learned to look at an argument, written or spoken, and find the errors or truth — and that will serve me well in the years to come.

Working through the College's sequential curriculum, I am pretty convinced that the most effective way to learn is by going a little slower in the beginning — in order to understand the principles and interconnectedness of things — rather than by learning through the method of sudden and rapid special-

ization. I am so grateful that you encouraged me to develop my *whole* mind by studying mathematics, philosophy, and theology. Without a foundation in these disciplines, I don't know how anyone could grasp the ultimate significance of the subjects studied at a more particular level.

It seems that the best way to specialize in any future endeavor is by first understanding the whole of which my interest is just a part. I have discovered that science is not merely a tool for solving practical problems or making the world a better place, it is a means by which we can grow in wisdom and gain a more complete understanding of the material order in nature — and that reveals something about the mind of God.

“This summer I will be going to MIT after all. Only now, I believe, I am much more ready to study and work there than I was three years ago.”

Now, three years after we had those long discussions about whether I should go to MIT or TAC, I got a call from a former teacher of mine who runs an internship from Abbott Laboratories in Chicago. I had applied for a spot there this summer, and had been accepted, but he said the lab wanted to send one of the applicants to MIT instead — and they chose me. I will be working for the Jamison Group on the Neglected Tropical Diseases Project.

So this summer I will be going to MIT after all. Only now, I believe, I am much more ready to study and to work there than I was three years ago.

Thank you, Mom and Dad, for your guidance and your sacrifice, which have made this education possible for me.

Love,

A Note of Welcome

Dear Fellow Parents,

A hearty welcome to you, members of the Thomas Aquinas College Parents' Association. We parents and grandparents of the College's students and alumni form a vital part of the College and its mission. We are a community that supports and prays for the students — our future leaders — in this unique program of Catholic liberal education. We are our children's first educators, and our concern for their well-being continues long past the time they leave our homes for campus, or leave campus for the world beyond. My hope is that this semiannual newsletter will help to keep our community of parents informed and united.

We begin this issue with the front-page letter from junior David Langley to his parents, Laura and Michael of Lebanon, Ohio. It is an "open" letter because any of the College's students, past or present, could have written one like it to you, their parents. The particulars would vary, but the underlying message would be the same. Through your generosity and guidance, you helped bring your children to the College, and for this they are profoundly grateful — as are we all. I hope you hear your own child's voice in David's heartfelt thank-you, and know that your support and devotion are deeply appreciated.

Liberal education is undertaken for its own sake. Still, it is reasonable for parents to ask — as they often do — how their children will fare in a competitive job market. How can they gain access to employers, and how will they demonstrate the value of their education in their résumés and job interviews?

To help answer these questions, the College's Office of Career Advisement has hosted a career forum, several talks, recruitment visits, and a workshop over the course of this academic year. (See page 3). In the interest of expanding these efforts, we welcome your support and engagement. For those of you who would like to assist our students with career opportunities, please contact Mark Kretschmer at 805-421-5917 or mkretschmer@thomasaquinas.edu. To introduce new families or supporters to the College, please contact me at 805-421-5927 or rbagdazian@thomasaquinas.edu. Thank you!



God bless you and your children,



Robert Bagdazian
Father of Daniel ('13) and Gabriel ('14)
Coordinator, Thomas Aquinas College Parents' Association

E-Mail Resources for TAC Parents!

- Get "Letter Home," the Parents' Association Electronic Newsletter
- Join the TAC Parents' Discussion Group

To sign up, just send an e-mail to rbagdazian@thomasaquinas.edu.



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Liberal Education in the Marketplace

Students Prepare for Life After Graduation at Career Forum and Workshop

“The students who come to talk to me about their post-graduation plans are confident, but apprehensive,” says Director of Student Services Mark Kretschmer. “They know they have received an education that will serve them well in whatever vocation or work they pursue, but they are unsure how to get their foot in the door — how to choose the right career, how to talk about their liberal education in an interview, how to land that first job.”

To address these concerns, Mr. Kretschmer’s Office of Career Advisement hosts professional-development events throughout the year. This year his efforts culminated with an on-campus Career Forum, followed by a workshop dedicated to interview preparation and résumé writing.

The Career Forum, held in St. Bernardine of Siena Library on a Sunday in late February, featured four successful and faithful Catholic professionals: Rob Neal, president of Hager Pacific Properties; his wife, Berni, an entrepreneur, philanthropist, and member of the College’s Board of Governors; the Board’s Vice Chairman, Scott Turicchi, president of j2 Global, Inc.; and his wife, Lannette, president of Falling Upward Productions. “Because of their close relationship to the College, the Neals and the Turicchis have a deep appreciation for the value of our program of Catholic liberal education, and they know how graduates can demonstrate that value in the marketplace,” said Mr. Kretschmer.

The panelists’ presentations focused mostly on practical considerations. Mrs. Turicchi, for example, offered tips for job interviews, such as: always look the interviewer in the eye, offer a firm handshake, and follow up with a thank-you letter. Her husband recommended that students maintain diverse interests and be open to unexpected opportunities. “You have to keep your skill set evolving,” said Mr. Turicchi. “Then you can be open to opportunities that might seem unusual, shocking, or surprising at the moment.”

The speakers also offered words of encouragement. “Get out there! There’s nothing to be afraid of,” said Mrs. Neal. “You have pursued truth, you’ve understood it, you recognize it. Now we’re going to put you out into the world to magnify the truth that’s out there.” When the students meet prospective employers, said Mr. Neal, “You will lead them into probably the best hiring decision of their career, and that is to hire someone from Thomas Aquinas. Why? Because you think about the world differently. You’re not thinking about just how to take the same old tried-and-true method and apply it to what may in fact be a very different situation.”



Following their presentations, the panelists took questions from students and talked with them over refreshments. The students were interested and eager to speak: two hours after the initial presentation was over, some could still be seen chatting with the speakers in the arcade outside the library. All four panelists offered to help the College’s students and alumni with networking and advice.

“I was thankful for the guidance of such respected business people,” said senior Andrea Florez. Added her classmate Alec MacIsaac, “It was energizing to hear what is possible from people who were in a similar position to what we are in now.” Nolan Napier, a fellow senior, took the day’s message to heart. “They preached the truth,” he said. “If you want something, you work for it.”

One week later students followed that advice by dedicating a Sunday afternoon to developing their interview and résumé-writing skills. Mr. Kretschmer’s workshop led participants through the various stages of finding a job, giving them tips on how to market themselves to prospective employers. He showed sample résumés, cover letters, and letters of recommendation. He also distributed a handout listing commonly asked interview questions and strategies for preparing compelling answers.

Calling the two events “a great success,” Mr. Kretschmer praised the students for their diligence and the Neals and the Turicchis for their generosity. “The value of these experiences is priceless,” he said. “They have given our students a real sense of how best to put this education to use in choosing their careers and finding a job.”

Campus Life

Students Lead Confirmation Retreat



Throughout the past academic year, several of the College's students have led Confirmation classes at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Santa Paula. In March they held an on-campus retreat for 75 students, which included prayers at the newly installed Stations of the Cross (above).



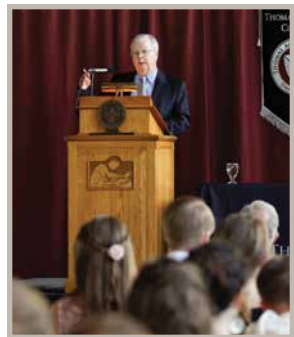
Topatopa Hike

Left from right: Alex Tombelli ('13), Magdalen Grismer ('15), Resident Assistant Jean Collins ('13), Hannah Martin ('17), Alexander Sebastian ('17), Ryan Truss ('16), Chaplain Rev. Michael Chabarek, O.P.; Rev. Joseph Illo, Susie Jackson ('15), and Chris Sebastian ('13)

The Merchant of Venice



St. Thomas Day



The College celebrated its patron's feast day this year in its customary manner (photos, clockwise from top left): Mass in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel; a midday lecture ("On Nature and Reason," by Dr. Duane Berquist of Assumption College); the campus-wide game show, Trivial & Quadrivial Pursuits (pictured, the Rhetoricians, who chose a *Duck Dynasty* theme); Rebecca Peterson ('17) and Claire Yanoschik (15), of this year's winning team, the Logicians, who donned *Fiddler on the Roof* garb.





On February 8 the St. Genesius Players treated Thomas Aquinas College students, faculty, and families to a production of *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare. The directors of the performance were seniors Maria Russell and Maria Pape. Sonja Misko, a freshman, headed up the cast with a lively and mischievous portrayal of the heroine, Portia. Sophomore John Turrentine played the part of Bassanio, her poor lover. Other *dramatis personae* included Portia's maid, Nerissa (Margaret Gardner '14); greedy Shylock (Joseph Rivera '17); his beautiful daughter Jessica (Bernadette Buches '17); her lover, Lorenzo (John Parker Wilmeth '15); the kind-hearted Antonio (Erin Straub '15); and Gratiano (Michael Pfeiffer '17).

Mardi Gras Dance



Nnadozie Onyekuru ('17) and John Paul Thureau ('14), Brian Shrader ('14) and Heather Waldorf ('15), Luke Burnham ('15) and Sadie McCafferty ('15)

Spring All-College Seminar



The subject of the campus-wide seminar was St. Thomas Aquinas's treatment of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection in the *Compendium Theologiae*. Pictured: Hannah Martin ('16), Brian Schardt ('15), Sean Robertson ('13).



Campus Blood Drive

During the mid-semester Don Rags break, students made their way over to St. Augustine Hall for the semi-annual campus blood drive. Pictured: Freshmen Margaret Quackenbush, Thomas Langley, and Maureen Pfeiffer



Open Mic Night

Students gathered in the Dumb Ox Café one evening during Don Rags week for this annual showcase of musical talents. Above: Clara Diodati ('17), left: Luke Joliat ('15)



Spring Schubertiade

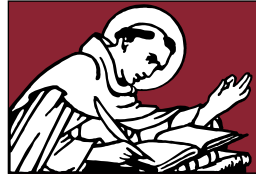


Left: Emily Sanchez ('17) and Andrew Pfeiffer ('17) perform "Waltz in C," by Fanny Hensel; Kellan Loew ('17) and Cecelia Teichert ('15) perform Mozart's "Violin Sonata in G, KV 301"

¡Felicitaciones!

Alumni & Parents' Associations to Host Taco Dinner for Seniors & Parents on Eve of Commencement

“To the Seniors, we want to say, ‘Congratulations.’ To the parents, ‘Thank you.’ And to Seniors and parents alike, we hope to make it clear that graduation need not mean goodbye.”



THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Those sentiments, says Thomas Aquinas College Vice President Paul J. O'Reilly, are the reason for a new event that will take place at the College this May — the first, he anticipates, in a long-lasting tradition. On the evening before Commencement, the Thomas Aquinas College Parents' and Alumni Associations will jointly host a celebratory dinner for graduates and their families.



Tlaquepaque, a popular local Mexican restaurant, will set up its grills in the campus picnic area, serving fresh chicken, beef, and shrimp tacos with all the fixings — rice, beans, salsa, and chips. The Associations will provide four free tickets to

“We can toast the Seniors for their hard work, commend the parents for their sacrifices, and give thanks to God.”

all seniors, who can purchase extras in advance for \$5 apiece.

For the Alumni Association, the event will serve as an opportunity to welcome its soon-to-be newest members, the Class of 2014, and to make known the net-

working and fellowship opportunities available to the College's graduates. Parents will likewise get a chance to learn how their relationship with the College can continue, far beyond Commencement, through the Parents' Association and its community of faith.

“Above all else, the dinner will allow for us all to celebrate together,” says Dr. O'Reilly. “We can toast the Seniors for their hard work, commend the parents for their sacrifices, and give thanks to God for the many blessings of these last four years and those that are still to come.”

Commencement 2014: Schedule of Events

More information available at thomasaquinas.edu/commencement

Wednesday, May 14

- Senior Theology Exam
9:00 a.m.
- President's Dinner
5:00 – 9:00 p.m.
St. Joseph Commons
Seniors and their fiancés only
- Senior/Faculty Bowling
9:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 15

- Senior Photos
12:30 – 3:00 p.m.
Individual times vary

Friday, May 16

- Commencement Practice for Seniors
9:15 – 10:45 a.m.
- President's Reception
4:00 – 6:00 p.m.
Doheny Hacienda
Parents, seniors and their fiancés only
- Alumni and Parents' Associations Dinner for Graduates and their Families
Fresh grilled tacos
6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
Campus Picnic Area
Seniors will each receive an invitation and up to four free tickets, provided that they RSVP by April 30. Additional tickets are available for \$5 each at thomasaquinas.edu/tacodinner.

Saturday, May 17

- Baccalaureate Mass for Seniors and their Families
Edwin Cardinal O'Brien, presiding
8:30 a.m.
Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel
- Commencement Exercises
11:00 a.m.
Academic Quadrangle
Luncheon immediately following in St. Joseph Commons

Monday, May 19

- Residence Halls Close
12:00 p.m.

Members of the Parents' Association Executive Committee

The Executive Committee of the Thomas Aquinas College Parents' Association consists of parents of current students and alumni who serve as a resource to other TAC parents, students, and parents of prospective students. The members of the Executive Committee are:

Robert Bagdazian, Coordinator
Father of Daniel ('13) and Gabriel ('14)
Director of Development,
Thomas Aquinas College
Santa Paula, Calif.



Joanne and Dr. Thomas "Murph" Goodwin
Parents of Frater Simeon Charles ('10) and Joseph ('15)
Homemaker / Ob-Gyn Physician and Professor
Alhambra, Calif.

Sherri and Lt. Col Timothy Jackson
Parents of Susannah ('15)
Homemaker / Marine Civil Servant
Manassas, Virginia



Laura Berquist ('75)
Mother of Margaret ('98), Theresa ('01),
John ('01), Rachel ('04), James ('08), and
Richard ('10)
Founding Director,
Mother of Divine Grace School
Santa Paula, Calif.

Hope and Dr. Keith Marotti
Parents of Rich ('03), Rosemarie
('05), Fr. Francis ('07), and
Marie ('12)
Bookkeeper / Molecular Biologist,
Researcher
Kalamazoo, Mich.



Veronica and Lt. Col. Ret. John Conklin
Parents of Mary ('01), Louis ('11), Patrick ('15), and Margaret ('17)
Homemaker / Oregon Military Department Project Manager
Mt. Angel, Ore.

Joan and Joe Duda
Parents of Kathryn ('03) and Gabriel ('12)
Homemaker / Construction Project Manager
Manassas, Va.

Clyde and Otto Feil, Esq.
Parents of Rebecca ('04), Joel ('06), and Lucy ('11)
Homemaker-Attorney / Attorney
Atlanta, Ga.



Elizabeth Raskob
Mother of Sharon Reiser ('99)
Retired User Experience Designer
St. Louis, Mo.

Miriam and Bruce Schardt
Parents of Cristina ('14),
Brian ('16), and Scott ('17)
Homemaker / Electrical Engineer
Trabuco Canyon, Calif.



thomasaquinas.edu/parents
The Parents' Portal on the Thomas Aquinas College Website!

- College calendars, payment forms, and information
- Parents' Association activities, contact information, and daily prayer
- Campus map and directions
- Nearby accommodations
- Prayer requests
- Student photo galleries



Parent's Corner

Did Thomas Aquinas College Prepare My Children for Life After Graduation?

By Laura Berquist ('75)

When people ask me if Thomas Aquinas College prepared my children for life after graduation, I say yes.

I tell them about how my six children, all of whom graduated from the College, are grown up now. Four of them are married, three with children of their own. Four went on to graduate school. One now manages IT for a small business. (Amazing what philosophy prepares one for!) Two are well on their way to earning doctorates in philosophy, with future plans to teach at the collegiate level. Another is a nurse practitioner at Georgetown Hospital in Washington, D.C., and two worked their way up to administrative jobs in the business world.

Beyond describing my children's accomplishments, I also describe how my children learned to think critically and well at the College. They learned how to determine, and focus on, what is most important to completing the task at hand. They learned how to learn, which is much more important than obtaining particular job skills, as such skills are very narrow in application. (I know business owners who say they always prefer a liberally educated applicant to someone trained in a particular field, because the training gets outdated quickly, but someone who knows how to learn will be able to develop the necessary skills when the time comes.)

For 17 years — from 1994 to 2010 — I had at least one child at the College, and during that time I got to know many other graduates as well. One, a medical doctor, told me that his education at TAC was most responsible for his success. Another alumnus thrived in his graduate architectural program, even though he had not taken the usual prerequisite classes, because he knew how to learn. An alumna said she had feared that she would struggle in her accelerated nursing program, but she was among the top five in her class. She cited the critical-thinking skills she learned at TAC as instrumental to her success. I know many, many more stories like these.

The question of preparation is on the minds of those who ask me about the College, and I can say that all of my children have been professionally successful since graduation. I believe their education from the College is largely responsible for that. They certainly think so.

But when I answer that question from my heart — has TAC prepared my children for life after college? — this is what I say:



The education at TAC is the education for a man as a man. It fits his nature. It makes him more perfectly what God intends him to be. It forms his mind and heart so that he is able to know and love the highest things in the way that is possible in this life. It prepares him not only for a job; it prepares him to live his life here in such a way that he is ready for his ultimate goal: life with God. Thomas Aquinas College does this better than any college I know.

What is most important to me is that all six of my children are committed to the Catholic Church and to their families.

As a parent, I want them to be happy, in this life and, especially, in the life to come. I want an education that is ordered to both of these goals. If one is prepared for this life, but not the life to come, then he

is missing what is most important. Bl. Cardinal Newman said, "If our hearts are by nature set on the world for its own sake, and the world is one day to pass away, what are they to be set on, what to delight in, then?"

I want my children to order their lives to eternal life, and Catholic liberal education as found at Thomas Aquinas College offers the formation that makes that possible.

Mrs. Berquist is the founding director of Mother of Divine Grace School, a distance-learning school serving about 4,000 students.

“The education at TAC is the education for a man as a man. ... It prepares him to live his life here in such a way that he is ready for his ultimate goal: life with God.”

Top 10 Career Fields for Thomas Aquinas College Alumni *

1. Education
2. Business
3. Medicine
4. Priesthood & Religious Life
5. Law
6. Public Service/Military
7. Technology
8. Arts & Architecture
9. Finance
10. Media

* Based on 2012 Alumni Census, 54 percent responding