Fusions: Integrating Values in Higher Education
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fusion (fyooâ€”zhen) n. 1. the merging of different elements into a union. 2. the state of fact of being so united. 3. joining together.

The founding Benedictine monks and sisters laid the foundation for a values-driven, values-infused education at Saint Leo University. At this University, educating students means giving them the tools to awaken their highest potential, to recognize the importance of values in their lives, and to empower them with the knowledge that they need not to â€” take the world as it comes â€” but for the better. In designing a program to provide multiple opportunities for intellectual development and discovery, the University identified the following six core values central to the education of mind, body, and spirit: community, respect, integrity, responsible stewardship, personal development, and excellence. One or more of these values are integrated in course offerings and in the general education program; they are clearly identified through the development of the text Fusions: Integrating Values in Higher Education. The authors chose the word â€” â€” fusions â€” to highlight how various disciplines can be united in providing opportunities to actively engage in thinking about how values inform, deepen, and distinguish oneâ€™s living and learning. In other words, to show how values may appear in a science lab, a literature class, on-line research, studying historical perspectives, calculating a math problem, a philosophical discussion, or even in a physical education program.

It is expected that students will better understand what a values-centered education is all about as they actively engage in thinking about values. Discussion questions include items such as â€” What does it mean to be a student of excellence? â€” What ways have you identified for yourself to lead you on the path of excellence? â€” How does integrity fit into your college community? â€” How can you build a sense of community within your university? â€” How does respect influence your learning? etc. Overall, the reflection questions and activities may even fuse into a greater whole â€” a body of knowledge working in harmony that will guide and inspire one to think, to act, and to lead a more fulfilling and successful life.

It is a fusion of the entire community that provides for an effective college life experience where students, faculty, and staff become more aware of their own values and begin to examine and live these values. An important aspect in writing this book was that the university community pulled together to develop values activities for specific disciplines. Professors, adjuncts, library personnel, and administrators designed and developed exercises to show how thoroughly values can easily be integrated in a general education program. A unique bonding was established and a more in-depth integration of values and core disciplines was attained. The process also modeled the universityâ€™s commitment to excellence. Although values are universal, students have the opportunity to learn to understand, judge, and live these values based on their commitment to their studies and personal goals. The book is written for both student and faculty alike in that the tone and content is tailored to the interest of freshmen and sophomores, while faculty members have ready-made, well-designed activities to include in assignments and class discussions. Meeting traditional and non-traditional studentsâ€™ interests and needs was also a priority in the authorsâ€™ writing processes.
The book is divided into two sections; the first is aimed at acquainting the reader with various facets of values education. It begins with a brief personal inventory and continues with an historical perspective of one university, Saint Leo University, and includes student life in a values environment. An overview of the development and trends in values education is provided, along with reflections on how values can shape and affect life for the better after graduation. The thoughts and theories behind values education, which have influenced programs of study in colleges and universities throughout the U.S., are also clearly identified. In the second section, practical activities are organized around a select set of core values, which are universal in nature and adopted by people of differing cultures and backgrounds. The organization of this section affords both instructor and student alike to choose how they want to use the book. Readers can look for a value they are interested in and learn how different disciplines might implement that particular value. Alternatively, if they would like to know how a particular discipline might implement multiple values, they can refer to the discipline itself. Activities serve as warm-up exercises, leading to more sustained and reflective discussions. One may also opt to use a variety of activities to give students multiple perspectives.

In sum, the book is worthwhile for all university and college readers as academic and social cultures are truly integrated through a values lens. Students may find themselves focusing on excellence in math class, integrity in English, or responsible stewardship in sociology. As we well know, no activity alone can teach values, for values are complex and rich. Nevertheless, in the end, the authors hope this book engenders lively discussion and thoughtful reflection that leads readers to explore further values as part of academics and in society, the community, and one's individual life. The process of values education involves clarifying, modeling, teaching, and asking students to role model values, and to apply them in their educational, personal, and professional lives. Based on Benedictine traditions and heritage, the core values will have a lasting affect on the readers, as they will surely begin to re-think values in relation to their own educational experiences, personal, and professional lives. Saint Leo is one University where living core values is integral to its school mission, and ultimately to the success of each individual.