



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SHIMER COLLEGE BOARD ANNOUNCES NEW MISSION STATEMENT EMPHASIZING REQUIRED STUDY OF U.S. CONSTITUTION

During its meeting on February 20, the Shimer College Board of Trustees adopted a revised mission statement to reflect more accurately the unique and continuing mission of Shimer College. The revised mission statement reads:

Founded in 1853, Shimer College, The Great Books College of Chicago, is an independent, nonsectarian institution whose mission is liberal education. The word “liberal” in “liberal education” has the same root as the word “liberty.” Liberal education at Shimer is an education for and through liberty. Agreeing with Socrates that the “unexamined life is not worth living,” Shimer finds the highest liberty to consist in the freedom of the mind; that is, in freedom from unexamined assumptions, for example, swings in intellectual fashion, partisan politics, and ideology. Liberty at its peak is thus identical with the pursuit of truth. To this end, Shimer students and faculty engage in close study of the Great Books of Western Civilization conducted through the Socratic Method. By the term, Great Books, Shimer refers to those works of world-historical significance in the natural and social sciences as well as the humanities. Included in the Core Curriculum are the seminal works of Plato, Aristotle, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Francis Bacon, Sir Isaac Newton, William Shakespeare, John Locke, Adam Smith, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Alexis de Tocqueville, Karl Marx, and Albert Einstein, among many others.

The Shimer community recognizes that the intellectual liberty it pursues depends on its being situated in a system of political liberty. That is, Shimer’s cultivation of free minds simultaneously transcends and depends on the political freedom enshrined in the American Constitution. This dependence, along with the College’s commitment to enhancing its students’ self-knowledge, leads it to require of all students the serious study of the Founding documents—the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and The Federalist—as well as the other original sources that both informed the Founding and reacted to it.

“Shimer College is committed to becoming an exemplar of liberal education. With this statement, we strengthen Shimer for this leadership role,” stated President Lindsay, who led the revision process.

Carson Holloway, member of the Board of Trustees says, “In an age when so much higher education is characterized by superficiality, trendiness, and mediocrity, Shimer College is a beacon of intellectual seriousness. Its new mission statement makes this clear by eloquently expressing the College’s noble purpose: the cultivation of true intellectual independence through the Socratic study of the great books of Western Civilization. The new mission statement is therefore a major step forward in explaining to the larger community why Shimer’s work is so valuable and so worthy of support.”

Chris Nelson, Chair of the Board of Trustees, adds, “We are appreciative of the work of President Lindsay and others involved in the process. This statement acknowledges our debt to the books and authors that have helped shape our intellectual heritage and our understanding of the world we inhabit.”

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