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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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"What America's students need and what they get at WCC is a strong dose of the God-given real world. By encountering the truth of reality, they find hope!"

Dear Friend of Wyoming Catholic College,

If someone asked me to sum up the dire situation in American education today, my answer would be an easy one: 95% of college counselors report rising mental health issues on their campuses. **Ninety-five percent!**

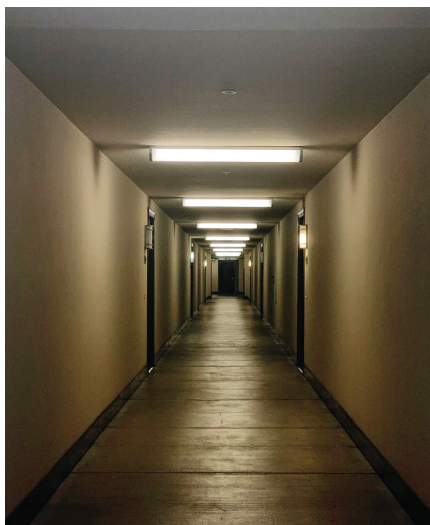
It's a shocking number—because these young men and women are our best hope for the future. The reasons for these issues vary from case to case, but the underlying causes aren't that difficult to diagnose—the highest inflation in decades and the uncertain economic outlook that accompanies it; humiliating foreign policy debacles and the armed conflicts that follow hard upon such missteps; seemingly-endless waves of COVID and the naked government overreach that attends each of them; and a population deeply divided on the most essential things, such as the importance of the traditional family, fidelity to the truth, and the value of every human life.

America's youth see this confusion as their inevitable inheritance. And while our next election might solve some of these problems (if we're very lucky), the divisions themselves are rooted in the poisonous philosophical atmosphere of the past few centuries. The steady rise of moral and intellectual relativism has left us in an environment perhaps best defined as one where a Supreme Court Justice says that we humans contain within ourselves "the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life."

What a shocking claim—that reality is entirely at the beck and call of our own human desires and foibles. But regardless of what people like this might pretend about the world, reality always exerts itself in the long run. What America's students need—and *what they get at Wyoming Catholic* —is a strong dose of the God-given real world.

By encountering the truth of reality, they find hope.

To explain just how rare and crucial this education is, I'd like to tell you a story—a story, followed by a challenge.



Imagine a young man named Isaac, a bright 18-year-old Catholic from a small town in the Midwest. He is a sincere and affable young man, eager to get along with everyone, and he tends to downplay his faith when it becomes an issue for others. His parents want to make sure he finds a good job, and the state university offers the most affordable education. Initially concerned about his religious formation, they are pleased to find a Newman Center on campus. And when the university accepts him (and offers him a partial scholarship) they send him off, convinced that the environment will be a largely wholesome one, if not as overtly Catholic as they might wish.

In the dormitory, his roommate has already installed a brand-new 60-inch television set by the time Isaac has arrived, and that same roommate's brand-new girlfriend (who lives just down the hall) is sitting half-dressed on Isaac's bed. In the next few days, he discovers that the university has no restrictions on inter-visitation; ironically, he also learns that COVID mask requirements are everywhere and all-consuming.

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On the first weekend, none of his new friends and classmates even think about going to church, so Isaac goes to the Newman Center alone. There, he finds a priest who is very casual about the sacraments, who uses the word “accompaniment” with great sincerity, and who belittles Isaac’s problems in the confessional, telling him not to be so judgmental.

When classes begin, his history course concentrates on racism and white privilege as the sole source of American identity, wielding terms such as “race, class, and gender” as cudgels against the technological and humanitarian successes of the American experiment. A math teacher rebukes Isaac in class for calling a female classmate “she,” and ignoring this person’s preferred pronoun (which he should have known because it was passed out on a sheet on the first day). Everywhere he goes, he’s instructed to feel things that he does not feel and to be suspicious about everything he had once considered good.

Isaac feels isolated and grows increasingly anxious and depressed. He never goes to see a counselor about it, because he remembers that one of them told a friend of his from home to get over his moral hang-ups. He discovers that he can do that by himself. Within a semester, never quite believing that what he is doing is right, Isaac begins to conform to the behaviors that are all around him—no need for the lurid details—and he stops going to Mass. He eventually majors in psychology, but does not enjoy it. A summer job after his junior year turns into a permanent offer, and he drops out of college for good with the overwhelming feeling that he has wasted his time and run up debt for nothing.

Isaac’s entire educational experience is nothing but an exercise in the destruction of piety!

And while you might argue that this is a frightening little fiction I have constructed for dramatic effect—that it’s not’s real--you know as well as I do that the reality is often much worse. I could weigh down every sentence of Isaac’s sobering educational demise with innumerable footnotes.



Let’s try another version of this dismal story, shall we? Like one of those classic little “Choose Your Own Adventure” books? In Isaac’s senior year of high school, some friends from the parish tell his parents about an unusual summer program for high school students—something called PEAK, held at Wyoming Catholic College each year, and advertised as a preview of the college itself. Isaac still plans to attend his state university but tells himself there’s no reason not to take a couple of weeks to hike in the Wind River Mountains, ride horses, rock-climb, and learn from college professors in the classroom. And so, one June night in Lander, he finds himself staying up late, talking to one of the program’s counselors, a rising junior at the College. This young man lays the whole curriculum out before Isaac, starting with the 21-day backpacking trip into the mountain wilderness that launches the Wyoming Catholic College educational experience.

Isaac is amazed; he’s never heard of anything like this place; he’s never seen anything like this curriculum—so dedicated to the beauty and richness of the past, so aware of the goodness and importance of the real, and so earnest and unstinting in its pursuit of the truth. Three weeks later, after a scramble to get in his application, his transcripts and scores, his letters of recommendation, and a last-minute interview with a member of the Admissions committee, Isaac is back in Lander, the newest member of the College’s freshman class.

The first week in the mountains—immersed in the spectacular scenery of the Mountain West—tests him with real difficulties, but by the second week he’s finding his stride and loving the experience. By the third, he finds himself thinking a trifle scornfully of all those comforts he’d left behind in the “front country.” After generating enough story material to last him a lifetime and after enjoying a celebratory return to Lander, he turns in his cell phone (like everyone else), and classes begin. Within days, he is reading and discussing the Bible and Homer, studying logic and philosophy, learning Latin by speaking it in the College’s unique “experiential Latin” program, and doing science by hands-on experience in the field. Most of his classmates join him in attending daily Mass in the College’s newly-consecrated Immaculate Conception Oratory.

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His mind begins to open in ways he would never have imagined and could never have achieved at the state university. He looks ahead eagerly to four years of theology, four years of Humanities, six semesters of philosophy, math, and science, not to mention art history and music, horsemanship and leadership courses, and numerous week long adventures in the gorgeous country of the Rocky Mountain West. He is not preparing for a specific profession, but he is developing an increasing confidence in himself and a steady competence that comes from facing the challenges of the outdoors and the classroom. He does not take computer classes or any other professional training, but he does take on real responsibilities at the college—food service in his first year, for example, and several construction projects as an upperclassman, working as part of our “Flex” maintenance team.

To be fair, he does not know what he will do after graduation, but he has learned to be adaptable; he has been taught to grapple with new ideas, to write cogently, and to speak in public (including a 30-minute oration from notes in his last semester). He is ready for whatever life will bring.

Now isn't that a better story? Isn't that an ending worth supporting? Unlike the first version of Isaac—the one whose education has robbed him of his better self—this one will leave Wyoming Catholic College strong in his faith, well-formed in his character, and full of real hope.

I keep coming back to that word: hope. The one thing I see in all our graduates after their time with us—the one thing that gives me the energy and confidence to press forward despite the challenges we face as a faithfully-Catholic institution—is tangible, powerful, transformative hope.

At the beginning of this Spring semester, I reminded our students' parents of what hope is all about: “St. Thomas Aquinas writes that the object of hope has four characteristics: that it is good, that it is in the future, that it is difficult to achieve, and that it is possible. Cynicism comes all too easily in times like ours. That is why the genuine hope of our students is all the more beautiful. How could our students fail to hope after what they undergo here? They know what to strive for, they know how hard it will be, and they know it is possible.”

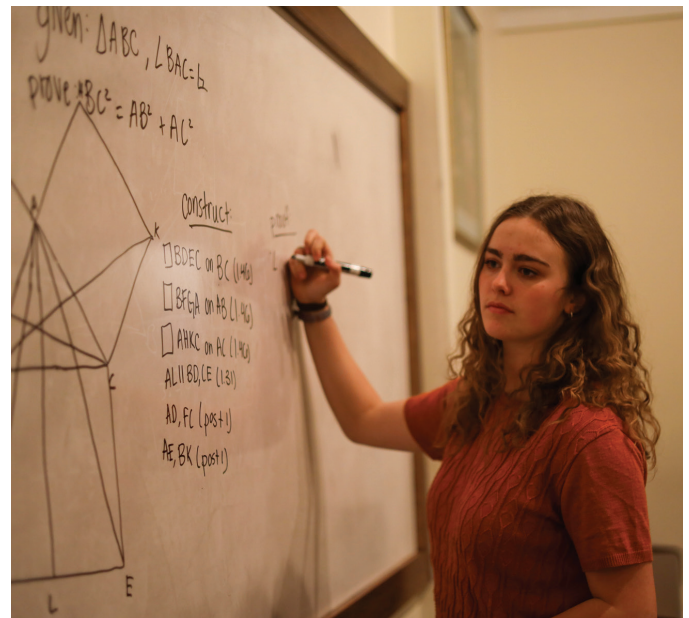
But are a few hope-filled graduates from a small college in Wyoming really able to make any meaningful difference in the culture today?

Yes, they can. And yes, they will!

Small things amplified over time turn into large results. In his book, *Atomic Habits*, James Clear makes the argument that a year of improving just 1% a day amounts at year's end to being 37 times better—not 37% better but 37 *times* better!

Now, apply that idea to Wyoming Catholic College and its graduates. Day-by-day, they add to the betterment of the world around them. They work hard, contribute deeply and generously to their communities (especially their parishes), raise joyful families, and exert a naturally-expanding influence for good everywhere they go. And I'm not talking about our superstars or “best-and-brightest,” either; I'm talking of our ordinary graduates—graduates like Isaac, who find their way to us almost by accident (or Providence), who immerse themselves in the College's exceptional curriculum and its extraordinary intellectual community, and who understand the importance and power of the true, good, and beautiful things they have experienced here.

In a world increasingly disinterested—even hostile—to the very notions of truth, goodness, and beauty, nothing is more crucial than the work we undertake here in Lander. “Just 1% better today,” we tell ourselves; “just one graduate, shaped and inspired by what they learn here.” And just think of the exponential power of that one graduate, transforming the country's destitute culture through their hope and their goodness, one percent at a time!



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And so, to my challenge: I challenge you to join Wyoming Catholic College's "Tenth of a Tithe" giving program—an idea inspired by Clear's "1% Better," by the exponential power of generosity, and by the ways in which small gifts can turn into big ones.

How much is 1%? How much would this tenth of a tenth actually be—this "Tenth of a Tithe?" Let's look at the median income for American households, about \$67,000 a year. 1% of that is \$670, which is \$56 a month when divided up over 12 months, or \$13 a week for 52 weeks—two or three lattes from Starbucks, or a couple of value meals at McDonald's, or a book purchased on Amazon. If you were instead to pledge this 1% to the College by setting up an automatic payment through our website (www.wyomingcatholic.edu/Tenth), you would be providing critical support to this important institution and its vital work.

I know what it's like to feel that our modest capacities are inconsequential, and I understand the natural and easy instinct to leave the support of important institutions like Wyoming Catholic College to those with more dramatic financial means. But that \$670 would cover the cost of books for one of our students for an entire year—anything but inconsequential! And the exponential power of such gifts is astonishing. If our college had 500 median donors supporting us with just 1% of their annual income, this "Tenth of a Tithe" would add up to more than \$335,000 annually. And if we had a thousand donors at this figure—at \$13 a week? Their support would cover a tenth of our expenses for the entire year!



This, then, is my challenge: Would you consider giving a "Tenth of a Tithe" to Wyoming Catholic College?

A tenth of a tenth; a 1% contribution to support this strong, spirited Catholic education and to prepare our graduates to be a force for good in this broken world—young men and women like Isaac, who are hungry for the reality we offer them. And if you are blessed with even greater capacity, would you consider \$13,000, the average financial aid grant a needy student needs to attend? Or let me be even bolder! Perhaps \$41,500, to cover the entire yearly expenses for a single student? Or even several of them? And if you have some other kind of support in mind—mentioning the College in your estate plans, making a gift of appreciated stock, or perhaps helping us to connect with prospective students and donors—I and my Advancement team are always available, either by phone (877-332-2930) or by email (oa@wyomingcatholic.edu).

If you choose to send a gift somewhat less than the 1% mentioned above, or if you would prefer to make a one-time gift rather than committing to a monthly (or weekly) donation, or if you are able only to offer your earnest prayers for our continued success, I can assure you that we are deeply grateful for these gifts, as well. Truly, nothing is too small, because God gives power far beyond our human expectations to even the smallest of gifts—even to the widow's mite.

Thank you for considering supporting our students through this Tenth of a Tithe opportunity, and know that you are in my daily prayers, as well as in the daily intentions of the entire College community.

Dr. Glenn C. Arbery, *President*
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P.S. Grounded in real experience and thoughtful reflection, our graduates love truth, think clearly, and communicate eloquently, engaging with the world as it is. Please help support this unique and important educational effort by visiting our "Tenth of a Tithe" page at www.wyomingcatholic.edu/Tenth to make either a recurring or a one-time donation.