

Community Living and the Benedictine Hallmarks

The Office of Residence Life strives to create a residential community that is centered on the ten Benedictine Hallmarks. The College hopes that this community will support the College's mission and Catholic identity and encourage academic achievement and personal growth. In this community, the ten Benedictine Hallmarks serve as a guide for community living where each member is challenged to live a life of excellence and virtue. All of the policies in the Handbook support the Benedictine Hallmarks. When these policies are disregarded, the Hallmarks they relate to are violated and the community as a whole is affected. To restore the negative effects of policy violations, a given sanction will seek to restore the spirit of the Hallmark contravened. The following illustrates how the individual Hallmark relates to the policies.

Love of Christ and neighbor

The "good zeal" of the Rule has us "each try to be the first to show respect to the other" and "prefer nothing whatsoever to Christ". Each member of the community should collaborate in pursuing a rigorous and disciplined search for truth and be able to count on others' assistance when needed.

The Love of Christ and neighbor includes the whole of the community, not just the individual member. Endorsing negative comments, thoughts, or actions that damage the reputation of the college only serves to increase discord among the community members. Let us avoid discord by leading lives like Christ and "cook(ing) the truth in charity until sweet". This means community members should strive to "show respect to the other [the community]" by using civil methods of expression of displeasure or concern whether with the individual or the whole.

Being created in the image and likeness of God, we inherently possess dignity and worth and are called to love and serve God above all else. To love like Christ, means to love without conditions, to give oneself freely, unreservedly as a gift to another. We violate another's dignity and self-worth when we turn away from love by means of using another to gratify our sensual desires. The Catholic Church teaches that the marital act of sexual intercourse is one of the highest forms of love since one freely gives of himself to his spouse to form a marital bond centered on Christ-like love. Since any sexual acts outside of marriage deface the pure love that stems from the marital act of intercourse, the college, in accordance with the Catholic Church, does not condone them. Furthermore, the college will not condone any conduct that is sexually degrading, such as pornography, pornographic posters, sexually degrading language, humor, films, music, et cetera.

Prayer – "A life marked by liturgy, lectio and mindfulness"

We aim to inspire by the design and life of the campus a spirit of transcendence and mindfulness, encouraging all to cultivate a life of prayer appropriate to their own faith. All community members should cultivate openness to the work of intellectual and personal transformation by connecting study to the fundamental purpose of life.

Belmont Abbey College is a Catholic institution that believes in welcoming people of all faith and denominations. In no way does the College mandate student prayer but it does encourage students to utilize the religious facilities on campus (the Basilica, St. Joseph's Chapel, the Grotto and Sts. Benedict and Scholastica) so that they can fully develop as a holistic person and bring a unique light to the campus community. Prayer in daily community activities links one another in our fundamental beliefs.

Stability – "Commitment to the daily life of this place, its heritage and tradition"

We cultivate lasting relationships because we believe that persevering together in the pursuit of wisdom builds strong and lasting relationships and makes remarkably powerful growth possible for all.

The College promotes stability of the minds, bodies, and souls of its students. By promoting the development of the person as a whole, the College hopes to foster civil-minded adults who will contribute to the community. Improper use of alcohol and illegal substances hinders a student from gaining inner stability since drug usage handicaps the needed development of the individual's mind, body, and soul. This instability of the individual adversely affects those closest to them which have a ripple-effect throughout the community.

To further build a stable community, the college encourages a respectful and Christ-like demeanor at sporting events and all other activities and events put on or hosted by the college.

Conversatio – “The way of formation and transformation”

Benedictine education seeks to establish intellectual and moral virtues, which may take years to perfect. These habits of mind challenge realities we take for granted and transform students, faculty, and staff alike by nurturing learning and generosity over a lifetime.

It is important for students to understand and value the heritage of the College. Understanding and valuing the heritage will be planted a seed of respect and appreciation for the mission of Belmont Abbey College. In attempt to foster this understanding, the College asks its students to conduct themselves (in their actions, attire, and engagements) in a fashion that honors the Benedictine way of life. By respecting self and the community, one honors our heritage.

Obedience – “A commitment to listening and consequent action”

In intellectual inquiry, obedience means respecting the integrity of the methods of study appropriate for each academic discipline and maintaining fidelity to the evidence, wherever it leads. Teaching and learning are impossible without this obedience, and through it, we form an intellectual community, drawing on a diversity of academic endeavors, respecting the methodologies proper to each.

St. Benedict taught that obedience leads to a deepening in the virtues of love and humility. In attempt to further develop a community that strives on these virtues and virtues like them, the College asks both its officials and students to understand the importance of holding in high esteem the rules and guidelines of this handbook. The College staff is here to both serve the students and foster their holistic development. It is through this desire to serve and foster the development of the students that sanctions are administered.

Discipline – “A way toward learning and freedom”

Discipline is the way of focusing energy and attention on what matters most. Our goal is to grow beyond a discipline imposed from the outside to a mature self-discipline in which we possess a robust love of learning and can imagine and pursue what is necessary to achieve our personal goals.

In order for a student to excel holistically, the student must learn self-discipline so that he/she can further strive in living a virtuous life. The College encourages its students to practice discipline while they conduct themselves on a day-to-day basis. Students can practice the virtue of discipline by taking their studies seriously, acting in moderation when balancing study and social time, and also acting in moderation while consuming alcoholic beverage and dating. The discipline of virtue can bring us to a point where we consistently desire what is good. Discipline in our daily lives frees us from the effects of sin. Discipline and order creates peace, love and joy. When we are at peace we are free to love, learn and be formed in the Benedictine way which seeks to form the whole person.

Humility – “Knowledge of self in relation to God, others and creation”

Humility is St. Benedict’s word for wisdom. It is an accurate appraisal of one’s strengths and weaknesses before God, before others and before oneself. We seek to cultivate the exploration of truth in academic discipline, aware that in a rigorous and wide-ranging pursuit of academic excellence, all participants are freed to discern and cultivate the gifts they possess and thereby contribute to the well-being of all.

Students are encouraged to be active members of the community by engaging in activities that honor the gifts God has blessed them with, something that will ultimately contribute to the betterment of self and the well-being of the community. Honest self-reflection about comportment that negatively impacts the individual inspires growth in wisdom. This self-reflection is difficult for all; students are provided with guidance from the greater community, particularly our monastic community.

Stewardship – “Responsible use of creation, culture and the arts”

We foster good stewardship of our environment and our talents out of respect for God's creation.

Stewardship serves as the community's housekeeper. While building a community it is important for the members to practice stewardship of our home and our gifts. This respect for God's creation promotes the care and wellbeing of the community. The College asks its students to become stewards of the campus proper by treating all private and public property as if it were their own. Students can practice stewardship by caring for their room and making sure that there are no fire hazards present and acting against vandalism. This respect carries over to the library, cafeteria, and academic facilities, and also fosters respect for intellectual property and privileges such as internet and computer use.

Hospitality – “Openness to the other”

St. Benedict directs us to respond to a guest's unexpected arrival as we would to a visit from Christ Himself. We seek opportunities to enable us to recognize the needs of those in our community and to call forth the talents and gifts of persons of differing capacities and dispositions, and of diverse races, cultures and backgrounds.

The Benedictine Hallmark of hospitality plays a large role in community development. Without hospitality a community cannot thrive since the community atmosphere is not welcoming. In order to promote hospitality within the college community, members are asked to treat others as they would treat Christ. Respect minors when consuming alcohol by not drinking in their presence. During quiet hours, please keep your noise level down as to not disturb others while they either rest or study. Respect the visitation hours so your roommate can go to bed. When a fellow community member needs help, offer your assistance even if it's just calling your RA. When smoking, don't stand near any public places. And, above all, please be considerate of others and their needs; let us keep in mind the words of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta who once said, "Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness: kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile."

Community – “Call to serve the common good”

A Benedictine community is rooted in a particular place where mutual service is demanded of all without concern for individual reward. We have a practical focus on community building, cultivating responsible living that is enriched by examples of those around us grounded in the wisdom of the past, and refreshed by the perspectives of others. In so doing, we seek to ensure that the students cultivate the disposition to serve others in ever deeper and broader ways.

A strong community is devised of individuals all working together for the whole. Each member must help foster this community by positively contributing to its foundations. Students should actively support one another and condemn any acts of inappropriate physical contact or use of force, harassment or hazing, and acts, verbal or nonverbal, that threaten or harm college officials. With the exception of Police, fire arms are in no way allowed on campus. Fire arms and other weapons pose a real threat to the safety of the community. Pets can create unneeded stress on other residents, become a threat to campus safety, and alienate those with allergies.

In conclusion, when considering policies for the community there is a balance that must be placed on the need of the individual verses what is best for the common good of the whole. Students are asked to engage their peers in always considering whether their actions will serve the community. We must all challenge ourselves to make sure our actions are beneficial to the community. Strength of character in choosing to do the right thing is not always easy.

Our policies seek to uphold the Benedictine Hallmarks and encourage the holistic formation of excellent and virtuous people, *so that in all things God may be glorified.*