

Creativity and Innovation

For a post-industrial urban center like Buffalo, creating “opportunity,” both individual and communal, requires that we cultivate not only “human” and “social capital,” but that we also develop sufficient reserves of what Richard Florida calls “creative capital.” Florida argues that future economic development will be driven by creativity and innovation, and that attracting and growing the “creative class” will be the key to urban revitalization.

The Role of Higher Education

Higher education is challenged to contribute to this stock of “creative capital” in two important ways.

First, we are challenged to teach openness to diversity and new ideas, an attitude that both fosters creativity and builds a tolerant community, which in turn attracts and retains creative individuals. Second, we are challenged to provide students with a range of disciplinary tools to engage in creative problem solving.

What students learn in business, or philosophy, or science must serve them in developing solutions

to the unscripted problems that await them in the world beyond the academy. That world is the one invoked by Medaille College’s first President, Dr. Alice Huber, SSJ, when she asserted that we must “prepare the young to live in their time.”

Ensuring a Sustainable Future

We choose to deploy the knowledge that we and our students have acquired in order to build social and creative capital in our community and in order to practice the environmental stewardship required for a sustainable future. We aspire to these values not only to serve the common good, but also because such links between theory and practice, between learning within and beyond the classroom, create a vast universe of possibilities for our students.

With our students, we embrace the promise of a hopeful future, where the social and creative energies of every individual are engaged. That future will require a thoughtful balancing of “three E’s” of sustainability—economic growth, social equity, and environmental stewardship—in order for the current and all future generations to live both meaningfully and well.

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MEDAILLE
COLLEGE

Medaille College: Our Collective Aspiration for the Year 2020

Medaille College will be known as the leader in preparing learners for career success and a lifelong commitment to a civic and sustainable future in Buffalo, the region, and the world.

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A CIVIC AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Medaille's Role in Leveraging Human, Social, and Creative Capital

By virtue of its emphasis on early career access and the success of every student, Medaille is committed to building “human capital,” that is, providing the kind of education that contributes to individual success and well-being.

Building Social Capital

From its inception, however, the College has also operated on the understanding that personal success not only occurs in a social context, but that social networks and community involvement are essential to the common good. As social theorist Robert Putnam puts it: “social connections and civic engagement pervasively influence our public life, as well as our private prospects.”

Putnam's assertion suggests that by investing in “social capital” (civic interconnections) as well as “human capital” (training and talent), we can turn our individual and communal aspirations into realities. For this reason, Medaille focuses on both the success of every student

and on the difference that each can make in building a better community, one that is socially cohesive, environmentally conscious, and economically strong.

Service to Others

Since its founding by the Sisters of St. Joseph, Medaille has been directed by an ethos which envisions service to others as a prime way of building “social capital” and thus promoting social cohesion. The College's namesake, Father John Peter Medaille, preached and modeled service to one's neighbor, “a service which consoles, relieves, unites.”

Father Medaille's call is reflected in the words of Medaille's pre-2005 mission statement, which committed the College to sharing “a close, mutual relationship with the community, based on collaboration, responsiveness, and service.”

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College of Opportunity

That vision of community outreach was embedded in an earlier mission statement that was called “Medaille in the 21st Century: The College of Opportunity.” Although not explicit in the current mission statement, the notion that Medaille is a “college of opportunity” still runs deep, and we choose to unpack that phrase and take a broader view of what “opportunity” means for our students, our community, and our world in the twenty-first century.

Medaille's current mission statement affirms our belief that with the right combination of challenge and support, every student has the potential to succeed, to seize opportunities, to shape their own destiny. This longstanding commitment has meant “opportunity” not just in terms of individual student success but also with regard to the possibilities that derive from promoting social equity, especially in urban Buffalo, where the poverty rate is among the highest of large American cities and where the racial divide is exacerbated by geographic separation.

By providing access to students from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and giving them the tools to succeed, Medaille has contributed to a sustainable future for the Buffalo–Niagara region by preparing students to join what Richard

Florida deems the “creative class”—that group of individuals who have the capacity to support an existing community, but also the self-assurance to imagine what more it might be.

Seeking the Common Good

Our vision, then, is to reflect more fully Medaille's ethos as a “college of opportunity,” but in an expanded sense of what possibilities that entails for individual students and for the community and region. Our students seek opportunity—for career success, for fulfilling personal lives—but in addition to helping them develop their “human capital,” Medaille students learn that individual success is not meaningful or even possible apart from the common good.

Especially in a region challenged by the social, economic, and environmental problems of a post-industrial world, only by investing in “social capital” can we leverage the communal potential that will allow us to meet the challenges that face us as a region, a nation, a planet. Thus, a commitment to civic engagement and to productive social ties is not only necessary for individual success but is also an ethical imperative.

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