Character and Values Are Vital for Today’s Youth

William J. Bennett Speaks at Character Forum

Dr. William J. Bennett, former Secretary of Education, addressed a capacity crowd and answered students’ questions during the first Character Forum of The Keeter Center for Character Education. This initial Forum was designed to give College of the Ozarks students along with invited students and administrators from other institutions a chance to interact and exchange ideas concerning character development with Dr. Bennett.

One hundred twelve College of the Ozarks students were selected via a nomination and application process to participate in the Character Forum. Students and administrators from the following institutions also attended the Forum: The United States Air Force Academy, University of Arkansas, Bluffton College, Evangel University, Alice Lloyd College, Oklahoma Baptist University, and Lee University. Students were required to read Dr. Bennett’s books, Our Sacred Honor and The Death of Outrage, and participate in several discussion groups prior to the Forum.

Regarding the topic of Leadership and Character, Dr. Bennett stated, “Children aren’t being taught the difference between right and wrong.” He said that education starts at home with the parents, then carries over to the school, the teachers, faculty and administrators.

“If I were running a school—college or high school—I would look to the intellectual competence of my faculty. I would look as much, indeed a little bit more, to the character of my faculty,” Dr. Bennett said.

In closing Dr. Bennett gave the students and audience five pieces of advice:

- **Don’t object to work.** It’s a pre-condition of relaxation. He encouraged students not to be afraid to change their majors. “Find something you love, do what you know and love, and you’ll feel God’s pleasure,” he said.

- **Popularity leaves when you die; your reputation stays.** He challenged the students to honor their commitments, help to raise standards and avoid indifference.

- **Self-esteem and self-respect—know the difference.**

- **Don’t pursue happiness; it retracts the more intensely it is pursued.** If you pursue faith and family, the happiness will come.

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**Keep an open mind.** He ended on a lighter note with this piece of advice. “Don’t keep it so open though that your brains fall out.”

The audience gave Dr. Bennett a standing ovation and, as is College of the Ozarks’ tradition, he was presented with a Hard Work U.® sweatshirt and a basket of C of O student-made products.
Students Comment on the Character Forum Experience

After the Forum, participating students completed evaluation forms regarding their experience. The following excerpts are quotes from these evaluations.

"This forum provided me with encouragement, immense wisdom, pride and an overall respect for America and American men of great character. I also gained pleasure from the realization of wisdom present in my fellow students. The whole experience has amplified my pride for College of the Ozarks, its uniqueness and everything it stands for."

"I gained an appreciation for character and what it takes to be a citizen with character. I have renewed faith that our country can make a turnaround and raise our standards higher and approach the moral decline in this country. I had never realized the passion America's founders had for our country. I hope that someday soon the leaders of our country can restore the passion that our founders had for life, love and true patriotism."

"I gained a great deal from this experience. I learned a lot about our forefathers and woke up to what our nation is missing. We must as a society do something different if we want to continue to survive and prosper. Dr. Bennett and his literature re-tuned my patriotic strings. This was a very good experience for me, especially going into education to teach America's youth."

"This forum gave voice to values that aren't openly expressed and advocated nearly enough. Views and proposals for change expressed here were wonderful food for thought and were challenging to the contemporary mental models we often experience."

"I gained an insight into the hearts and dedication of our forefathers, how they had such a passion for a cause that is seldom, if at all, seen in our society today. I now believe character education is a must for students all across America."

"I gained more inspiration to stand for what is right. Sometimes it looks hopeless, but it doesn't matter what the outlook is like. I still have a duty to stand for what is right."

"I am even more proud now to say I am an American who believes that with God's help I can change lives. I have been inspired to be a better person, not because I believe it would do me well, but because it would be a way to show my gratitude for the gifts I have been blessed with."
College of the Ozarks Honors Willard and Pat Walker

Willard and Pat Walker of Springdale, Arkansas were honored at the recent Character Forum Banquet for their gift to endow the Character Academy of The Keeter Center for Character Education. The Academy consists of three components including the Willard and Pat Walker Character Camp, Focus on the Family Exchange and the Willard and Pat Walker Character Forum.

College of the Ozarks President Jerry C. Davis and Dr. William J. Bennett, former Secretary of Education, presented the Walkers with a plaque commemorating their generosity. C of O students Chrissy Casper and Sara Umfleet presented the Walkers with an Edwards Mill basket of student-made Hard Work U® products. The Walkers have been extremely humble and unselfish as they have provided numerous scholarships to C of O students over the last several years. Casper, a sophomore from Holcomb, Missouri has been a scholarship recipient during the last year.

In 1952, Mr. Walker began a career in business when he became the manager of Walton's Five & Ten on the square in downtown Fayetteville, Arkansas. He continued his association with Walmart Stores, Inc. until his retirement in 1972. Since then Mr. Walker has spent a great deal of time in real estate development, farming, ranching and community interests.

Dr. William J. Bennett presents a commemorative plaque to Willard and Pat Walker of Springdale, Arkansas for endowing The Character Academy.

The Walkers have two children and seven grandchildren and are members of the First Christian Church in Springdale, Arkansas. The College family is extremely grateful for the generosity of this fine Christian couple.

Leonard and Edith Gittinger Community Convocation Series Presents Franklin Graham for Fall 1999

Franklin Graham, founder of Samaritan's Purse and son of renowned evangelist Billy Graham, will be the keynote speaker for the Leonard and Edith Gittinger Community Convocation Series on October 25, 1999. Graham, author of Rebel With a Cause, will speak on "Christianity on College Campuses."

Calendar of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 1</td>
<td>Camp Lookout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 27</td>
<td>Honor America</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 11</td>
<td>Character Camp (Orientation program for new students)</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 22</td>
<td>Honor Induction and Etiquette Banquet</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 25</td>
<td>Franklin Graham (Christianity on College Campuses)</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 7</td>
<td>Gary Smalley (Relationships)</td>
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Summer Means Camp Lookout at College of the Ozarks

Each summer, College of the Ozarks hosts ten one-week camp sessions for financially disadvantaged children. C of O camp directors and a staff of over 30 Hard Work U.® students oversee the sessions and serve as counselors for approximately 400 children who attend.

Campers ages eight through twelve receive an all-expenses paid, fun-filled week centered in a Christian environment at the College's camp facility near the banks of Lake Taneycomo. During their stay, campers participate in activities such as swimming, hiking, music, arts, crafts, various sports, and are treated to some area attractions.

Summer campers will enjoy two new cabins thanks to the generosity of Elizabeth Dole, former President of the American Red Cross. Mrs. Dole visited the College in 1997, and has since corresponded with the camp and some campers. One of the cabins is named in honor of her grandmother who, according to Mrs. Dole, had a profound influence on her life. Another cabin is named for Mrs. Dole.

During camp sessions, counselors have opportunities to share the gospel and the unconditional love of Jesus Christ. Several children who have accepted Christ during camp are returning campers as long as they are eligible. One early camper from 1994 is dual-enrolled in classes at the College this fall as she enters her junior year of high school. The positive influence our student counselors provide make a profound influence on campers' lives.

A special thanks is due James P. Keeter, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, College of the Ozarks. Mr. Keeter is a distinguished business entrepreneur and is Chairman of the Board and CEO of Royal Oak Enterprises of Atlanta, Georgia. He and his family have provided an endowment gift to start The Keeter Center for Character Education. The Center is named in honor of Mr. Keeter's parents, Ruby and the late Vester Keeter of Bradleyville, Missouri. It is the intent of the Keeter family to take a leadership role with College of the Ozarks in promoting character education on a national level.

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