

AALE

NEWSLETTER



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William C. Friday Honored with Barzun Award

Former University of North Carolina President Recognized at AALE Banquet

“**W**illiam James once said that the best thing an education can do for you is to make it possible to recognize a good man when you see one. We at the American Academy for Liberal Education know a good man when we see him.”

With these words, AALE president Jeffrey Wallin presented the 1999 Jacques Barzun Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Education to William C. Friday at a black-tie dinner held at the French Embassy on Nov. 13. Mr. Friday was honored for his 30 years of distinguished service and achievements as president of the University of North Carolina, as well as for his broader contributions to the cause of liberal education in his state and throughout the nation.

Other hosts of this year's award dinner, attended by more than 100 AALE members and guests, were Mrs. Marion Oates Charles, Thomas S. Kenan III, the Hon. C. Boyden Gray, Mrs. Eugene McDermott, and James P. Elder.

One of this country's most highly regarded university officials, Mr. Friday was cited by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education as “the most effective public university president in the nation.” In addition to his tenure at UNC, Mr.



William C. Friday (left) accepts the Jacques Barzun Award from AALE President Jeffrey Wallin during a dinner at the French Embassy, Nov. 13, 1999.

Friday also served on the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, as president of the Association of American Universities, as chairman of the American Council on Education, as chairman of the Task Forces on Education under Presidents Johnson and Carter, as advisor on student activism to President Nixon, and as co-chairman of the Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics. After retiring from the University of North Carolina, Mr. Friday went on to serve as executive director of the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust, from which he retired this year. He has received the National Humanities Award from President Clinton (1997), the World Citizen Award (1996),

and is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

In accepting the Barzun Award, Mr. Friday thanked the Academy and added that he has striven to promote the liberal arts for the good of the one and the good of the many: “I have done

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President's Opening Remarks at 1999 Barzun Award Dinner

In his opening remarks at the 1999 Barzun Award Dinner, AALE president Jeffrey Wallin applauded the great increase in access to higher education for students across racial, ethnic, and economic lines over the thirty five years. He cautioned, however, that this signal achievement was being undermined by "a well-documented decline in academic standards at many of our colleges and universities." This decline in standards means that even as access to higher education has expanded dramatically, quality liberal education has remained "a perquisite for the few."

Citing Jacques Barzun's view that "civilized life is the strenuous goal of democracy," Dr. Wallin urged all concerned with conducting and supporting

liberal education to redouble their efforts "for the sake of our own civic health and mutual well-being, and for the sake of our students." The American Academy for Liberal Education, he added, "stands alone in requiring of its members specified, substantive, and demanding standards in liberal education."

The task of ensuring that increased access to higher education is accompanied by high standards might not have "the cachet of the opera, the charm of the ballet, or the life and death struggle of the hospital ward," Dr. Wallin concluded, "but to strengthen the democratic spirit in our age is an urgent commitment of which we can all be proud." ■■■

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my best not only to preserve but extend and enrich the commitment to liberal education simply because I have seen how terribly important an open, inquiring mind is to an open, democratic society and its future growth." Mr. Friday recalled the turbulent times through which his generation had lived over the last 50 years - years that were as difficult as they were instructive to "one launching a career in

university life." By struggling to survive the hardships of the Great Depression, the challenges of rebuilding the national economy under the National Recovery Act, and the pervasive degradations of racism and poverty, Americans "came to understand that there is more to life than mere existence." The more perilous tests posed by the Second World War taught Americans that "global citizenship" would place even

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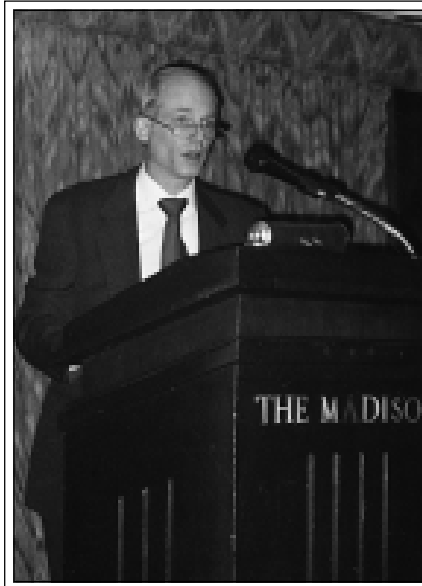
Michael Poliakoff Succeeds George Lucas as AALE Executive Director, Addresses 1999 General Membership Meeting

Michael Poliakoff, formerly Deputy Secretary for Postsecondary and Higher Education for the State of Pennsylvania, has succeeded George Lucas as executive director of the American Academy for Liberal Education. Dr. Lucas has returned to the U.S. Naval Academy to resume his duties as professor of philosophy and head of the Ethics section of the Leadership, Ethics, and Law Program. Dr. Lucas continues to collaborate with the Academy on several key research projects. Dr. Poliakoff has served with the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington, D.C., and as Associate Dean at Bloomsburg University in Pennsylvania. He is a Magna Cum Laude graduate of Yale University, attended Oxford University on a Rhodes Scholarship, and received his Ph.D. in classical studies from the University of Michigan.

Dr. Poliakoff addressed the topic "Liberal Education and the Crisis in K through 12" as opening speaker at AALE's 1999 General Membership Meeting, held Nov. 12-13 at the Madison Hotel in Washington, D.C. "The good news," he informed his audience, "is that U.S. students generally do well at fourth-grade level assessments. However, I am not coming here to deliver good news." At the eighth- through twelfth- grade levels, Dr. Poliakoff continued, "the situation becomes apocalyptically frightening."

Particularly distressing, according to Dr. Poliakoff, is the

direct correlation between poor student performance and the all-too-common failure of K-12 teachers to master their subjects. "What does it say to students when



AALE's incoming Executive Director Michael Poliakoff addresses the 1999 General Membership Meeting.

a veteran teacher writes grammatically incompetent sentences on the blackboard, or in notes to parents? What does it say when a veteran teacher has difficulty solving the same math problems that students are assigned? We must ask ourselves what it means to be licensed as a teacher." In most states, he argued, qualifying scores for teacher-licensing exams are unconscionably low, and teachers "often obtain their licenses by answering fewer than half of the exam questions correctly."

Dr. Poliakoff added that it is inappropriate, however, to single out teachers for their lack of preparation in college. "They are

only representative of problems seen among college graduates in general. A recent Education Testing Service study showed many college graduates are in the lower three ranks of literacy, meaning they would have difficulty reading a sophisticated piece of prose and analyzing its arguments. We need to define what constitutes meaningful college-level achievement." This broader problem points to the close relation between loosened educational standards at secondary and postsecondary levels.

Many liberal arts colleges have lowered their standards and requirements, Dr. Poliakoff said, "and there is a lot of truth to the view that college standards will drive standards at the secondary level." Many secondary school systems, in turn, have lost the will to set adequate requirements for graduation. The college requirement for mathematics, for example, which once included calculus or precalculus, is often eliminated or reduced to algebra, and many incoming freshmen arrive "without even a reasonable background in arithmetic." Together, argued Dr. Poliakoff, the slackening of secondary and postsecondary standards has created a situation in which more than one-quarter of incoming students receive remedial course work when they enter college.

To resolve these problems, Dr. Poliakoff asserted that "we need to develop a culture in higher education that is impatient with
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underpreparation.” Higher standards in college can help to remedy weaknesses in the K-12 education system, he added, “but only if we have the will to enforce them.” America’s public schools “must, in turn, embrace the standards movement. It is only through honesty that we can address and solve our problems.” Improving the financial rewards for educators and honoring their achievements are both laudable tactics in Dr. Poliakoff’s view, but he argued that these tactics will not achieve their purposes unless the standards used to evaluate teachers are also toughened. “If we want to help students, we must help teachers first, by holding them to more stringent levels of intellectual rigor and achievement in teacher education and licensing.” Here Dr. Poliakoff praised AALE for its role in upholding stricter standards in higher education, and for supporting “the core of knowledge that forms the baccalaureate experience.”

Concluding his talk on a positive note, Dr. Poliakoff reminded his audience that the United States still produces many extraordinarily good students. “It is humbling and uplifting to see just how good our very best are, and that so many of them are immigrants or children of immigrants who have faced and overcome significant obstacles. A strong K-12 educational system with breadth and depth in the liberal arts has been the gateway to the American dream of success and good citizenship. The viability of higher education in America is inextricably linked to K-12 education. Nothing less than the future depends on their mutual success.” ■■

Yale Professor Claude Rawson Demonstrates Value of Multi- media Projects for Classical Texts



Claude Rawson presents examples of the Everyman Multimedia and Yale Perseus projects at the 1999 AALE General Membership Meeting luncheon.

Classical texts and modern technology are not incompatible, and careful, imaginative conjunction of the two may yield valuable educational tools, according to Dr. Claude Rawson, keynote speaker at a luncheon held during November’s AALE General Membership Meeting.

Dr. Rawson, Maynard Mack Professor of English at Yale University, is working with Yale University Press and Everyman Publishers to create computer based multi-media programs intended to enhance students’ understanding of great works in literature, art, philosophy, and history.

These programs combine the texts of classic works with CD-ROM technology to provide interactive access to a wide variety of encyclopedic resources, including historical and biographical information, documentary materials, and

related artwork. When complete, the project will include a broad list of well-recognized titles by major European, American, and world authors.

The development of such innovative programs, Dr. Rawson explained, shows that the liberal arts and modern technology can be seen as complementary partners, rather than antagonists, in the development of liberal education. Combining advanced technology with the traditional materials of the humanities in multi-media projects may open doors to many students who might otherwise never encounter great works of literature and philosophy. Multi-media technologies, he concluded, should be seen as promising tools for widening the audience for the humanities. ■■

ACCREDITATION UPDATE

Tusculum College, Magdalen College Earn AALE Accreditation

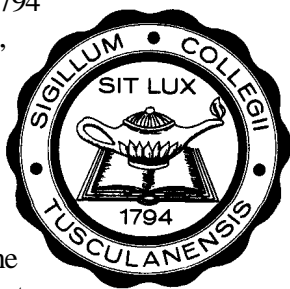
Following thorough reviews by AALE staff and site visitors, and based on favorable recommendations from AALE's Council of Scholars, the Board of Trustees voted at its Nov. 12 meeting to grant accreditation to Tusculum College and preaccreditation to Magdalen College.

Tusculum College

Founded in 1794 in Greeneville, Tennessee by two Presbyterian ministers, Tusculum College is the oldest college in the state and the twenty-

eighth oldest in the nation. The college takes its name from Cicero's villa, and draws inspiration for its distinctive "Civic Arts" curriculum from his civic republican legacy.

The college retains its connection to the Presbyterian church and seeks to embody the virtues of the two traditions - civic republican and Judeo-Christian - that have guided it since its inception. Tusculum's Civic Arts curriculum aims to develop the skills, virtues, and abilities appropriate to citizenship in a democratic society. Among these are active and empathetic listening, the ability to present thought clearly in speech and writing, the ability to analyze situations carefully and solve



problems creatively, respect for one's own cultural heritage and those of others, and the cultivation and practice of the virtues conducive to sound personal and civic decision making.

The Civic Arts curriculum at Tusculum College is implemented through five principal avenues:

1. A Focused Calendar (Block Plan)
2. The "Commons" Core Curriculum
3. The Competency Program
4. Service Learning
5. Major Programs of Study.

Tusculum College at present enrolls approximately 500 full-time residential students on its 140 acre campus, and has a student to faculty ration of 14:1.

Magdalen College

Magdalen College, founded in 1973 and located in Warner, New Hampshire, is a small lay-governed and lay-administered Catholic institution of higher learning.

The College seeks to implement "a full, human, and Catholic" education through an integrated system of undergraduate liberal education called the Program of Studies. Through this Program, Magdalen College aims "to develop in the student a

mature baptismal life and to prepare him or her for the lay vocation, apostolate, and spirituality." The Program of Studies is rooted in the classical and Christian understandings of liberal education and is designed to help students learn "how to question and how to participate in reasoned discourse, how to think and how to learn, how to assess opinions and how to arrive at a truth, and how to analyze and how to synthesize."

The Program of Studies accomplishes its educational mission through "Sequences of Readings" that are designed to help students cultivate the art of open dialogue. Accordingly, an education at Magdalen College takes shape through a series of tutorials on *Philosophical Thinking, Scientific Reasoning, Social Thought, Mathematical Reasoning, The Creative Arts, Using Language, and Catechesis*. These tutorials

allow students to "learn to inquire, reason, assess opinions, and grasp indemonstrable truths by participating with the masters of orderly thought - the persons who seem to have elevated

the life of spirits to its highest level and who appear to have lived the interior life of spirit to the full." ■



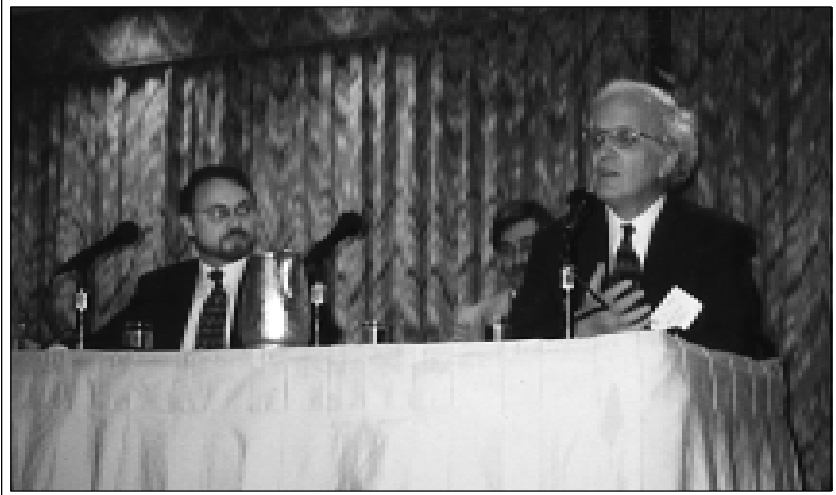
Scholars Compare Merits of Different Liberal Arts Approaches

A ALE Trustees Peter Kalkavage and Glen Thurow engaged in a spirited debate over the merits of their respective institutions' approaches to liberal education in a panel discussion at the General Membership Meeting.

Dr. Kalkavage, tutor at St. John's College in Annapolis, upheld the advantages of "an all-required, integrated liberal arts curriculum" grounded in the view that the several liberal arts bear an organic relation to one another, while Dr. Thurow, professor and provost at the University of Dallas, championed an educational model that introduces students to the different ways of "viewing and thinking about the world" developed by the various disciplines, with disciplines understood not as "collections of techniques, but as ways of knowing and being."

Dr. Kalkavage began by observing that the term "interdisciplinary" as commonly used does not accurately characterize the curriculum at St. John's: "This term presupposes an initial separateness of isolated disciplines that are somehow brought into union with one another." St. John's, instead, takes its cue from the seven liberal arts as traditionally conceived, with their division into the Trivium arts of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, and the Quadrivium arts of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music.

This division, he explained, "reflects a certain complementarity in human nature and human rationality. At our most fundamental level, we are beings



Glen Thurow (right) discusses the University of Dallas liberal arts program at the 1999 AALE General Membership Meeting. Looking on is fellow panelist Peter Kalkavage of St. John's College, Annapolis.

defined by our capacities for speech, counting and measuring."

The St. John's curriculum aims to develop these twofold aspects of human rationality harmoniously, by immersing students and tutors in the simultaneous study of the various and seemingly disparate liberal arts. "Indeed, the word *logos* itself, which means both rational speech and mathematical ratio, embodies the ultimate union of these two aspects [of human rationality]." And to develop these complementary human capacities rigorously and reflectively, he observed, is to be what the Greeks called "*mousikoi* - musical or educated."

By studying the several liberal arts as "a coherent whole of different yet intersecting disciplines," students and tutors at St. John's are continually compelled to reflect on the differences as well as on the similarities between those arts. Dr. Kalkavage concluded by observing that the combination of

this integrative approach to liberal education with a fixed curriculum required of all its members greatly facilitates the development of "a true community of learning" by providing those members with "a fixed point of reference and a common intellectual history."

Dr. Thurow opened his reply by taking issue with the conception of "disciplines" prevalent in today's higher education. In the modern university, he argued, departments and the specialized studies contained within them are frequently hostile to the spirit of liberal education. "In the various fields of study, departmental professors often work diligently to dig moats of jargon, to erect ever-growing ramparts of secondary literature, and to aim their bows of professionalism at any neighbor who might dare to encroach."

Urging his audience to recall the original sense of the term "disciple," one who "learns not

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FIPSE Researchers Present Interim Report

Quite a few of the nation's liberal arts colleges and university liberal arts programs have been adopting more structured general education curricula over the past twenty years, yet at a sizable majority of institutions core requirements have remained unchanged or have even been reduced. These are among early findings of AALE researchers conducting a major study on changes in general education requirements over the past 20 years. This project, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, aims to strengthen accreditation standards for liberal arts colleges and programs by examining the changes that have taken place in core curricula over the last twenty years, and identifying the range of causes that led to those changes.

At an AALE General Membership Meeting presentation

marking the end of the project's first phase, principal investigator J. Scott Lee and FIPSE project director George R. Lucas described the state of general education at the undergraduate level with guarded optimism. According to Dr. Lee, "there has been a trend over the last twenty years among many colleges to adopt a more structured general education curriculum." However, he remarked, "many of the nation's most selective institutions have resisted this trend."

These initial findings are based on a comprehensive analysis of core requirements at 66 institutions representing a cross-section of American higher education and including public, private, religious, and non-religious institutions spanning the four basic Carnegie categories (Baccalaureate, Master's, Doctoral, and Research). Among the range of materials amassed and analyzed were college catalogs from 1978 to 1999 (sampled at four year intervals) and internal institutional documents,

including curriculum meeting notes and faculty and administration memos.

The second phase of the project, already underway, consists of site visits and extensive interviews with faculty and administrators at more than twenty of the institutions initially surveyed. Drs. Lee and Lucas expect these in-depth investigations will bring into sharp focus many of the issues and circumstances that have influenced changes in core programs in the liberal arts. AALE anticipates this second phase will be completed in the coming year, after which a complete report of its findings will be published and widely disseminated. Project findings will also be used to guide a review of AALE accreditation standards and policies, to determine how they can be adapted to better support and strengthen general education requirements at member and applicant institutions. ■■■

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simply skills and techniques, but a way of life and thought," Dr. Thurow defended the idea of a discipline as a particular "way of both opening up and giving order to men's thoughts...[that is] rooted in some common experience or opinion about life, and is developed by reflecting on this experience or opinion."

The discipline of literature, for example, can be seen as "rooted in the common human capacity for, and delight in, making images in speech." The discipline of politics can be seen as arising "out of the common human desires for justice and honor." As he extends and

develops his reflections on the images men make in speech, or of the opinions they form about justice and injustice, the disciplinary scholar necessarily is led far from these starting points, while remaining mindful of them. "A proper discipline," argued Dr. Thurow, "is not a chute to narrow the path of a student or a wall to block his view, but literally a discipline to bring out the possibilities in some vital aspect of life which, properly pursued, becomes a window upon the larger whole."

A special virtue of the disciplinary approach to liberal education, Dr. Thurow concluded,

is that it allows "students to come face to face with fundamental alternatives reflected in the different approaches, assumptions, and passions of their teachers." This experience, in turn, can help students discover and develop their own natural talents.

"It is better for his education that someone master literature and flunk history than be a mediocre polymath. This is not because success is the goal, but because he will see and understand life more deeply by following his bent - he will be more liberally educated - than by neglecting what he can do best for the sake of acquiring mediocrity in something else." ■■■

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greater demands on personal and civic freedoms and responsibilities.

Mr. Friday commended the Academy for its role in furthering the cause of liberal education at a time when “[t]he nation hungers for moral leadership, for a deeper understanding of human values and of the worthiness of individual citizens.” That hunger “needs the sustaining nourishment of liberal learning,” and for that reason, he concluded, “AALE has an enormous role to play in leadership development, intellectual exchange, and scholarly advocacy.” ■■

Applications

The Academy accepts applications for membership from schools and programs across the country and around the world. Although accredited membership is currently available only to institutions and programs of higher education within the United States, affiliate membership is available to qualifying international programs and schools. Colleges and programs interested in membership should contact the American Academy for Liberal Education and request information on application procedures.

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