At Benedictine, a student’s exposure to American politics is not limited to the pages of a textbook or the insightful lectures of a professor in a classroom. Through the University’s Center for Civic Leadership (CCL), students dive headfirst into the political process. They rub elbows with influential politicians and propose solutions to some of the greatest challenges facing our country.

Educating values-based public servants is critical to our country’s success at all levels, and the CCL works hard to engage students in the political process so they can take on positions to serve the greater good with a strong ethical standard.

Our students practice serving as elected officials within a village hall boardroom, make foreign policy decisions as members of a simulated United Nations, observe presidential candidates clamor for votes in Iowa and intern for elected officials at all levels of government.

And in just the last four years alone, students have been afforded many wonderful opportunities, including:

- Hearing Barack Obama’s then campaign strategist contemplate the president’s re-election chances and the former head of the Republican National Committee reflect on what can be done to remedy gridlock in Washington.
- Voicing possible solutions to political corruption in Illinois with professors, reporters and better government advocates.
- Examining the tenets of the Affordable Care Act and its impact on the health care industry.
- Attending a gubernatorial debate held on campus.
- Listening to a former U.S. solicitor general discuss cases he has argued before the U.S. Supreme Court.
- Learning how a state’s attorney made a career of public service.

The nonprofit and nonpartisan CCL offers these kinds of enlightening experiences as part of an overall goal to improve the political culture in Illinois. Since its founding more than a decade ago, the CCL has made significant inroads in promoting civic education, and continues to attract students and members of the surrounding community to its events, according to Phil Hardy, Ph.D., assistant professor of Political Science at Benedictine and director of the CCL.

“We have sparked a great deal of interest in various aspects of public service, and we hope to continue to grow this interest in the future with our events and programs,” Hardy said.
Since its founding in 2005, the CCL has not only attracted dynamic and well-known figures to campus, it has also brought in expert speakers with viewpoints from all sides of the political spectrum.

The CCL has hosted President Barack Obama (then a U.S. Senate candidate), Democratic strategist David Axelrod, MSNBC political analyst Michael Steele, U.S. Sen. Mark Kirk, Washington Post columnists Bob Woodward and David Broder, CNN’s Peter Bergen, Children’s Defense Fund Director Marian Wright Edelman, human rights advocate Paul Rusesabagina and former U.S. presidential candidate Howard Dean.


“We are really proud of the fact that we welcome so many people with diverse viewpoints and have conversations that challenge them politically, while sparking our students’ interest in civics and government life and everything that is taking place in politics,” Hardy said.

In March, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle shared how the second-most populous county in the country is working to address its public safety, health care and economic challenges, and implored students to get involved in the issues that matter to them.

In April, WGN-TV Chief Meteorologist Tom Skilling and renowned climate change scientist James Hansen, Ph.D., came to campus to discuss the politics of science and the impact of global warming. Their visit coincided with the CCL’s Youth Government Day conference, which brings area high school and community college students to campus to learn more about the importance of government by examining some of the most-pressing political issues affecting their community, state and country.
Students can participate in multiple volunteer opportunities and simulated exercises that help them develop greater leadership skills and provide insight into future careers.

They can learn about the work of trial attorneys, increase their understanding of the judicial system and develop enhanced critical-thinking and communication skills in Mock Trial. They can develop lifelong skills in research, writing, public speaking, conflict resolution and problem-solving through Model UN, which simulates a United Nations session with college students serving as representatives of member states.

Working with the DuPage County Election Commission, the CCL and Department of Political Science have trained and employed hundreds of Benedictine students as local election judges. Students who participate in this program fill critical positions at numerous polling places throughout the county.

Each year, the CCL selects students to serve as Public Service Fellows who play key roles in planning and developing speaking engagements, conferences and other CCL events. Students who are selected also qualify for scholarships, engage in semester-long internships, participate in service learning, and attend special classes and seminars on leadership and public service.

“Being a Public Service Fellow has opened my eyes to the numerous ways politics and public service can shape our local communities,” said Paulina Piasecki, a junior English Language and Literature major. “I have had the opportunity to meet individuals who have dedicated their lives to public service, and I have learned that being a Public Service Fellow is more than planning events and helping faculty and staff at Benedictine – it is about being part of a stronger movement to mobilize the greater community.”

The benefits for students who take advantage of the CCL’s programs are as diverse as they are fulfilling. For some students, attending a CCL event can lead to an internship or define a career path.

Steve Montalto, C11, Social Science, was one such student. His CCL experiences led him to the White House where he served as an intern for Vice President Joe Biden.

“Being a member of the White House Internship Program was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to commence a career in public service alongside other devoted young leaders,” he said. “The foundations I learned from Benedictine, including the scope and responsibilities of the federal government, prepared me well for this experience and encouraged me to succeed after setting the highest of goals.”

Although the University and the Department of Political Science dedicate resources to the CCL, private donations from alumni, outside groups and individuals continue to play a major role in helping to make these kinds of student and community experiences possible. Without them, the CCL is limited in terms of the quality of national speakers it can bring to campus, and in its capacity to offer free programs and opportunities to a greater number of students and community members.

“We want to continue to shine a bright light on what is happening in politics in Illinois and nationally,” Hardy said. “We are determined to continue to inform the surrounding community about the different political discussions that are taking place while encouraging more young people to get involved in public service and leadership. Keeping our events free is an important part of our mission and allows us to serve the most people.”

To learn more about the CCL and how you can help its efforts, contact Jen Zingg at jzingg@ben.edu or (630) 829-6460.
Event marks Brophy’s installation as 11th University president

Michael S. Brophy, Ph.D., M.F.A., was officially recognized as the 11th president of Benedictine University during a ceremony commemorating his installation as the leader of the private Catholic institution on April 8.

The event drew more than 500 attendees and included remarks from James L. Melsa, Ph.D., chair of the Benedictine Board of Trustees; the Right Rev. Austin G. Murphy, O.S.B., abbot of St. Procopius Abbey; Sr. Mary Bratrsovsky, O.S.B., prioress of the Benedictine Sisters of the Sacred Heart; Sam Ortega-Guerrero, president of Benedictine’s Student Senate; and faculty, distinguished alumni and other honored guests.

Brophy assumed the role of Benedictine president last August, but University officials traditionally hold the installation ceremony after an incoming president has served nearly a full academic year.

Brophy was bestowed with the University’s medal of office, ceremonial mace and its charter from the state of Illinois. Bishop R. Daniel Conlon of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Joliet presented Brophy with a blessing from Pope Francis.

During his installation address, Brophy pledged to continue to build on the University’s strengths while forging ahead with a number of new initiatives to further Benedictine’s mission and scope as a premier Catholic institution of higher learning.

“We are a united community of individuals who have been brought together by a 1,500-year tradition of faith and character formation,” Brophy said. “We have seen and pointed to where we wish to be, and now we will release the many talents and resources of so many here today in sustaining the Benedictine way.”

Since coming to Benedictine, Brophy has presided over the dedication of the 125,000-square-foot Daniel L. Goodwin Hall of Business and has visited the University’s two branch campuses in Springfield, Ill., and Mesa, Ariz., as well as its partnership programs in China and Vietnam. He also attended a weeklong conference of Catholic university presidents at the Vatican where Pope Francis spoke about the critical need for Catholic institutions to work toward correcting social injustice and encouraging future generations of students to serve the common good.

Brophy has galvanized the University community around the creation of a strategic plan, BenU 2020, which will serve as a roadmap to achieve continued success in a number of key areas for the next five years including growing student enrollment, recruiting and retaining quality faculty and providing technologically advanced academic resources and facilities.

“I have come to better understand our strengths and unique capabilities and I am firmly convinced in our ability to achieve even greater levels of excellence,” Brophy said. “We have many positive assets to build upon to help us achieve our institutional goals. Even more, our faculty and staff possess a substantial desire to clarify a new vision.”
Professor’s Egg Research Hatches New Discoveries on Environmental Change

Eggs. We eat them, decorate them and collect them.

But what if we could use eggs to go “back to the future” and find out what happened in the past that has affected and possibly is still affecting our current and future environment?

Monica Tischler, Ph.D., professor of Biology, has solved this time paradox in a way that fully preserves historical artifacts. Except she didn’t use a specially fitted DeLorean. She used X-rays.

But it wasn’t just any ordinary X-rays. It was X-rays from one of the world’s most powerful sources – the Advanced Photon Source at Argonne National Laboratory. Tischler is one of many researchers using the U.S. Department of Energy’s $467 million X-ray machine.

The renowned laboratory is only a few miles from Benedictine, allowing Tischler the opportunity to break new ground without breaking the treasured, rare eggs that had been preserved and housed within the University’s Jurica-Suchy Nature Museum.

Typically, researchers have to destroy their egg specimens by crushing them into fine particles so they can more easily examine the material. Doing so gives researchers data that can reveal historical changes in the environment which can then be used to predict environmental changes in the future, including some that could prove hazardous to the Earth, as well as animal and human life.

“When birds lay eggs, they excrete contaminants into the egg, and the contaminants in the eggshell reflect blood concentrates of those contaminants,” Tischler said. “These specimens represent a window into the past. The problem is that up until this research, all the techniques used to identify the contaminant in an eggshell were destructive. You take the eggshell, crush it, dissolve it in acid and examine it. It would be unfathomable to destroy these rare eggs for research.”

She wrote a proposal asking Argonne if she could use its advanced X-ray equipment to detect metals and inorganic pollutants in bird eggs. Argonne approved her request, and in 2013, Tischler and her research team began detecting some pollutants using the X-ray beam.

Using the Advanced Photon Source, Tischler designed a method to examine changes in an ecosystem by looking at rare egg collections without damaging them.

The machine uses an electron storage ring that produces hard X-rays. The X-rays cause the elements to fluoresce, and analyzing the fluorescence allows the researchers to determine which elements are present. Researchers identified within the eggs naturally occurring elements such as calcium, iron and zinc, but also elements such as manganese, arsenic, bromine and lead, which can be considered contaminants.

In the examination of eagle and osprey eggs from approximately the same era (circa mid-1910s), researchers found levels of arsenic and lead in addition to iron and zinc.

“You see the same contaminants in both types of bird, so it’s the environment – not the bird,” Tischler said. “The same species at the same time from different watersheds were exposed to different contaminants and we can show this. It’s a new technique to gain a window into the past to compare watersheds and compare contaminants over time.”

Tischler plans to submit a manuscript with full results for publication in a scientific journal in the near future.

The College of Science provides unique opportunities for students to participate in research projects on campus, and internships through its ties to the regional science community, which includes Argonne, Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory and the Field Museum of Natural History. This experience allows students to gain expertise in a laboratory setting, connecting their classroom work to real-world applications.
Corinne Nawrocki celebrated a landmark moment in her career this past November, becoming the first woman in more than 120 years to serve as Silver Cross Hospital’s chief of staff.

She represents more than 800 members of the medical staff at the New Lenox-based hospital, working alongside its leadership team, employees, volunteers and physicians. It is the culmination of her life’s ambition, which she didn’t fully realize until after her undergraduate and graduate studies at Benedictine.

“It took me awhile to realize that I am a caregiver,” Nawrocki said. “It comes naturally to me. While I had never been a stellar student in the sciences, I was always a good student and loved learning. I saw the medical profession as more of a vocation than a career choice and still feel that way today.”

A graduate of Benet Academy, Nawrocki earned a Bachelor of Arts in Literature and Communication from Benedictine in 1980. Among the highlights she remembers of her time at the University were the “Friday Afternoon Club” gatherings with teachers and students at the pub in old Ben Hall and working in the cafeteria.

She met her husband, Andy Nawrocki, on a Friday night inside Ondrak Hall.

“We ended up by Lake St. Benedict under the stars and have been together ever since,” Nawrocki said.

And she can still pinpoint some influential discussions she had with faculty that helped solidify the person she is today.

“There is no doubt that Br. Finian Taylor, O.S.B., Ph.D., and Sr. Benita Jasurda, O.S.B., had a positive impact on me,” she said. “They offered a course on end-of-life issues which was one of the most powerful classes I ever took. We read books, we spent time with people with terminal illnesses and we had some very challenging discussions. I have since worked as a medical director for a hospice program and have helped bring a palliative care and hospice program to Silver Cross Hospital.”

After earning a bachelor’s degree, she worked for the University’s Office of Admissions and earned a Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.) in 1985. One month after graduating from the program, she gave birth to her first child and became a full-time mom.

While raising her son, Nawrocki ran a day care business out of her home for four years. Then, with the support of her husband and a second child at home, she decided to return to Benedictine to take science classes in preparation for the Medical College Admissions Test.

Nawrocki earned her medical degree in 1997 from Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine at Midwestern University in Downers Grove, and completed both her family practice internship and residency at Olympia Fields Chicago Osteopathic Hospital. She joined Midwest Physicians Group in 2000 and in 2007 became a founding partner of C&R Medical Group. Since then, her practice has grown with the addition of four family practice physicians and a new office on the Silver Cross Hospital campus. Today, the practice serves 16,000 patients annually.

The path Nawrocki took to become a key leader of a major hospital was by no means traditional. But today she sees her diverse educational background as a powerful asset that makes her uniquely adept at handling the challenges that come with the job.

“What I found (and still find) interesting about Literature and Communication is that it is so essential to our human condition,” Nawrocki said. “It can be used to entertain, persuade, educate, express or influence. It involves all the ways we interact with each other and is a subject that superficially seems so basic and obvious, but in reality is filled with nuance, subtlety and richness. I loved it then and love it still.

“In terms of career development, the M.B.A. has been invaluable,” Nawrocki added. “As a partner/owner in a medical practice and chief of staff at Silver Cross, having a basic understanding of finance, accounting and statistics allowed me to actively participate in the operations of my practice, and the management and marketing background of my focus has given me the foundation to build great working relationships.”

She encourages future students to study what they love, and for women who want to grow as leaders to speak their minds, listen and be honest.

“Leadership demands that we ask the difficult questions and sometimes give the difficult or unpopular answer,” Nawrocki said. “It demands that we have the inner strength to really look at and understand the issue and then respond in the best possible manner. Recent studies show that boards that have female representation make better corporate decisions than those that do not. The world needs us to speak up and participate, and we need to nurture, encourage and lift each other up.”
“This group has made history,” said head coach Keith Bunkenburg, who was named D3Hoops.com National Coach of the Year. “I couldn’t be more proud of this team, their effort and what they’ve done all year.”

What the Eagles achieved was something no other Benedictine team had done before them.

The groundwork was laid last season.

“We worked hard during the offseason, in the weightroom and during summer leagues,” said 6-foot-9 senior Lucas Johnson, who was named the D3Hoops.com National Player of the Year. “We did everything we could do to get better.”

The Eagles reeled off 27 consecutive wins during the regular season, eclipsing the record for most wins in a season (23) set by the 1990-91 team that reached the NCAA tournament quarterfinals before losing to eventual champion University of Wisconsin-Platteville.

Benedictine’s unblemished regular season featured five wins against teams from the perennially strong College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin, including victories over nationally-ranked Elmhurst College (94-86) and North Central College (75-73).

They won the Northern Athletics Collegiate Conference tournament by defeating Milwaukee School of Engineering 83-57 to earn the league’s automatic berth in the NCAA tournament. It marked the first time the Eagles qualified for the NCAA tournament since 2011. The Eagles were awarded a first-round bye and defeated Hardin-Simmons University 85-64 in the second round on March 5. Junior Michael Blaszczyk of Naperville Central led the way with 29 points, and Johnson, a Wheaton Academy graduate, added a double-double with 20 points and 12 rebounds.

They advanced to the Final Four by whipping Ohio Wesleyan 97-84 and crushing Alma (Mich.) College 93-73 on March 11-12 at the Rice Center. The Eagles trailed only once against Alma, at 3-2, before unleashing a barrage of 3-pointers that led to an early 26-9 advantage.

The team made 8 of its first 12 shots behind the arc and led Alma 44-25 at halftime. The Eagles extended the lead to as many as 29 points in the second half with an amazing shooting display from 3-point distance behind Blaszczyk and sophomore Brayden Olson of Grand Rapids, Mich.

On March 18, the Eagles reached the NCAA championship game by holding off Amherst 63-60 in the tournament semifinals in Salem, Va. Four players scored in double figures for Benedictine, including juniors Tahron Harvey and Adam Reynolds.

However, 24 hours later the University of St. Thomas (Minn.) outscored Benedictine 27-6 from the free-throw line to defeat the Eagles 82-76 in the title game.

The Eagles ended their record-breaking season at 31-1.

“When we came in as freshmen we won eight games,” said senior Tim Reamer of Chicago, recipient of the Elite 90 award presented to the student-athlete with the highest cumulative GPA participating at the finals site for each of the NCAA’s championships.

“Then as sophomores we won 14 games and last year we won 18,” he added. “Wining 31 this year was incredible.”
SPREAD THE WORD

If you’re like us, you believe that the efforts of one person can make a huge difference.

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Your help allows the University to continue to follow its mission and provide students with a values-based education where they can contribute to the greater good and make a difference in the world.

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22nd Annual President’s Invitational Golf Outing featuring special guest Ben Crenshaw

Cog Hill Golf & Country Club in Lemont
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