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FYS Seminar

Resilient Student

At Calvin College, my vocation is a resilient student, whose goal is to persevere through the struggles students face, to learn more about myself as an individual and member of society, and to learn what God's calling is for my life. Learning more about my weaknesses and strengths, figuring out where I fit in the bigger picture of society, and learning about God's world through college education, will enable me to better understand God's purpose for my life, and what He expects of me. With this knowledge, I will be better equipped to live out my life the way God intended me to.

As a resilient student, my task is to explore the academic world in my studies and to appreciate the wonder and splendor of God's creation, all with diligence and perseverance. At the most basic level, the task of a regular student is to do his or her best to gain knowledge and skills that will be required in his or her career later in life. However, as a resilient student, the main goal of the student isn't perfect grades or a high paying job; instead, a resilient student's job is to work hard and to overcome any obstacles. For example, I had to persevere to fix the scheduling mistake I made. When I requested classes at the beginning of the semester, I made the mistake of assuming that my zero-credit band class I requested was not shown in my schedule, since I thought zero credit courses were not included in the shown schedule. However, I thought I was still in band. Fortunately, I realized my mistake later, and I visited the Center for Student Success multiple times to put band into my schedule. Once I finally found myself blowing into my trombone at band class, I realized how far behind I was in the music compared to others who

had started band at the beginning of the semester. At first, I felt embarrassed for being placed in band so late in the year, and I wanted to quit. However, I pushed through the first few days, and I persevered until I caught up to the rest of the musicians. Had I not persevered and had I not bounced back from my failure, I would have missed the opportunity to explore the wonder and beauty fine arts provides, and I would have been stuck with only practical academic classes. As a resilient student, I have learned to use my failures as an opportunity to learn, and I have also learned that perseverance isn't optional. Unlike high school, I must be responsible for my understanding in class. As a result, this means I need to take advantage of resources available for me at college, such as the Center for Student Success where I changed my schedule. With the wealth of student resources available on campus, I know that I am prepared to tackle any challenge college may throw my way. If I struggle with writer's block, I can always visit the rhetoric center. Or, if I can't seem to understand a difficult calculus problem, I can always go to the professor, a classmate, or schedule a meeting with a tutor. With so many resources, the only thing standing between me and God's calling for my life is any lack of perseverance and initiative on my part.

In addition to bouncing back from failures, my vocation as a resilient student also requires that I learn more about my own identity and how it relates to the surrounding community. Discovering my place in my community spiritually and socially requires that I know both more about myself, my strengths, and my weakness; and more about my new environment. For example, I have learned that one of my unique struggles is carelessness, which leads to missing assignments, careless mistakes on tests, and general forgetfulness. After a few times of missing assignments and lower test grades, I learned to use a schedule more consistently and to take more time on tests. With a better understanding of my unique struggles and gifts, I am better

prepared to succeed in academics and to fit into the student community. Not only have I learned more about the academic issues that define my unique identity, but I have also learned more about how my identity in Christ is both common and unique in the campus community.

Throughout most of my life, I have gone to church that agreed with my parents' theology, so going to college and going to a new church has widened my understanding of Christian beliefs.

Being introduced to religious diversity has lead me to a better understanding of where I am spiritually compared to most other students. I have realized that I tend to have more conservative values than most others, and that I come from a relatively traditional church setting. Sometimes these differences lead me to think less of others, simply because I assume my ideas are better.

However, I need to remember that God created everyone in His own image. According to the "Economy of Order" video, "you don't give dignity, you affirm it." This idea of humility encourages me to not think less of others, just because my identity and their identity clash. If everyone were to disregard God-given dignity, our differing identities would cause chaos.

Recognizing God's role and how he created everyone equally enables us to integrate with others with very different unique identities than ourselves, because God's gospel and his Word gives us a shared identity. Knowing my identity and my shared identity enables me to be better prepared at persevering through failures, and persevering through relational conflict as a resilient student.

With a better understanding of how my unique story fits into the bigger picture, I am better equipped to learn God's calling for my life. Currently, I do not know what God has in store for me, but I do know God's current calling for me. God has called me to be at Calvin College, to live in a dorm community, and to worship in a new church. With these new surroundings and communities, I am being called to learn and grow socially, academically, and spiritually. By exploring new subjects, by succeeding in some classes, and by struggling in others, I will

hopefully find my career through trial and error. According to the video “Economy of Order”, institutions such as Calvin College are comparable to a gardener. In the same way a gardener works to plant different plants in the soil right for each one, college is one of the many tools God uses to direct people to their calling. For example, a student who thought they were called to engineering but really is called into computer science might experience some struggle growing academically when planted in engineering classes. As a result, the grading system will naturally encourage him or her to change majors in order to find a better fit. Just as a gardener sometimes moves plants around for optimal growth, college leads people in the places and later in the jobs where they will fulfill God’s calling for their life. As a resilient student, I need to remember that no matter the struggles I face in my current path, that God has a plan for me, and that the success and the failures I experience will direct my life onto the path God wants me to take.

As a resilient student, my calling is to persevere in the struggles I face by recognizing my unique identity, my shared identity, and by acknowledging God’s calling for my life. Despite the failures, and despite the hardships I face, my job is to trust that God has a plan for me, that he has a calling and a purpose for my life.