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Dominican launches program with University of Oxford

Sarah Gardner

Dominican University of California, sarah.gardner@dominican.edu

Dave Albee

Dominican University of California, david.albee@dominican.edu

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Dominican launches program with University of Oxford

A gift from Marin residents the late Thomas and Joanne Peterson paved the way for Dominican University of California students to study at the University of Oxford.

The Thomas and Joanne Peterson Endowed Scholarship for Dominican Scholars at Oxford is supporting Dominican students selected to study at Oxford as part of a new agreement between Dominican and St. Catherine's College, one of the University of Oxford's 44 autonomous colleges and permanent private halls.

"We are delighted to support a program that will allow Dominican students to benefit from the tremendous educational opportunities at Oxford," said Mr. Peterson, who passed in 2017 two years after launching the scholarship program with his wife. "At St. Catherine's College, the Dominican students will engage with academic work in a way that is both intellectually challenging and hugely rewarding. Their experiences at Oxford will be life changing."

The Dominican Scholars study using the tutorial method, a unique and highly personalized style of instruction that is the central feature of an Oxford education. The structure of study at Oxford differs from that of an American university, with more time spent on individual work and on tutorials. Students will prepare discussion papers for tutorials on a weekly basis. They also hear formal reports by their tutors at the end of their terms, reports that are formally given in the presence of other faculty.

Not long after she arrived at Dominican in 2011, Dominican President Mary B. Marcy embarked on a plan to expand the University's international programming by involving students with meaningful study abroad opportunities. Having earned both her Doctorate of Philosophy and Master of Philosophy from Oxford, President Marcy is aware of the unique educational experience that studying at Oxford will provide Dominican's students.

"The impact of Tom and Joanne Peterson's extraordinary generosity will be enduring," President Marcy said. "The gift not only reflects their long-standing commitment to the University, but also extends Dominican's international reach through an important new collaboration with the oldest university in the English speaking world."

"While at Oxford, our students will strengthen their independent study skills while sharpening their ability to discuss issues critically, evaluate material, and defend ideas. It was at Oxford that I found my own identity and developed my intellectual curiosity. I know this experience will be equally transformative for Dominican's students."

Thomas Peterson served as a member of Dominican's Board of Trustees from 2003 to 2009. The Petersons were consistent and generous donors to Dominican, donating more than \$1 million in support of scholarships for students in the Department of Nursing, the construction of the science building, the refurbishment of Edgehill Mansion, and the construction of a nursing skills lab in Meadowlands, a historic building which has been transformed into a state-of-the art academic facility.

"I am so incredibly proud of Dominican because it is such an important part of our community," Mr. Peterson said in 2015. "Dominican is a University with more than 2,000 undergraduate and graduate students from a wide range of backgrounds. Many of these bright, talented students will contribute to our local workforce. How wonderful for Marin County to have such an important asset in its midst."

Under the terms of the Dominican/St. Catherine's College agreement, Dominican may send up to three undergraduates to St. Catherine's College each academic year. Applicants must have a cumulative GPA of 3.7. Beginning Fall 2015, the Dominican students will take the equivalent of 12 units of pre-selected courses in their major as a visiting student at St. Catherine's College. The students will attend lectures and classes led by members of Oxford's faculty and will have full access to all college facilities and resources.

The Thomas and Joanne Peterson Endowed Scholarship for Dominican Scholars at Oxford helps to open the Oxford program to academically outstanding, motivated Dominican students – regardless of their financial situations.

Making education in the arts and humanities, as well as the social and natural sciences, accessible to the growing demographic of historically underrepresented students entering U.S. higher education is a core component of Dominican's commitment to civic, as well as individual, progress. Currently, about half of Dominican's undergraduates are from ethnically diverse backgrounds, one-third are from low-income families, and a quarter are the first in their families to attend college.