

☞ Special Academic Programs

Pre-professional Programs

Pre-business

Graduate schools in business administration will accept students from any undergraduate major. Nonetheless, students will do well to take courses in accounting, economics, statistics, and calculus. Students should also take advantage of Ave Maria's broad liberal arts curriculum to gain excellent facility in oral and written communication. Students will increase their likelihood of a successful application to business school through business-related experience, including part-time, full-time, or summer employment and volunteer work. The advisor to the Pre-business Program is Dr. Gabriel Martinez, Economics Department. Interested students should contact Dr. Martinez. Schools require applicants to take the Graduate Management Aptitude Test (GMAT). Interested students should see the Business Concentration in the Economics Major or the Certificate in Business.

Pre-law

Law schools will accept any undergraduate concentration. They desire a broad range of study, excellence in work, and a strong ability to read and write. Ave Maria encourages students who select the Pre-law Program to complete courses in politics, economics, and history. Schools require applicants to take the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). Students can get individualized direction from the Pre-law advisor, Dr. Seana Sugrue, Political Science Department. The Pre-law Program will develop opportunities for lectures, meetings, and other opportunities for students considering a career in law.

Pre-medicine

See full description in the Biology Major.

Pre-Theologate

Mission Statement

The mission of the Pre-Theologate is to assist men in their discernment of a vocation to the priesthood, religious life or the laity in response to the Universal Call to Holiness as advanced by the Second Vatican Council. In conformity with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops *Program of Priestly Formation*, the Ave Maria University Pre-Theologate provides the total environment for personal, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation appropriate to undergraduates preparing for entrance into a major seminary. As such, the Pre-Theologate is a propaedeutic program providing the foundation for immediate transition to a graduate program of theology .

Fr. David Testa, who began the Ave Maria Pre-Theologate, had the great wisdom to situate our formation program in the context of the Center for Discernment. At Ave Maria University, we welcome all good men who are sincerely seeking to discern their vocation while pursuing an undergraduate degree.

Every year young men graduating from high school are thinking about the priesthood but are not yet ready to make the commitment to enter a formal college seminary program. Similarly, some men have spent a tour of duty in the military or have entered the workforce for several years, but feel they are missing something in their lives. Could it be that God is calling them to serve as a priest or a religious?

The Center for Discernment provides these men the opportunity of discerning their vocation to the priesthood, the religious life or the laity. Following the Salesian model of discernment, we maintain that holiness is to be found in every way of life, not only the religious. This is the Universal Call to Holiness as advanced by the Council Fathers at Vatican II.

Students commit themselves on a semester basis to the Pre-Theologate. If at any time they are uncertain about continuing, they are free to take a leave of absence from the program; they remain on campus and continue their studies without any loss of time or credit. If they wish, they are free to re-enter the program the following semester.

Formation of the whole Person

The mission of the Ave Maria University Pre-Theologate is to assist men in the discernment of their vocation. In conformity with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops *Program of Priestly Formation*, we provide the total environment for personal, spiritual, pastoral and intellectual formation appropriate to undergraduates preparing for entrance into a major seminary.

In Our Holy Father's apostolic letter, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, we find his charge to have the Pre-Theologate as a component of priestly formation: "I ask that there be a period of preparation prior to seminary formation. Candidates should have certain qualities: a right intention, a sufficient degree of human maturity, a sufficiently broad knowledge of the doctrine of the faith, an introduction to the methods of prayer and behavior in conformity with Christian tradition."

Our men participate in all the activities of Ave Maria University, as they share their prayer, classes, meals, study, recreation and sports with their classmates, men and women like themselves, who love the Lord and seek discernment of God's will for themselves. Since ours is a co-ed campus, the men are encouraged to have healthy, non-exclusive relationships with women, providing them ample opportunity to test their commitment to embrace the charism of priestly celibacy should they discern the vocation to priesthood or religious life.

Our close collaboration with the University Dean of Student Affairs, Dan Dentino, and his office guarantees the full and healthy integration of the men of the Pre-Theologate into every aspect of University life, liturgical, spiritual, social, athletic and academic. Our staff psychologist promotes the psychological and social wellness of all the men.

The formation of the whole person is essential for men preparing for the priesthood, as Pope John Paul II observes: "In order that his ministry may be as humanly credible and acceptable as possible, it is important that the priest should mold his personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others. Future priests should therefore cultivate a sense of human qualities needed for them to be balanced people, strong and free, capable of bearing the weight of pastoral responsibilities."

Spiritual Formation

With regular spiritual direction and access to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, men in the Pre-Theologate are provided the excellent formation mandated by the *Program of Priestly Formation*: Daily Mass, celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours and Eucharistic adoration.

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The Dean gives a weekly conference on spiritual formation in the Salesian tradition of discernment and growth in holiness. There is a monthly off-campus day of recollection, led by speakers, often of international reputation and from a variety of disciplines.

As one would expect of students at a university named to honor Our Lady, Marian devotion comes naturally to all of us. All activity literally comes to a standstill three times a day as the University community recites the Angelus, that prayer which is the hallmark of our Catholic tradition which recalls the Annunciation to Our Lady and the Incarnation of Our Lord. The day ends for our students with our daily Rosary walk and Night Prayer.

The Pre-Theologate is well served by the ready availability of spiritual directors and confessors who live in the same residence with them.

Fr. Robert Garrity, S.T.D., J.C.L., University Chaplain, serves as spiritual director and gives weekly conferences on the Catholic tradition of spirituality. He involves our men in all the liturgical ministries that serve our University community.

Fr. Eamon McManus, S.T.D., a priest of the Archdiocese of Washington, not only serves as confessor and spiritual director, but also tutors students in Greek and Latin.

Fr. Dennis Cooney, S.T.L., a pastor in the Diocese of Venice, brings his vast pastoral experience to the benefit of the university community as confessor and spiritual director.

The Dean, because of his responsibilities in the external forum of formation, cannot serve as spiritual director or confessor to the students of the Pre-Theologate.

Pastoral Formation

St. Paul charges the young priest Timothy not to be cowardly in his exercise of his priestly ministry, but to be strong, loving and wise. The Pre-Theologate aims to inculcate these very same pastoral virtues in the men discerning their vocation at Ave Maria University.

In *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Pope John Paul II sees a fundamental pastoral nature in our conversation of hearts, as he writes: "The spiritual life is, indeed, an interior life, a life of intimacy with God, a life of prayer and contemplation. But this very meeting with God and with His Fatherly love for everyone brings us face to face with the need to meet our neighbor, to give ourselves to others, to serve in a humble and disinterested way."

In this regard, it can be said that the Pre-Theologate serves as a leaven to the whole University community, as staff and students alike bring a decided moral and spiritual tenor to both our residence and the University campus. All residents are welcome to participate in the daily prayer of the Pre-Theologate and they frequently avail themselves of the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in our chapel, including times of exposition. The Pre-Theologate chapel is available daily for group prayer by the campus brotherhoods, who schedule their night prayer and devotions there.

We understand that by opening our hearts to God in vocational discernment, we enter into a unique brotherhood of men united by the common goal of listening to the still, quiet voice of God that may be calling some men to the priesthood or religious life. Fraternal support and, when needed, fraternal correction are the hallmarks of our

brotherhood, so we agree to live in charity as a family, to love and support one another as brothers in Christ, committed to self-sacrifice for our brothers and collaboration with them.

As Pope Benedict XVI writes in *The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood*: "In Mark 3:31-35 ('Whoever does the will of God is my brother'), Jesus seems to be speaking of a brotherhood based not on a phenomenon of nature, not on blood relationships, but rather a brotherhood dependent upon a decision of the spirit of man: a saying 'yes' to the will of God."

Intellectual Formation

Pope John Paul II charges Catholic colleges and universities to recognize that we have our origin in the *Heart of the Church* and to be faithful to that source as the very font of our life. In this way the conversation of hearts extends even to the classroom, as professors open their hearts to God that they may then touch the hearts of their students and share with them the *Splendor of the Truth*.

In the classroom, our students have their faith nourished by teachers, many of them priests and religious, who embrace the Church's magisterium in total fidelity to our Holy Father as Vicar of Christ. Pope John Paul II advises us that "diligent care be taken for the quality of the intellectual formation of candidates for the priesthood, who should seek an ever deeper knowledge of the divine mysteries for the salvation of their brothers and sisters."

The Pre-Theologate is a propaedeutic formation program that provides the foundation for immediate transition from the university to a graduate program of theology. While studying at Ave Maria, students may choose from a variety of majors. As they pursue their selected field of study, they concurrently fulfill all the requirements of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops *Program of Priestly Formation*. The bishops have mandated 30 credit hours in philosophy and 12 credit hours in theology for entrance into a theologate. "The philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas should be given the recognition that Church teaching accords it."

The bishops propose: "A Philosophy program should be balanced, comprehensive, integrated and coherent. It should include studies in metaphysics, anthropology, natural theology, epistemology, ethics and logic; it should also include substantial study in the history of philosophy treating ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary philosophy."

"The undergraduate Theology program should include introductions to biblical revelation, doctrine, church history, liturgy, spirituality and Christian ethics. An appreciation of the role of religion in literature and in the arts, as well as an understanding of world religions may be helpful."