



DISSERTATIO VITA

Many students finish their college career looking back at how much they perhaps were not able to study, how much they may have missed during these important years of higher education. Perhaps they have found themselves in a job which does not ask them to engage their minds or academic curiosities as much as they wish; they may even find themselves in a local church which does not place a proper emphasis on “loving God with our minds.” Likewise, a college graduate may have a desire for further study at the graduate level, but they are unsure what that study could entail or how to make that next step. This is why Chesterton College has created the Dissertatio Vita, a one-year study plan for students interested in learning in a local community of Christians who are dedicated to reading about, writing on, and discussing important ideas. For ten months (August-May) DV students will choose a research topic, prepare a study and reading plan, and complete a series of drafts, culminating at the end of the school year in the delivery and defense of a final paper.

Phase I: 102 Great Ideas

The DV student will begin by meeting with their DV Mentor and looking over the 102 Great Ideas presented by Mortimer Adler. The ensuing discussion will seek to narrow down an area of study, be it time period or topic, as well as a research question.

Phase II: DV Library, the Reading and Writing Plan

The DV student will work with their DV Mentor to compile a list of reading for the year. This will include a writing schedule. The reading plan should include texts ranging the span of Western Civilization, especially those we call “classics.” Secondary texts and anthologies will be utilized, but the reading plan will seek to place the DV student in conversation with important and established primary sources.

Phase III: Writing Drafts and Discussions

As the DV student enacts their reading plan, they will meet periodically with their DV Mentor and other DV students to discuss their work, hear feedback, and receive further direction. This will be done in a series of formal and informal meetings. Writing drafts will be turned in on time, according to the writing plan, and drafts will be given to two different parties: the DV Mentor and one other DV student. These parties will provide timely, scholarly, and critical feedback on the DV student’s work.

Phase IV: Final Draft, Delivery, and Annotated Bibliography

The final phase for the DV student to complete their Dissertatio Vita will be to turn in a final draft (15-20 pages), publicly present and discuss their final paper, and turn in a final annotated bibliography of no fewer than 15 books and 10 articles they utilized to complete their work.



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Activities

There will be both scheduled and organic events for Chesterton College DV students throughout the school year. Below are a few events to expect each term:

1. DV Dinners will be once per month, and will be an opportunity for DV students to present their latest work and ask questions of the DV Mentors and other DV students.
2. DV Movie Night will be once every two months and will allow DV students and DV Mentors to discuss cinematic ideas pertaining to their topics.
3. DV Lecture Night will be once every two months and will be a time with a DV Mentor gives a formal lecture on an idea or topic which may span several DV topics chosen that year.

What's the cost?

Wanting to set up DV students well for making good financial investments and decisions in this next stage of their lives, Chesterton College has sought to keep the DV program free of tuition this first year. DV students are welcome to make a donation to Chesterton College at any time or at the end of the school year. Students will be responsible for purchasing the required books and materials for their reading and writing plan.