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Faculty Illustrated... Opening Liberty's Doors

Dr. Gai Ferdon pauses mid-sentence and says, "I never let a door shut." She is referring to her time in Bratislava, Slovakia, in 1991 where Communism was still the prevalent ideology. Ferdon was teaching English, but she was also imparting the concepts of free enterprise and American constitutional government. The events leading her there were indeed a series of opened doors. Previously, Ferdon was pursuing an undergraduate degree in mathematics and physics and was frustrated with attempts to reconcile "calculus with the Bible." This struggle for God's perspective on the whole of life led her to pursue a School of Evangelism with YWAM (Youth with a Mission) in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1985 which included a mission trip to Zimbabwe, Rhodesia.

While in Lausanne, Ferdon started to define her life's work. Contradicting previous advice from an earlier speaker, Udo Middleman, then lecturer at L'Abri and current President of the Frances A. Schaeffer Foundation, encouraged Ferdon not to hesitate to bring her American ideas of liberty to the mission field because they were fundamentally influenced by biblical Christianity. He advised her to freely discuss the biblical principles of civil government, economics and law that were part of America's founding period while ministering the Gospel in Zimbabwe to confront the tyranny of a Marxist-Leninist society. Ferdon was also influenced by Dr. Glenn Martin of Indiana Wesleyan University during this time. His audio lectures affirmed for her that "part of my mission was to go to Communist countries and teach civil government, economics and law according to a Biblical Christian worldview."

Within the next few years, Ferdon completed an associate degree in Bible through a YWAM Bible College, as well as a Russian language school in Leningrad, took classes at Wheaton College and finished her bachelor's in History and Political Science at Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion, Indiana.

She came to the realization, "It's OK in the kingdom of God to be a scholar." She smiles, "And that's who I am."

In 1991, Ferdon spent time teaching in Bratislava, Slovakia, and upon returning to the U.S., completed her master's degree in Government and Public Policy at Regent University's Robertson School of Government. She then took a teaching post with StoneBridge School in Chesapeake, Va., from 1994-2000. A door opened for Ferdon to continue her scholarship under the auspices of the Jubilee Centre, a Christian public policy organization located in Cambridge, UK, which actively seeks to promote biblically-based research toward social reform policy. The Centre underwrote her Ph.D. in History through the University of Leicester, UK, which culminated in her dissertation on the political use of the Scriptures for constitutional reform during the English Interregnum (1649-1660).

Ferdon has returned to Cambridge twice to teach and participate in public policy conferences hosted by the Jubilee Centre, often being the only American presenter speaking to an audience including European, African and Asian civil servants, humanitarians, students and intellectuals. Specializing in a biblical

approach to civil, legal, economic and social issues, her doctoral studies and conference presentations tended to provoke debate. Nevertheless, Ferdon has learned to “walk in courage, guard my heart, respond in love when discussing controversial topics and be mindful of the true absolutes and the to die for issues.”

When Ferdon completed her Ph.D. in 2004, she returned to Chesapeake, Va., to take up a research and writing post with the Foundation for American Christian Education. She edited the Foundation's The Christian History of the Constitution of the United States of America, originally published in 1960. This project was the forerunner for her recently published book, A Republic If You Can Keep It: America's Authentic Liberty Confronts Contemporary Counterfeits, which represents a targeted attack upon the postmodern ideals that have infiltrated American society. It was originally written for teachers and students; however, it is a great tool for understanding the nature of our founding philosophy of government and our heritage of civil and religious liberty.

Considering Ferdon's many accomplishments, one would be surprised that she considers herself to be a shy introvert. Yet for all her quiet tendencies, she is confident that the Lord has called her to work with people. After completing her book in 2008, another door opened for her to come to Liberty University to teach in the Helms School of Government.

Ferdon continues to maintain her core values of liberty, scholarship and serving people with the Truth. These are her strength and passion, which she translates into her teaching and her relationships with students. Ferdon also views teaching as an opportunity for “mentoring and teasing out of them who they really are in the kingdom of God, to direct them toward their future professions.” She knows that sometimes, when her students ask a question, that there's a heart issue that needs to be ascertained.

“I find out what is going on in the heart.” Looking up from her desk, Ferdon says with quiet confidence, “I minister the Truth to my students.” If they learn anything, Ferdon wants them to walk away from her class knowing the Truth of God in every area of life, and what it means to “walk in authenticity in today's artificial world.”



First the NSSE, Now the FSSE!

Faculty Weigh In

For the first time the Liberty University Office of Institutional Effectiveness will administer the FSSE – Faculty Survey of Student Engagement. The FSSE, which will be administered in Spring, 2010, was designed to complement the NSSE – National Survey of Student Engagement, which was recently administered to undergraduate students at Liberty.

The FSSE focuses on:

- Faculty perceptions of how often students engage in different activities
- The importance faculty place on various areas of learning and development
- The nature and frequency of faculty-student interactions
- How faculty members organize their time, both in and out of the classroom

In addition to the FSSE data and reports available, we will receive a combined report correlating LU NSSE and FSSE responses. This correlation will provide valuable data on faculty perceptions of student engagement compared to what students self-report.

FSSE, administered online and anonymously, is designed to measure faculty expectations for student

engagement in educational practices that are empirically linked with high levels of learning and development.

As stated by Alma Clayton-Pedersen, VP, Office of Education and Institutional Renewal, Association of American Colleges and Universities, utilizing the information from these two instruments "can be an important element in developing strategies to help all students achieve learning outcomes essential for them to address the challenges of a 21st century, globally interdependent world."

You may access information on the FSSE website www.fsse.iub.edu.

Coming Attractions



November

LexisNexis — Residential Track

Tuesday, Nov. 3, 3:40 - 4:40 p.m. TE 137

Friday, Nov. 6, 10– 11 a.m. CN 1879

Description: The LexisNexis database contains much more than newspaper and periodical articles. This workshop will explore the research treasures available through the LexisNexis database, and how to find them.

December

Book Study: *Understanding the Times* by David A. Noebel — Core Competency Track (optional for Professional Development credit)

This workshop is a departmental chapter study from *Understanding the Times*. Chairs will facilitate a discussion at a faculty meeting about how multiple worldviews manifest themselves within their discipline. Select, read and discuss the appropriate chapter. Disciplines listed are theology, philosophy, ethics, biology, psychology, sociology, law, politics, economics and history. (Chapter can be broken into segments for reading and content reported back to the larger group.)

Disciplines not listed in the book may want to:

- Focus on the 3-part Introduction pp. 1-41
- Identify a related discipline to read
- Devote time to having faculty dialogue on classroom experiences with students from other worldviews and/or how they incorporate Biblical Christian worldview into their discipline

Follow-up on Fall Orientation workshops by having faculty share how they have implemented ideas into their teaching presented during the Summit and Passing the Baton Ministries sessions, and how they disciple or "walk beside" their students. Note: small departments may want to combine across related disciplines. Chairs, please send a list of attendees, the date/time and a brief report of session to swheeler@liberty.edu to receive credit for the session. 1 credit = 55 minutes.

January

Legal Issues in the Professoriate — Residential Track

Monday, Jan. 25 10– 11 a.m. CN 1879

Tuesday, Jan. 26, 3:40– 4:40 p.m. TBA (main campus location)

Description: In today's litigious society, it is important to understand faculty rights in the academic setting. Where do you go for help and how can you get your questions answered? Come with your burning questions about past or potential experiences.

