

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the goal of The Grade?

To help high school students prepare themselves to take on responsibility. The more ready they are, the more responsibility they will get, and the more exciting their lives will be.

The underlying idea is that what matters in life is not material possessions, athletic ability, good looks, intellectual ability, etc. What matters is character. Character allows men to take on responsibility and makes them great. Character endures after these other things are long gone.

2. Why the name "The Grade"?

The path of responsibility is usually uphill — along a grade. To walk it requires personal struggle. The seminar encourages and coaches these students to want to be responsible men of character. To have character is "to make the grade" in life.

3. What does the Freshman Seminar offer?

- highlights the important decisions made during high school and how these help shape one's future strength of character: e.g., choice of friends, the priorities one establishes, relationship with God, attitude toward women, etc.;
- teaches students to study proactively: posing and answering questions, and not merely absorbing information;
- uses historical figures to show that a successful life has its roots in one's adolescent years;
- reviews in detail a current college application and points out what is being asked of students during the next four years;
- discusses current societal trends that could affect students' future world;
- offers assistance in finding interesting summer job experiences, volunteer opportunities, research projects, etc.;
- stresses the importance of communication skills through frequent roundtable debates.

4. What does the Professional Seminar for Sophomores and Juniors offer?

- presents men of integrity from ten different professional fields; students hear what their work is like, what challenges it presents, and how they handle these challenges;
- mentors students in leadership skills through actual leadership challenges;
- stresses the importance of communication skills through public speaking and writing classes;
- provides contacts with students at universities across the country who can discuss their college experience with seminar participants;
- offers assistance in finding interesting summer job experiences, volunteer opportunities, research projects, etc.

5. What does the Senior Seminar offer?

- introduces students to basic intellectual concepts they will need in life and should be deepening during their college years (e.g., truth, certainty, moral goodness, freedom, rights, the soul, faith, science);
- provides a conceptual framework for evaluating the new ideas students encounter in college;
- teaches students to identify and critique the ideologies that currently underlie the academics at most American universities (e.g., relativism, secular humanism, materialism).

6. What does the mentoring involve?

The mentor guides the individual student in finding practical applications of the principles taught in the classes. He is like a coach who teaches, challenges and encourages each student to reach his best. Specifically, he helps the student set goals that are important and practical. In an ongoing way, he helps the student track his progress toward these goals. For the sake of continuity the mentor will try to maintain contact with the student in between sessions.

7. Isn't it too early for freshmen or sophomores to worry about things like college and career?

Not at all. The seminar is not meant to create stress about getting into the "best" college or having the "best" job. But high school students should be looking ahead to where they are going in life so that they begin now to develop the skills and attitudes needed for the great tasks of their lives: forming a family, serving society through their work, and developing friendships with colleagues, neighbors, and (most of all) God. Between the ages 14 and 19, habits are formed, friends are made, ideas and ideals are internalized. Young men need to see their high school years in the light of their entire life.

8. Can a student sign up for the course even though he cannot attend every session?

Yes, but we strongly encourage attendance to every session.

9. Why do Southmont, Overlook, and Schuyler entrust the Christian orientation of their activities to Opus Dei?

Southmont's, Overlook's, and Schuyler's activities are all based on a Christian view of life that recognizes the dignity of the human person, the inherent goodness of the created world, the value of human work, and the God-given moral law. In both the professional activities such as The Grade and spiritual activities like retreats, recollections, and doctrine classes, Opus Dei ensures that a true Christian spirit is present. Opus Dei is an institution of the Catholic Church whose mission is to help people find God in and through the circumstances of their ordinary life.

10. How can I get to Schuyler Hall?

Schuyler Hall is located on the 2nd & 3rd floors of Murray Hill Place (at 34th and Lexington) within blocks of both Grand Central Station and Penn Station. Many students take the train and walk from these stations. Parents also car pool. If you want to coordinate travel plans with other boys in your area or along the same train route, call Larry Olsen, the director of The Grade, at 914-755-6240.

11. Should I let my friends know about The Grade?

Yes. We encourage you to inform other people about The Grade. When friends attend the program together, they establish a means of reinforcement extending well beyond the classroom. If you would like a brief presentation of the program for you and your friends, please call Larry Olsen to make arrangements.