

Letter of Gratitude to Richmont's Christian Counselors 2021

I have taught for 45 years as an adjunct instructor at 10 universities, including three where I still teach. After 25 years without a sabbatical or semester away from the classroom, it was with ambivalence that I decided to take a break this fall. I keep hearing about my “retirement,” which is a misnomer. What I am actually doing is known as an asset allocation of investments of my time. With a finite number of hours a week to work and with less than 10 years left to teach, I need to use my time as efficiently and effectively as possible as I continue my work at three universities, two hospitals, one licensing board, one national provider network, and at my office located at the oldest multidisciplinary Christian counseling center in Atlanta. My greatest joy in life is being in the live classroom, interacting with future Christian counselors, and sharing with them what I have learned in practicing and studying neuropsychology, psychopathology, and psychotherapy for the past five decades.

You may ask—as I often do—“Where is God’s will in all of this?”¹ Discerning God’s will has never come easy for me, which is partly why I begin my mornings on my knees, then with a prayer walk, followed by morning Mass. Before I make an important decision, I listen first for the quiet voice of God spoken through His Holy Spirit, sometimes barely perceptible and sometimes clear, which leads, prompts, corrects, and supports me. I also listen to others who I respect and regard as striving to follow God’s will. Among those are my colleagues—at this school and at other places where I work—who have consistently told me that there are many ways that I can continue to serve others.

My own desire is to maintain whatever role I can fill that is a good fit and in the best interests of those I serve, including providing a community time, lunch-and-learn events, and continuing education activities. I look forward to continuing to receive and reply to emails I receive from former students, with whom I share my experience and encouragement. I look forward to continue maintaining and updating over 50 online resources that I have developed for students and teachers.² I look forward to exploring new avenues of education, fellowship, and service, which provide opportunities to help develop discipline, spiritual maturity, and wisdom in those I serve. Of course, I would always enjoy filling in for a lecture in one of the areas of my subject matter expertise—especially my first love of psychopathology—as well as ethics and Georgia law. Although I will no longer be teaching weekly classes at Richmont, I look forward to my continued involvement in other ways and venues. I look forward to seeing you at faculty meetings, community time events,³ and the ethics of supervision workshops.⁴

I appreciate your letting me share with you today. Lastly—and most importantly to me—I thank over 1,000 former students at this school for letting me be their trusted servant over the years.⁵

With best regards,

William F. Doverspike, Ph.D.
July 12, 2021

Footnotes

1. I strive to follow God's will rather than imposing my own feelings and thoughts onto God's direction for my life. Discerning God's will has never come easy for me. I usually seem to discern it—or maybe confirm it—retrospectively rather than projectively. When walking in the morning, my prayers are very simple: asking only for some knowledge of God's will for the day and the strength to carry it out. When driving in traffic, I see it less through the windshield and more through the rear view mirror. For this reason, I often consult with people who I regard as striving to follow God's will rather than their own. In this instance, I spoke with about 10 people. I consulted with three instructors in the training program in which I was striving to make the best decision. I also consulted three colleagues in other training programs where I teach. I consulted my very wise brother, my spiritual director, my secondary liaison at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and an HR director at a private Christian school (for which I agreed to maintain anonymity) who is not affiliated with any of the universities or hospitals where I teach.

2. These resources include over 50 open access documents that are downloadable without any login at my professional practice website (<https://drwilliamdoverspike.com/>): 15 APA Style Writing resources, 20 Ethics resources, 12 Addictions resources, 12 Religious resources, and 12 Psychopathology (including DSM-5, ICD-10, and ICD-11) resources. I have often been asked why I chose to use a private server (sponsored by Whirlwind Missions) rather than using university platforms to host these resources. The main reason is so that the resources remain free of charge and available to former, current, and prospective students.

3. Doverspike, W. F. (2021). Virtue ethics: Practicing virtue ethics and building character. Workshop at Richmond Graduate University, Atlanta, Georgia, September 13, 2021.

4. Doverspike, W. F. (2021). Ethics of supervision: Top 10 best and worst practices. Workshop at Richmond Graduate University, Atlanta, Georgia, October 08, 2021.

5. Last, I want to thank my students during the 2020-2021 academic year for voting the Psychopathology course as the winner of their March Madness award. First, I also thank the 63 students who sat on wooden pews in a church chapel during my first ethics class (Fall 2023) at Richmond's predecessor (i.e., the Psychological Studies Institute), where I lectured by walking up and down the aisle while we used overhead transparencies

projected onto the front wall. Your patience with me and your persistence under those circumstances has been an inspirational visual image in my mind in every class since that first day we met on August 26, 2003.

I would like to thank dozens of Teaching Assistants who, beginning with that first class in 2003, willingly volunteered their time over the years as role models who conducted study sessions and assisted other students with writing and preparing for examinations.

I thank my former Atlanta students in the Class of 2005 for inviting me to speak at their chapel service (April 20, 2005) before their annual communion before graduation (Atlanta, May 6, 2005). I remember the occasion well because I had just left my father—in a coma—at St. Joseph's Hospital (he died May 26, 2005). After I delivered a talk to the students, Confessions of a Secular Priest, the editor of the *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* came up to me and asked me if I would "write up the talk" so it could be published. I told him that I had already written "the talk" as part of a book manuscript and that I would be honored to share it with others. I thank my former students in the Class of 2006 for inviting me to give the charge at their graduation (Atlanta, May 13, 2006). The topic was "Seeing in Others What They Do Not See in Themselves."

I thank my former students in the Class of 2010 for inviting me to give the charge at their graduation (Chattanooga, May 8, 2010) and for their unexpected standing ovation. Until many disclosed to me later, I had no idea how many students felt that same way. The topic was "Christian Counseling: Integration of Psychology and Spirituality." I thank the Class of 2011 for inviting me to give the charge at their graduation (Atlanta, May 7, 2011). The topic was "The Real Presence: Integrating the Sacred and the Secular" I thank the Class of 2012 for inviting me to give the charge at their graduation (Chattanooga, May 5, 2012). The topic was "Seeing the Face of Christ in Others."

I thank dozens of my former students—especially the ones who have become professional psychotherapists and real professors in other universities—for setting an attendance record of 150+ registrants (which is when I asked then Alumni Director Autumn Stephenson to consider closing the registration so that the group size would not become so large that it would discourage discussion) at the Annual Alumni Reunion of Richmond Graduate University on November 9, 2012. As I shared with wonderful Autumn that afternoon before the event, my vision was to see Richmond become a regional landmark of continuing education and to see that record broken each subsequent year.