

2011 Honorary Degree Recipient
Citation for Dominic Belmonte
Upon the conferral by Saint Xavier University of the degree
Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*

Dominic Belmonte is an educator who cares deeply about the quality of Illinois schools and who believes passionately that all children deserve excellent teachers. That care and that belief explain his enthusiastic commitment to the mission of the Golden Apple Foundation of which he was named President and Chief Executive Officer in 2006.

As its name suggests, the Golden Apple Foundation is a source of rich nourishment for present and prospective teachers. Now celebrating its 26th year, the Foundation annually honors ten outstanding Chicago-area teachers in a style reminiscent of the Academy Awards. After basking in the well-deserved public recognition of a formal ceremony televised on WTTW Channel 11, award winners become members of the Golden Apple Academy of Educators working to advance the profession of teaching and deepen the learning of students.

It was during his tenure as an English teacher (later English Department chairman) at York Community High School (Elmhurst) that Dominic Belmonte became a Golden Apple Award recipient (1987). The following year, he became chairman of the Golden Apple Academy and a member of the Golden Apple Foundation Board of Directors. Thus began his steadily increasing dedication to the Golden Apple's mission and many programs.

Belmonte co-created the Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois, a program for talented high school and college students intent on teaching in high need schools throughout the state. Under his direction, the Scholars program has grown in the number of participants, in funding from the state and federal government, in the roster of partnering universities – including Saint Xavier University – and in recognition for effectiveness. Over 1,000 Golden Apple Scholars are now teaching in Illinois schools, and 92 percent of them have remained in education beyond the five year commitment required by the program. Serving as role models in the communities where they teach, the Scholars are an increasingly diverse group; the 2011 class includes 60 percent minority students, 62 percent first generation college graduates, and 45 percent participants from low-income households.

In 1996, Belmonte helped create and launch the Golden Apple Teacher Education (GATE) program. Assisting with the authorizing legislation (ILCS 21-5b), crafting the necessary administrative processes, forging new enabling partnerships – again involving Saint Xavier University – Belmonte fostered GATE's mission as Illinois' first alternate route to teacher certification, a route designed for college graduates and career-changers that brought over 400 persons with a background suited to teaching sixth to twelfth grade mathematics or science.

For these and other pertinent reasons, we are most pleased and privileged to confer on Dominic Belmonte the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*, with all the rights and privileges thereof.

Done at Chicago, Illinois, this fifteenth day of May, in the Year of Our Lord, 2011.