

Fred C. Tenover '76, Ph.D.
Distinguished Alumnus Award

The summer after his freshman year at the University of Dayton, Fred C. Tenover completed a three-month study tour at eight European universities, learning from some of the leading theologians of the day.

Tenover had considered joining the Society of Mary, but struggled with his desire to continue his scientific pursuits. The experience helped him understand that his faith could coexist with his scientific beliefs, and after speaking with Father Marty Solma, S.M., during a retreat in Toronto, he felt comfortable with his decision to pursue a science career. He earned bachelor's degrees in biology and chemistry in 1976.

"My Catholic faith is fundamental to my science," Tenover said. "I see the two as interconnected — the integration of faith and science makes sense to me."

A board-certified clinical microbiologist, Tenover has more than 30 years of experience directing diagnostic laboratories and working in academic, governmental and corporate settings. He earned master's and doctorate degrees in microbiology from the University of Rochester, and his work has taken him from the Seattle Veterans Affairs Medical Center and the University of Washington to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. He's now vice president for scientific affairs with Cepheid, a molecular diagnostics company in Sunnyvale, California, and consulting professor of pathology at Stanford University School of Medicine.

Tenover's studies of how bacteria become resistant to antibiotics, including the discovery of the first real "superbug resistance gene" in the United States in 2001, place him among the top five experts in the world on the topic.

At each stop in his career, Tenover has intentionally sought opportunities to grow in his faith. From feeding the homeless during summers at a Seattle food kitchen while completing post-doctoral work to teaching RCIA classes in multiple parishes for more than 35 years, Tenover continues to integrate his beliefs in faith and science, using his immersion in both worlds for the betterment of society.