

Reflected Best Self Portrait

Melissa Baumann

I am at my best when I am Tigger—seeing the potential, the best—in the situation and in others, when I see the possibilities, and use my gifts to bring others together. I am at my best when I speak out of compassion and kindness to help others see the best in themselves. For me this is evidenced in my joy as a faculty member teaching students—helping them to see the beauty and clarity of engineering principles or the complexity and wonder in the laboratory as we build tissues. It is in mentoring the kindest, smartest person I've ever been blessed to teach on to a Marshall Scholarship at Cambridge then on to his MD where his life goal is to restore sight to the sightless. It is with faculty as a colleague and then again as an administrator to bring out the best in others in the classroom and in the research arena; it is in co-authoring papers to bring others along in their careers; in paying it forward as others did for me to bring the next generation of faculty and leaders into their own strengths.

I'm at my best when I take time, sometimes precious time, to stop and have a difficult conversation with a student, a parent, a friend, a family member, who wants to share some of their burden without judgement. It is when I make the time to drive to Columbus to an art show where one of our faculty members is receiving an award or when I stay that extra hour to meet with someone who wants a mentor, someone to listen, someone to care.

I know I'm successful when people leave unburdened, when I receive an email five years later from a father who tracked me down to another institution to share that his son who had so many struggles, who I removed from the Honors College, and who I spent time with talking through his troubles, was doing really, really well, when a student continues to send me Christmas cards—even though he's of another faith—because I made him feel welcome and accepted in a new country in a new language, and when I am gifted with a piece of art as a token that it mattered that I was there.

Phil Chick – Reflected Best Self-Portrait – August 24, 2019

The instructions provided two prompts as options to consider for our reflection: “I am at my best when....” or “When I am at my best...”

It seemed to me that the first prompt was asking us to focus on causes – what factors enable me to be “my best.” The second prompt seemed to suggest a focus on results – what happens when I am at “my best.”

I am a left-brain thinker, and as such, I felt it would be illogical to discuss causes without also discussing effects, or vice versa. With that in mind, and since we were also advised to “remember that there is no ‘right way’ to do this” (which technically suggests that all responses are wrong), I decided to go all-in and address both prompts in a typical left-brained way – with lists of bullet points.

I am at my best when...

- I collaborate with others.
- I do not try to solve every problem on my own.
- I seek the input and advice of others.
- I am asking questions and always learning.
- I can distill complex information into information that is understandable and actionable.
- I work with without regard to who gets the credit, and not try to seek glory for my own sake.
- I am able to use my sense of humor, my willingness to learn, and my technical skills to effectively engage others in achieving meaningful work or solving challenging problems.
- I am patient listener and am able to control my instincts to react too quickly and speak too soon.
- I live, work and play in a space where the values of those around me are consistent with my own.
- I have some fun, regardless of what I am doing.
- I can show that progress is being made.
- I take the time to appreciate everything around me.

When I am at my best...

- I am able to help others achieve their goals.
- I am excited by what I am doing.
- I work with a sense of purpose and I work with others who share a commitment to mutual success.
- I listen more effectively, seek the input of others, and engage them in meaningful dialogue.
- I am able to make decisions that are free from personal, political or organizational distractions that disrupt personal and team chemistry and success.
- I have a greater sense of personal accomplishment and satisfaction.
- I gain a deeper understanding of those around me and am able to interact with them on more than a superficial level.
- I am learning something new.
- I am always moving forward.
- I take time to evaluate, discern, and reflect on what I am doing and why I am doing it, and how I can do it better. I take a time for myself.

Greg Christopher, Aug. 5, 2019

Word association for when I am at my best: growth, serving and curiosity.

Growth stems from a strong desire to always face forward. A competitive spirit to excel and a deep personal faith. Growth can play out in many ways. Whether it's interest developing new relationships or richer interpersonal bonds. And simple things like traveling to new places or trying different restaurants are part of life's exploration.

Serving with a purpose is important. Being a part of a team is rewarding. Collaborating for the betterment of our world or my team is meaningful. And serving my family – caring for my family – takes precedent over all.

Curiosity drives learning; learning propels growth. Knowing how and why things work is important. Asking questions, being analytical and searching for meaning are all essential for fulfillment.

Reflected Best Self Portrait – Jeff Coleman

I am at my best when I am being a servant leader working behind the scenes to help individuals or an organization. As I reflected on moments throughout my adult life where I felt that my best-self was affirmed by others and truly put into practice they all centered around situations where I either identified a need and worked behind the scenes to address the situation or where I was asked to jump in and assist in some way. Looking back I seem to be naturally drawn to these type of situations and roles probably because they are more in my comfort zone and allow me to be at my personal best while hopefully making a meaningful difference.

I am able to stay grounded and focused and provide a rational perspective during hectic and stressful times in both personal and professional situations. This has been consistent feedback from friends and peers over the years. Even if not directly involved I am often sought out as a sounding board to provide guidance on a path forward.

Joe F

Reflected Best Self:

- When I can understand the opposite point of view and forge an amicable alliance or resolution that serves both equally well.
- Similar to above: analyzing complicated options to try to best predict likely consequences of the various available approaches and then pick the best option.
- At my best self when serving others: colleagues, disenfranchised, friends, family
- Being calm in stressful situations helps me best deal with the contentious matter at hand, and tends to help others around me be their best as well
- On the rare occasions when I pray well.

Reflected Best Self Portrait

Better than a decade ago, at a conference of Jesuits on the west coast, I was introduced to a set of paintings on the life of Ignatius Loyola that had been commissioned for the relatively new chapel at Seattle University. Moved by these "icons," I brought copies of them along on my annual retreat several weeks later and spent the retreat reflecting on them. The fruit of the retreat was a series of gifts or graces—one for each of the five main paintings. They remain central to me in my own life and prayer today. In fact, they are simultaneously gifts I pray for and values I keep before me, often looking back at my day or week in a kind of examen, reflecting on where one or another of them had been present. While there is more to me at my best I'm sure, these graces have become central to my own self-understanding.

I list them here, together with examples of how I find them at work in my life.

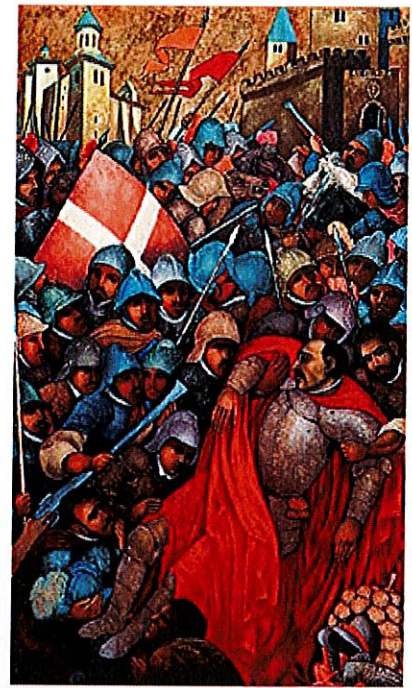
CONVERSION: When the future imagined as the past continued smashes into the present and stops. In other words, where you realize that the way things have been going has changed for good and you have to admit it and act accordingly. Examples: the RIF's from 2013, letting Scott and Beth each go.

DISCERNMENT: When God cracks open the present instant to reveal its hidden possibilities. Often, this requires a moment of conversion first! Examples: the Strategic Master Enrollment Plan; perhaps the most important one for me both personally and professionally was our pivot to a community engaged university (with all that meant and continues to mean) after the 2001 riots.

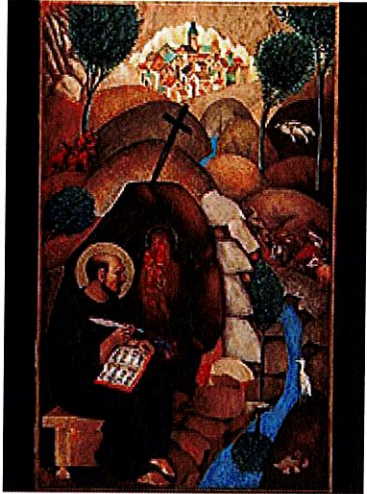
COMPANIONSHIP: I only become who I am called to become in and with and through others. Example: The presidency is inherently relational, a role that exists within a network relationships. I "am" president, for example, welcoming the new students and their families at the beginning of the year or shaking hands with the graduates as they cross the stage at the end of the year. Or with a group of XU administrators and faculty in a recent meeting with people from GCE. The groups are endless—large and small. And I only am "president" in the context of these multiple relationships, which themselves come to me as gifts and graces and towards which I therefore have important responsibilities. Gratitude among them.

FIDELITY: To be faithful only to that which will be faithful to me back, because only that fidelity sustains and endures. The "stuff" we too often put our faith in—money, power, fame, etc.—ultimately has no care or concern for us and will only let us down in the long run. My faith must be in God and how I understand God to work in my life. Examples: I see my various community engagements as exercises of this fidelity. Increasingly, as I've acquired more and more experience as a president and have found myself asked to make contributions to others (ACCU, AJCU, etc.) on the basis of that experience, that, too, is an exercise of fidelity to how I have found God active in my life and how I've learned and responded.

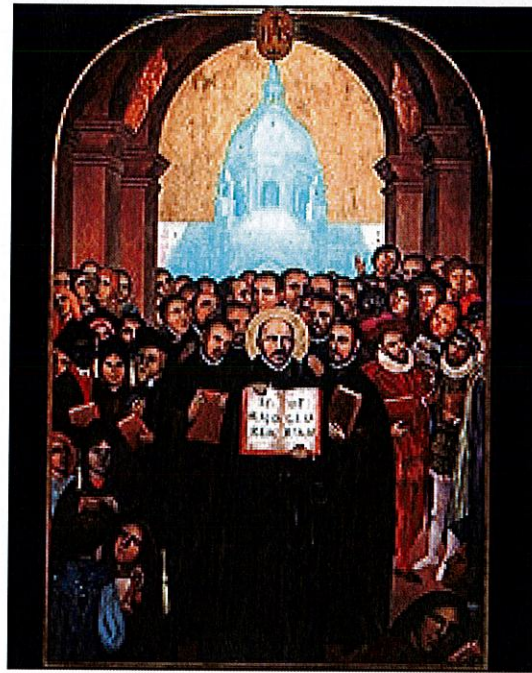
PURPOSE: To know in my bones that I am where God wants me to be, doing what God wants me to be doing. Example: Much of my work as president is dealing with what crosses my desk, as well as the bigger-picture things that come with the position regarding strategy, governance, etc. It's an often hard job. Therefore, it's really important to keep my eyes and ears and heart open for those moments—and there are many—where I understand why I do what I do for a living. And more than merely "understand" it in some abstract intellectual way, find myself deeply consoled by the experience.



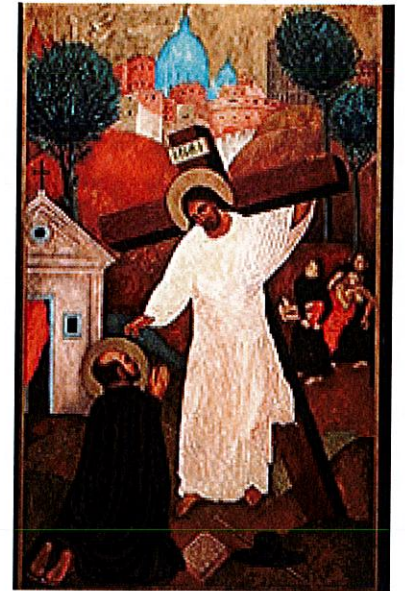
Conversion



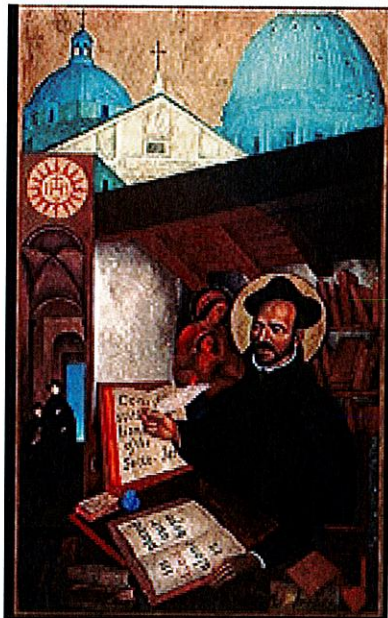
Discernment



Companionship



Fidelity



Purpose



Reflected Best Self = Dale Grubb

I am at my best when ...

I listen before I speak.

During my first year as the Associate Dean of my school, I found myself struggling to help one of my departments get “back on track.” They were a small, aging department that boasted about a few stellar students but consistently received blistering course evaluations from most students in their service courses. I believed that their attitudes toward their students – the faculty exuded a sense of elitism that dared students to take their classes – was self-defeating. This department had just elected a new chair who had previously alienated herself from most of the faculty in my school – another data point confirming this department’s lack of self-awareness.

When I first met with the new chair, she wanted to discuss a series of issues she was facing in her first weeks as chair. We had already exchanged emails about some of the issues, so I started to raise a variety of possible solutions or paths toward solutions she might want to consider. She stopped me and said “It’s not about the nail.” I had no idea what she meant, so I asked her to help me understand. She said that it might help us work better together if we ended the meeting and I viewed a video that she would send me before we met again. I attached it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4EDhdAHRog>

Our working relationship – and my working relationships with my other chairs and faculty colleagues – has improved markedly due to my conscious effort to listen patiently and intently before I respond. This allows me to fully understand the true needs of the person with whom I am interacting. Sometimes, what the other person needs is just to be heard.

I feel while I think.

Regardless of the nature of the task I am undertaking, I am acutely aware of how others will be impacted by my actions or decisions. In other words, I am always concerned about the people behind the data or issue at hand, and I feel concern and compassion for them.

Several years ago, my department was engaged in a search for a new faculty member, and we were in the process of creating our “short list.” One of the applicants was an internal candidate – he was in a term position but was seeking a tenure-track position with us. I had gotten to know him well over the previous 3 years, considering him a friend. Unfortunately, I was unable to convince my colleagues that he deserved to be on our short list. They emphasized his shortcomings – which were genuine – while I emphasized his positive qualities. Following that painful discussion, we all left the room and walked by his office back

to our own, and no one stopped to inform him of the outcome of the conversation. I knew that he knew we were meeting about the short list, and I knew how much he hoped to have a career at my institution. While it might have been a breach of protocol, I went to his office to let my friend know that he did not make our short list. He wasn't just a candidate – he was a person with hopes and aspirations, a person with a family, a person who had formed working relationships with all of us. I believed he deserved better treatment than the same letter all other candidates would receive who also failed to make our short list. To this day, he remains one of my best friends, likely due to the test of my character presented by the short list conversation with my colleagues and subsequent conversation that I had with my friend.

I act to benefit others before and to a greater extent than myself.

It's difficult for most people – myself included – to say that we are “selfless.” Even those who exhibit great levels of altruism will admit that acting altruistically makes them feel good – feeling good ends up serving as a reward for their altruism. So, I find it more honest to say that I am at my best when I put the needs of other before my own, and that I work to benefit others more than myself.

In June, new neighbors – a family of four from Syria – moved-in next door to us. When I first met the husband, he mentioned that this was the first house that they had owned, and he proceeded to ask many questions about maintaining the house and yard that I was happy to answer. A few weeks passed before I saw him again. His lawn had not yet been mowed and was really tall after the wet weather we had been having. My neighbor mentioned that he tried to hire landscapers, but no one was willing or able to take on a “one-off” job. He planned to buy a lawn tractor – he noticed that I mowed my own lawn with one – and was hoping that I could offer him some mowing advice. (I would have mowed his lawn for him, but my 18-year-old mower was not up to the task.) After he brought his mower home and started to mow his lawn that now looked like a wheat field, I stopped him and suggested a way for us to work together on his lawn. Between his new mower doing the first cut and my old mower and lawn sweeper making a second cut and removing the grass clippings, we got the job done in a few hours. Was my help truly altruistic? Not really. Improving the appearance of his yard improved the aesthetics of our neighborhood and the view from my windows. But my neighbor made a heart-warming comment afterwards. He told me that there is a saying in Syria: “You don't buy a new house ... you buy a new neighbor.” He followed that by saying, “You are a great neighbor.” A few hours of my time and sharing the right tools for the job he was facing offered him far more benefit than I had imagined: He told me that he felt great peace of mind afterwards because he was embarrassed about how his lawn looked, and he felt welcomed to the neighborhood and to my city after some initial apprehension, given the political rhetoric pertaining to immigrants that surrounds us.

Gary Massa Self-Portrait

August 29, 2019

I'm at my best when I recognize the gifts God gave me and use them to their fullest....by helping others especially my family and including friends and colleagues. There is a great peace of mind and soul when you feel like you're doing God's will and I believe that being a good husband and dad and working at Xavier is His plan for me.

Having said that, I would describe myself in the following ways....simple, faithful, loyal, positive and grateful. You might ask, what do I mean by simple? I would say that I'm not a very complicated person, what you see is what you get and it's pretty easy for me to stay in my own lane. I guess you could say I'm pretty comfortable in my own skin and I'm at my best when I act accordingly and when I'm with others that act the same way. I think being faithful, loyal, positive and grateful follow along with having a simple outlook on life.

I took a look at my last 360 review and was humbled to find feedback that included comments like caring, calm, patient, honest and collaborative team builder. I suppose if I could actually be those things I would be at my best as well.

As a fairly introverted person, I learned from my Mom that if you're truly interested in what someone has to say, asking questions and listening becomes easy. In this sense, I hope I'm sincere and real in my interactions with people, and that I'm able to build and inspire trust, especially one on one.

Conflict of ideologies is something we find quite a bit of in our world and in our daily life. My wife Mary has taught me to handle conversations regarding these tensions more with love and kindness. No conversation goes well with anger and I suppose this could be another area where I'm hopefully working at being at my best.

Finally, I look back on relationships with mentors, supervisors, coaches, teachers, etc. and I've learned as much about how not to be as I have learned how to be regarding how to treat people and situations both personally and professionally. The Golden Rule remains very much a simple guide to live by.

I am at my best when

- I have the courage to challenge others and speak my mind – in particular when leading them. In my experience people yearn for leadership – they want to be led.
- I am not second guessing myself or trying too hard to ‘read’ the room, when I have reflected on my decisions or positions and when I am brave in stating directly what I believe or the direction we are headed.
- When I see my leadership as teaching or guiding; when I am explaining the ‘why’ of a strategy rather than just the ‘what’.
- When I am providing hope to and motivating others and helping them focus on the fundamentals of their work.
- When I can work with my teammates to solve problems and improve the service we offer students and those students’ success.
- When I am spending time to understand the work and the challenges of those whom I serve (students, my team, and colleagues) then I am at my best.

Debra's Reflected Best Self Portrait

I am my best self in situations in which I can be “nice and a fast runner”

“Nice and a fast runner” mission

Life long/transferable skills - goals, teamwork, motivation, persistence

“good with ppl”

I am my best self in situations in which I live up to promises and commitments

Follows through on promises and commitments (1 360)

Conscientious

Sets a personal example of what is expected (3 360)

I am my best self in interpersonal situations which empathy and a complex understanding of i motivations, desires, personality styles is useful

Helpful –empathic – see from the others viewpoint

Empathy - the ability to understand and share the feelings (and motivations) of another

psychologist

Treats others with dignity and respect (2)

Actively listens to diverse points of view (4)

Recognizes people for commitment to shared values (5)

I am my best self in problem-solving situations which need organization, refinement, or enhanced systemic efficiency and processes are needed for effective execution

‘Refiner’ administration

organized organizer

systems viewpoint efficient/effective/gaps/processes

Refiner/ Executors explore alternative solutions and ideas while paying attention to detailed implementation plans. When presented with an idea, Refiner/ Executors will consider aspects of the idea that may present problems, paying particular attention to the implementation details.

They will think of ways in which the new idea can fit into the existing process. Good at visualizing the master plan and analyzing things,

When I Am At My Best

Janice Walker

My comments begin with this proclamation: I truly don't know what other people think about me. While former students, as well as faculty and staff, have stated in clear and definite terms that I made a difference in the lives, I am still sometimes baffled as to how. My main takeaway is that individuals have been touched and changed by words or actions that convey I genuinely care about their well-being and success.

As I reflect on when I believe that I am at my best, I inevitably land on the times when I respond to others who come under great distress and seek advice/validation. Because I am acutely familiar with such feelings, nothing or no one is more important to me than that person at that time. My full attention is given, and I avail myself to be the best companion that I can as hurts, fears, worries or needs are made known to me.

As I listen, I find myself being drawn to another time and place and seeing the world through someone else's lens. I am hearing but not judging. The protection of being an introvert evaporates and I inevitably share a personal story that provides support and comfort. My companion now knows that she is not alone: I am surviving (or have survived) a similar or perhaps even less favorable experience. I suspect this awareness and its internalization fosters hope, a force at the core of strength, endurance and resilience inspiring dreams of better days. At these times, I understand as much or more than at any other times what it means to be human.

My ability to relate to others' feelings and experiences is enhanced by my experiences, especially those associated with my race, color, ethnicity, gender, Southern upbringing and Baptist roots. I have often wondered if I would have the empathy, compassion, patience, tolerance and capacity to forgive that I do without having these identities. This is something I will never know for sure.

Interestingly, I believe that my efforts to be helpful may have served me more so than those who reached out to me. I have discerned what I shared had been buried but not fully resolved and that sharing my stories was beneficial for my own well-being and personal development. At the end of each meeting, my heart felt full and my spirit light, causing me to wonder if the exchange was not somehow meant for me all along.

Over the years, I have developed a deep gratitude for my identities despite dealing with everything that comes with them. They are at the core of who I am and greatly influence how I proceed in the world and respond to others. Without doubt, they serve me well when I believe that I am at my best.