Sustainability and The Mission Reflection

By Tracy Jackson

Participating in Sustainability and the Mission has been an enriching experience. This program deepened my understanding of sustainability and connected me with like-minded people across campus. The opportunity to engage with faculty and staff that are interested in environmental stewardship has been both inspiring and motivating. These interactions reinforced the importance of collaboration in addressing ecological challenges and has given me hope that meaningful change is possible when people come together with shared values and a common purpose.

One of the most insightful aspects of this experience was learning about the current sustainability initiatives on Xavier’s campus and in the Cincinnati community. Some of these include the Nexus Garden, the green roof, and energy-saving initiatives. The Nexus Garden, a collaborative learning and garden space on campus, serves as an example of how communities can cultivate their own food sustainably while promoting biodiversity. Learning about the green roof was equally inspiring, as it is a space I see almost every day but was not aware of its benefits and purpose. Additionally, understanding the breadth of energy-saving initiatives led by physical plant reinforced the value of implementing sustainable infrastructure at both small and large scales. It was inspiring to see how Xavier’s efforts align with global sustainability goals and emphasized the important role of educational institutions in promoting environmental responsibility. These initiatives serve as a model for how sustainability can be embedded into campus operations, ensuring long-term ecological and economic benefits.

Beyond the tangible campus projects, we were also given the opportunity to read and engage with the teachings of Laudato Si’ and Laudate Deum, two encyclicals by Pope Francis that address the need for environmental awareness and ethical responsibility. Participating in the small and large group discussions after completing the readings helped to reinforce and better understand the challenges and opportunities. Everyone in the program came with different life experiences and levels of involvement in sustainable initiatives, so it was encouraging to hear other perspectives and ideas. These group discussions challenged me to reflect on my own environmental footprint and consider ways that I can advocate for sustainability in my personal and professional life.

I am grateful for the knowledge gained and the relationships built through the Sustainability Program. This experience broadened my perspective on environmental issues and empowered me to be a more active participant in sustainability efforts. I am looking forward to continuing my efforts with the Sustainable Lifestyles committee on campus, a result of relationships formed through this program. This experience has been a great reminder that sustainability is a continuous, community effort that requires dedication, education, and a shared vision for a healthy planet.