Ignatian Leadership Capstone

Discernment/Reflection

Melissa Gallo

I started this program not knowing what the outcomes would be or how it may impact my leadership skills. I was hoping for some broader insight into the Ignatian pedagogy and how I could incorporate that insight not only in the classroom, but into my interactions with peers and colleagues. To my surprise I found that I got what I was hoping for and so much more. The interactions with the faculty/staff at each session was valuable. It was nice to connect to others outside of my college and build relationships with them weekly to the point that I see them on campus and we stop to say “hello” or just a quick wave of recognition.

What has challenged me most with this cohort is being comfortable being uncomfortable. Many weeks we were asked to reflect on our practices and share out to our table group. This definitely challenged me in many ways as I reflected on myself, my practices, and how others may perceive my interactions with them. Due to this I implemented a discernment and reflection activity into one of my courses to enable my students to engage in the same process. I did start this at the beginning of the semester explaining to them what the Jesuit Discernment looked like and how they could use this in their work, school, or personal lives. I also incorporated a moment of mindful meditation at the start of each class to connect with students differently and increase engagement of the content taught that day. We finished each class with a reflection topic. I asked students to journal on this topic, but it was not something I collected as some of the reflection’s topics were quite personal.

The feedback I received from students initially was quite positive. Many stated this was the first class that actually spoke to any process being of a “Jesuit Identity.” The reflection topics did give students a time to pause at the end and reflect on their practice. I personally found the idea and implementation empowering to students because they were able to look at how their personal bias could impact those around them and how it could impact the care they gave patients.

As I look ahead for future courses and my work I do plan to incorporate the discernment and reflection activity into my courses. I believe that it will impact the future of nursing and improve the care our students give to the patients they see. I believe it will give them pause to consider others as human beings and not just another patient. I have shared this idea with other nursing faculty and they would like to incorporate this into their courses also. The students shared feedback with me that they would prefer to have different mindful meditation moments each week and not the same practice. Some found it to be repetitive and were not able to quiet their mind when asked to. Overall, this opportunity has made a significant impact on how I see my work and others for the better. I am grateful to have had this experience in the Ignatian Leadership course and I will recommend it to another faculty.