

Seminar in Ignatian Leadership Spring 2024

Capstone Project

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The Ignatian Leadership Seminars have been very enjoyable, and I have found them to be valuable both professionally and personally. In preparing to discuss how the Ignatian Leadership principles can be brought back and implemented in my department and work team, I first examined the concepts that most resonated with me personally as who I am personally, greatly affects who I am professionally. After completing the self-reflection, it was easy to see where to best apply the concepts to my work in daily life.

Throughout the program there have been themes and concepts that continue to provoke deep thought and have profound impact. From each weekly lesson these concepts and themes continue to connect, weaving together to form a foundational framework by which I am able to apply the leadership principles to my daily personal and professional life. The concepts and themes that have been most impactful for me are: **Core Values**: Reflection and Discernment; **Ignatian Gifts**: Cura Propria and Cura Personalis; and **Ignatian Leadership**: Humble Leadership, Servant Leadership and Indifference.

The Core Values of Reflection and Discernment serve as the foundation for me, because as properly identified, they are at the heart and root of my intrinsic behaviors and speak directly to who I am as a person and child of God. I am naturally a very reflective and introspective person. Without provocation or encouragement, I consistently am reflecting on my life and spiritual growth. I review my decisions and actions, and try to consider different perspectives when thinking about my outlook on situations I may face. I find the Daily Examen to be a very practical tool, as it causes us to stop and think about our blessings, to find God in all things and to continuously give thanks and praise for even the smallest aspects of life. Discernment is what I consider to be one of my personal God given strengths and has guided me through life thus far. Using discernment with people I interact with helps me to comprehend the context and background of their words and actions, which allows me to respond and act with compassion, understanding and grace. Using discernment in personal and professional situations allows me to understand the motivation and rationale driving those encounters and by understanding the “who and the why”, I am better equipped to respond with the appropriate “what, how, and when”.

The Ignatian gifts of Cura Propria and Cura Personalis present both struggles and strengths as they impact me personally and professionally. As with many others in helping professions, I am stronger in utilizing these gifts when dealing with others than myself. Cura Propria presents more of a personal challenge as I am consistently encouraging my students, colleagues, friends and family to care for themselves but often find it a challenge to care for myself. I frequently tell others “you can’t pour out from an empty cup”, but am quite guilty of not refilling my own cup! Cura Personalis tends to be a stronger capability for me as my natural outlook on life is inherently holistic. Whether advising my students or making life choices for myself, I consider the mental, physical, and emotional impact and encourage others to do the same. When making decisions for myself, I also consider the spiritual aspect, but do not always have the knowledge of students’ spiritual views to encourage the same for them.

The Ignatian Leadership principles of Humble Leadership, Servant Leadership and Ignatian Indifference have more direct relevance in my daily work life. I strive to consistently remain humble in understanding that despite my experience and qualifications, there is still much to learn. Growth and development are continuous acts throughout one's lifetime. At the heart of my personal and professional choices, the sincere desire to be of service and assistance to others is a major driving force. In my experience, the leaders who are willing to do the work alongside of those they are leading, and truly want to be of service to them have been some of my most impactful leaders. Ignatian indifference has been a lifelong struggle, as the ability to detach myself from the outcome and accept that any result has the ability to bring me closer to God is an ongoing challenge for which I am an evolving work in progress. Part of the challenge is not so much the acceptance of the specific outcome (which in many instances is important), but more so the ability to emotionally detach from decisions, actions, and situations in which I am personally and emotionally invested.

As I apply the values of Ignatian Leadership to my work in the WCB, I decided the initiative that will be best impacted is the WCB Strategic Planning Committee. The committee was assembled by Dean Marco Pagani from faculty and staff across The College. The members have Xavier experience that ranges from 1-20 years. Our charge is to revise The College mission and vision, as well as determining the strategic pillars that will drive us for the next 3-5 years. These pillars will also determine resources allocation. This is no easy task, and there is a range of perspectives and personality types. However, serving on this committee has become one of most enjoyable job experiences.

The principle of Ignatian Communal Discernment has the greatest relevance to this committee and the alignment of the class discussions and my service on the committee has been quite beneficial. At our most recent meeting I was allowed to start the meeting by introducing the concept of Ignatian Communal Discernment to the group. They found the timing very appropriate, found the steps both practical and beneficial, and responded very well overall. Even prior to the exercise, my committee has organically demonstrated some of the aspects very well, such as: Outlining the pro's and con's; presuming the good intentions of others; being contributors, and deliberating until shared contentment. Where we have faced challenges are in the areas of: approaching the task with Ignatian Indifference; being active listeners and encouraging the contributions of those less vocal. These challenges are understandable however, because of the impact of our decisions on the forward movement for The College. Some members of the committee members are on the team with their Department heads, which may create hesitance in open sharing of opinions. The manner in which I can best contribute my enhanced understanding of the Communal Discernment process to my committee is by encouraging the one aspect we seem to have completely overlooked, and may be the most important: Noticing God's Presence and Will! I will strive to implement the useful tips of recognizing the connectedness and transcendence beyond myself. During times of intense discussion, I will endeavor to encourage my fellow committee members to pause and focus on the spirit of openness and freedom. Ultimately, I will find peace with the decision we make by focusing on God's presence and will, and giving the decision up to God!