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Seminars on Ignatian Leadership Capstone

In May 2019, I proudly floated across the stage to accept my undergraduate diploma from Saint Joseph’s University, a fellow Jesuit institution in Philadelphia, PA. My optimism was a symptom of countless faculty and staff leaders acting in accordance with the mission of accompanying young people in the creation of a hope-filled future. Entering the workforce, I realized quickly this boundless support was not the norm. I adjusted, but could not identify what was missing until returning to an environment that animates the Jesuit values. Nearing the end of Xavier’s Seminars on Ignatian Leadership, I feel reinvigorated to apply various leadership approaches to my work and do my part to discern, reflect, and care alongside of my students and colleagues.

Welcoming new students to this vibrant campus community through Manresa New Student Orientation is a privilege in my role as the Assistant Director for New Student Programs. This summer, I plan to be more intentional in my supervisory approach with the student orientation coordinators who design the small group content experienced by first-year students. I believe the Jesuit Education and Ignatian Pedagogy elements (Kolvenbach, 2005) shared by Kathleen Smyth would be a fruitful framework for them to ground their approach to ensure it is mission-driven:

* Context – what needs to be known about the learners’ environment to teach them well?
* Experience – what is the best way to engage whole persons in learning?
* Reflection – memory, understanding, imagination, and feeling are used to grasp the meaning of material
* Action – what kind of action might students take as a result of their learning?
* Evaluation – how is the student growing as a whole person as a result of this material?

Though a separate topic, the session during which we illustrated our Jesuit value of choice embodied this approach in an engaging and memorable manner. Coincidentally, I was tasked to cover the same topic in my Goa course and chose to revise and carry out a similar activity with this framework in mind. I asked students to work in groups and work together to select and draw their interpretation of one Jesuit value. Each group then presented their illustration and taught the class about their value. After, I asked students to select a different value presented by their fellow classmates and converse amongst themselves of how it shows up in their lives. Looking back, this session was a turning point for my Goa cohort in terms of classroom engagement and peer connection. Most remarkable was witnessing their willingness to be vulnerable with one another.

It is unfortunately not possible to bring this level of conscious preparation into every aspect of a fast-paced professional environment. However, each guest facilitator throughout the Seminars showcased their authentic take on understanding and living the mission. In the true spirit of Ignatian Indifference, I now understand that these practices become more natural when we hold ourselves in balance and surrender to a deeper calling. It is an ongoing process, but with this new perspective, I hope to impact my students in a similar manner that I experienced during college so they too feel confident going forth and setting the world on fire.