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XSIL Capstone Reflection

In thinking about my time in this program, I can’t help but be grateful for coincidentally meeting Joe Shadle on my first day at Xavier. Coming into a newly-created role that didn’t have much of an onboarding, this program provided me with the best onboarding possible in terms of learning Xavier’s culture and DNA, thinking about key values and concepts, and networking with an array of people that otherwise might have taken me years to meet. Although some people might not realize it, my role as a marketer is to communicate the DNA of an organization to an audience in order to – in [Simon Sinek’s words](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=qp0HIF3SfI4&embeds_referring_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bing.com%2F&embeds_referring_origin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bing.com&source_ve_path=Mjg2NjY&feature=emb_logo) – not just do business with people who want we sell, but to attract people who believe what we believe. XSIL has equipped me to do just that.

During the program, I was exposed to – and have thought deeply about – many concepts that could be the focus of this reflection: How do I incorporate IDEAS concepts into graduate school marketing? How can we create a mental scene (memory palace) into Xavier’s branding as to make it more sensorily compelling? What would a graduate student MANRESA look like? Ultimately, though, the presentation that stood out above all others was Gary Massa’s which I will take creative liberty to call “Leadership on Paper.”

Gary spoke to us about six weeks into my employment at Xavier and his simple message immediately resolved the internal conflict I had about what I felt was missing at this new institution: Leadership on Paper. My boss at my last job was big on this too and he always preached that it’s not enough to tell people things, you have to put it on paper so that the idea can travel on its own and so that we can all look at – and align to – the same thing. In my short time here, Gary stands out head-and-shoulders for leading in this way, and it’s a model that I hope to emulate in the Office of the Graduate School.

As much as I’ve learned from the coworkers in my office, I have probably learned even more from what The People My Office Should Serve have said about us, which is: That our office has been a revolving door or people for years, that our service is inconsistent, that they don’t know who does what, that some programs seem to get more attention than others, and on it goes. I think people will always have different opinions on *how* to approach things, but what Gary’s form of leadership does is provide 100 percent transparency on what the approach *is*.

While working with my last boss, my nickname for Leadership On Paper was “the five-paragraph essay approach,” which maps to Garry’s documents as follows:

* Tell people what you’re going to do. (Mission and Vision)
* Do it. (Values document, Campaign graph)
* Tell them how it went. (Benchmarking with results)

In a higher education world that’s full of peer-reviewed, peer-sensitive people, Gary’s approach takes the subjectivity out of the conversation. The conversation shifts away from opinions (I like or don’t like his campaign) to facts (here are my results; they’re either good enough or they’re not).

At the end of my First 100 Days at Xavier, I have already started adopting my own version of this. Next month I’m embarking on a Monthly Business Planning (MBP) meeting approach with all 30 graduate program directors in order to get everyone in the same room and aligned to an on-paper plan. I’ve already started mapping documents (see below) that drive clarity about our ecosystem and who we serve. And, behind the scenes I have been drafting an Objectives, Goals, Strategies, Metrics (OGSM) document for the Graduate Office that will be shared with my bosses soon, in hopes that it will further galvanize and empower a unit that, apparently, hasn’t had such a document before.

Thanks again for this opportunity. I wholeheartedly hope that XSIL becomes a staple at Xavier.



