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# Grounding Student Affairs in a Catholic Charism: The Journey of One Faculty Member in Connecting Curriculum with Mission

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## **Grounding Student Affairs in a Catholic Charism: The Journey of One Faculty Member in Connecting Curriculum with Mission**

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*The institutional mission of a university guides interactions among faculty, staff, students, and others and is instrumental in shaping the campus culture. As such, it is important that all members of a campus community not only understand the mission, but also have a sense of agency in determining how to live the mission through their work. This article presents a case study of one faculty member's journey to deeper mission understanding, identification, and agency. The article explores commonalities between Vincentian Personalism and the basic tenets of the field of Student Affairs and highlights experiences and formation needed by lay faculty and staff at Catholic colleges and universities, particularly those without a Catholic religious background, to contribute meaningfully to the mission of the institution. The case study concludes with recommendations for other universities looking to support new faculty and staff in developing mission agency.*

### **Keywords**

mission, higher education, student affairs, Vincentian Personalism

Catholic higher education in the United States continues to move through a significant transition; at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, evidence of a crisis point can be seen in the decline in the number of priests and other religious from founding religious communities actively involved on college and university campuses (CARA, 2014; Leahy, 1991; Putnam & Campbell, 2010; Rausch, 2010). It is an increasingly accepted fact that institutions can no longer rely primarily on the help of vowed members of religious communities to sustain and transmit the various and distinctive charisms on which many institutions were founded and sustained prior to and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This decline requires that religious communities and institutions implement creative and meaningful ways to share, teach, and form lay leaders who can understand, sustain, and continually evolve these mission-based charisms, as the religiously-professed become less

visible and active in classrooms, leadership, and day to day operations at most Catholic institutions (Putnam & Campbell, 2010).

This challenging transition is complicated by the fact that the lay faculty and staff who must take on greater responsibility for mission transmission can be assumed, based on recent data, to be diverse in their own religious identification or limited in their previous faith formation or religious education (Pew Research Center, 2008). Therefore, institutions face an increasing percentage of faculty, staff, and students who are religiously unidentified or indifferent. The challenges can be daunting for institutions of Catholic higher education to maintain a distinctive sense of mission, grounded deeply in the charism of a founding religious community.

The challenges of this transition compel institutions to consider various and myriad ways to teach, form, and prepare faculty, staff, and students to be agents of mission transmission, to learn to live and breathe the charism of the founding order in new ways and in ways that they can understand and find meaningful based on their own diverse backgrounds, lives, disciplines and practices. Members of the faculty have a responsibility for guiding and presenting the curriculum of the institution, as well as respective disciplines. Therefore, institutions depend on the engagement and formation of faculty for the transmission of mission through the curriculum, whether achieved through pedagogy or content, and they are challenged to find effective ways to inspire, support, enlist, or incentivize faculty to play an active role in doing so.

This article presents a case study of one faculty member's journey down the path of deeper mission understanding, identification, and agency. The faculty member's formation and area of teaching and research are grounded in student affairs. The case study investigates key dimensions of the experiences and formation necessary for lay faculty and staff at Catholic colleges and universities, particularly those without a Catholic religious background, if they are to contribute meaningfully to the distinctive mission charism of an institution and its founding religious community.

Following a brief review of literature on student affairs, the article presents reflections from the first author, Dr. Rich Whitney, on his journey toward mission agency—from an initial point of skepticism before arrival on the DePaul campus as a new faculty member, through moments of fear, concern and misunderstanding, to moments of deeper insight and learning, and finally to active mission agency. His reflections are balanced with those of the second author, Mark Laboe, a DePaul staff member integrally connected to and interested in the process of mission effectiveness. Taken together, these

reflections point to a set of recommendations for other universities looking to support new faculty and staff in developing mission agency.

### The Roots of Student Affairs

Esther Lloyd-Jones, the first person to receive a doctoral degree in higher education and student personnel work, noted that student affairs (i.e., student personnel work) is responsible for the whole student and recognized the integration of thought, feeling, and action (Lloyd-Jones & Smith, 1938). Her thinking was influenced greatly by the work of John Dewey, who suggested that experience was the root of learning, and that education and experience were individually constructed. Dewey suggested that attending to the needs of the individual learner was implicit to creating and sustaining environments conducive to learning (Lloyd-Jones & Smith, 1938). Nevitt Sanford, one of the first student development theorists to advocate for theoretically based programs and services on campus, highlighted in his book, *Where Colleges Fail* (1967), the importance of student growth and development in higher education. He posited that growth is an expansion of personality while, “development means, most essentially, the organization of increasing complexity” (p. 47). Therefore, the growing field of student affairs has consistently emphasized that student learning is not just cognitive and does not happen only in the classroom; it also involves the student’s development of social and emotional skills, which can best be gained experientially.

Since these early contributors, the field of student affairs has a long history of reiterating the importance of the holistic learning and development of students. One foundational document in the field, the *Student Personnel Point of View* (American Council on Education, 1937, 1949), first acknowledged the importance of approaching students holistically while appreciating their individuality. This statement includes the mandate for student affairs to work in tandem with their university mission. The *Student Personnel Point of View* pointed out that in order to best work with the student as a whole person, educators needed to remember that they are part of the whole organization and that the integration of faculty and staff will benefit the collective.

The *Student Personnel Point of View* (American Council on Education 1937, 1949) has remained foundational to contemporary documents like *Reasonable Expectations* (Kuh, Lyons, Miller, & Trow, 1994), the *Student Learning Imperative* (American College Personnel Association, 1994), *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs* (American College Personnel Association [ACPA] &

National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA], 1997), *Powerful Partnerships* (American Association of Higher Education [AAHE], ACPA & NASPA, 1998), *Learning Reconsidered* (Keeling, 2004) and *Learning Reconsidered 2* (Keeling, 2006). These guiding documents continued to reveal common themes for student affairs work: being holistic in an approach to student learning and development; valuing the individual; respecting student agency; holding an interactionist perspective; considering the importance of a holistic context for learning; being intentional and evidence-based; collaborating across curriculum and co-curriculum in and out of the classroom; preparing students for citizenship; and understanding the importance of accountability (Evans & Reason, 2001). Student affairs has emphasized consistently over time that students bring their identities, life experiences, and worldviews with them into each class, while also integrating their studies into their holistic formation outside of class.

Most recently, *Learning Reconsidered* (Keeling, 2004) and *Learning Reconsidered 2* (Keeling, 2006) renewed the longstanding focus of student affairs to prepare the whole student through education and development. *Learning Reconsidered* posited that the integrated resources of the whole institution helped improve the overall student experience. Learning is defined in these works as a “comprehensive, holistic, transformative activity that integrates academic learning and student development processes that have been considered separate, and even independent of each other” (Keeling, 2004, p. 4). *Learning Reconsidered 2* (Keeling, 2006) introduced the practical connections across campus for the benefit of the whole student through learning and development according to the institutional mission. Additionally, the focus on brain-based learning has supported the notion that learning and development are complements rather than mutually exclusive entities (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Zull, 2002), and Transformative education has emphasized developing the whole college student for a lifetime of learning, citizenship, and leadership in the community and society.

### **Connecting Student Affairs with DePaul’s Catholic and Vincentian Mission**

Student affairs practitioners in contemporary Catholic higher education have illustrated a striking congruence of Catholic values with the guiding principles and philosophy of the student affairs field, such as those discussed above (Estanek, 2002; Salmi, 2002). The *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities* (Estanek & James, 2007), for

example, was based on the pedagogy and philosophy of the student affairs field and “provide a framework for reflection and conversation” for student affairs practitioners at Catholic colleges and universities (p. 5). Approaching the work of student affairs from a Catholic lens, the practices they suggested are very resonant in and with the field of student affairs. They included:

1. Welcome all students into a vibrant campus community that celebrates God’s love for all.
2. Ground policies, practices, and decisions in the teachings and living tradition of the Church. Build and prepare the student affairs staff to make informed contributions to the Catholic mission of the institution.
3. Enrich student integration of faith and reason through the provision of co-curricular learning opportunities.
4. Create opportunities for students to experience, reflect upon, and act from a commitment to justice, mercy, and compassion, and in light of Catholic social teaching to develop respect and responsibility for all, especially those most in need.
5. Challenge students to meet high standards of personal behavior and responsibility through the formation of character and virtues.
6. Invite and accompany students into the life of the Catholic Church through prayer, liturgy, sacraments and spiritual directions.
7. Seek dialogue among religious traditions and with contemporary culture to clarify beliefs and to foster mutual understanding in the midst of tensions and ambiguities.
8. Assist students in discerning and responding to their vocations, and understanding their potential.

These Catholic principles discussed by Estanek and James (2007) are highly consistent with the foundational elements of broader student affairs practice and theory such as the emphasis on the holistic nature of student-focused work, cross campus partnerships, and the importance of reflecting on the values and mission of the campus community. These common elements, therefore, form a solid theoretical foundation for bridging Catholic identity, mission, and the academic discipline of student affairs. The following reflection elucidates those connections and describes the personal integrity achieved by a by one student affairs faculty member moving through the process of mission integration at a Catholic university.



### A Journey to Vincentian Mission Agency: Reflections by Dr. Rich Whitney

The following reflections are shared as revelatory of the concrete, personal nature of the journey of mission formation and integration for a faculty member at a Catholic university – a journey which is at once cognitive, affective, and relational or social in nature.

#### Onboarding

Upon finding the open faculty position at DePaul University, I did not have a great deal of interest due to perceived incongruence between my own values and beliefs and those expected of a Roman Catholic institution. However, the “Vincentian” adjective on the DePaul website and materials were notable, and further investigation presented an environment that resonated with me. “Vincentian” implied a commitment to diversity and inclusivity, attention to the whole student, and an emphasis on service and social justice. The application and initial contact with faculty members led to on-campus visits and interviews and being hired for the position.

Throughout the application and hiring process, the DePaul staff and faculty with whom I met spoke repeatedly of the *Vincentian mission* of DePaul. The more people I met and the more I heard of this Vincentian mission, the more I was intrigued. It was obvious this mission was more than marketing; it seemed to influence the day-to-day life of the institution. Furthermore, it was comfortable and resonated with my own values, background, and beliefs. My formation as an educator and professor emanates from a student affairs background; I identify my work with students as a calling—one that has become more than just a job. There is a larger vision or mission at work for me. Because of this, early on in my time at DePaul, I slowly began to feel a growing connection and affinity between my personal philosophy and the institutional ethos or mission. I attributed the feeling of connection to excitement about being in a new place and meeting new people. However, over time I came to realize the sense of comfort I was feeling was the intersection of my student affairs persona and standpoint with the conspicuous culture of this campus. The Vincentian charism resonated with my personal philosophy of work, as well as with the fundamental tenets of my field of work, student affairs.

My moment of clarity occurred when I was able to make the intellectual connections between what others described as *Vincentian personalism* with the field and philosophy of student affairs. Student affairs contributes to the

formal and informal curriculum and to the overall learning that happens during college through a wide range of out-of-classroom engagement experiences, by helping to address the barriers and obstacles to learning and student success, as well as by creating and delivering leadership and character development programs which further the institution's educational goals (Keeling & Hersh, 2011). In a conversation with a colleague now serving as President of a Vincentian college abroad, he made the comment that "without student affairs we [the university] are not Vincentian" (Fr. P. McDevitt, C.M., personal communication, May 9, 2011). Over time, I came to see that many people at DePaul served students in a way that aligned well with a student affairs philosophy—the difference was calling it Vincentian personalism.

### **What is Vincentian?**

As I grew more familiar with Vincentian personalism, I became increasingly comfortable making connections between the Catholic perspective, my field of study, and work in student affairs. I found myself drawn even further to embrace the people and resources around me at DePaul, to delve more deeply into the distinctive Vincentian heritage and mission of the school, and discover how it connected to my personal beliefs and values, as well as those of my field of study and work. I found still further resonance as I learned more about Vincent de Paul and Vincentian history. I recognized numerous elements of this heritage and mission that are congruent with my student affairs philosophy and practice, and even with my own life experience.

DePaul's Vincentian mission flows from the life's work and example of St. Vincent de Paul, one of six children born to a family of French peasants in 1581. His motivation to priesthood was greatly influenced by a desire for what we might call today "upward mobility," as well as to be a financial support to his family. In learning about St. Vincent de Paul's life, I was struck by similarities to many of DePaul's current students, especially those who are first generation college students. St. Vincent's lifelong work as a priest was strongly influenced by his direct work with the poor and abandoned of both urban and rural France (Editions du Signe Publishers, 1995; Kelly, 1985; Sullivan, 1997). In this work, St. Vincent realized the power of the collective and the value of collaboration with others who shared like-minded convictions (McKenna, 2005; Sullivan, 1997). He believed there was a great synergy and power when people gathered to focus together on a common mission, saying that at times, "three can do more than ten" (Kelly, 1985, p. 12). St. Vincent



spoke often of the development of virtues, which might today be linked to notions of character development. Among the virtues, he said simplicity was most desired. Vincentian simplicity, most akin to transparency or integrity, was central to St. Vincent's leadership. He taught that if "your words do not correspond to what is really inside you, they will not hear..." (McKenna, 2005, p. 71). In today's vernacular, St. Vincent's approach might be interpreted as transformational leadership, in which the values of common good are at the forefront and the needs of the followers are acknowledged by those in leadership roles (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Burns, 1978). Sister Margaret John Kelly (1985) describes St. Vincent as a *creative reconciler*, highlighting that his work was focused on those with whom he was most concerned. Acknowledging their value, equality, dignity, and providing for their development happened by meeting people in the context of the circumstances and realities of their lives.

When referencing *the* Vincentians, one typically means to refer to the priests and nuns who are members of the orders founded by St. Vincent de Paul in 17<sup>th</sup> century France. These include the *Congregatio Missionis*—the 'gathering of people for the sake of the mission'—otherwise known as the Vincentian priests and the *Daughters of Charity*, one of the largest orders of religious women in the world today (Dosen, 2005; Holtschneider & Udovic, 2001). However, DePaul's current President, Fr. Dennis Holtschneider, and Vice-President for Mission, Fr. Ed Udovic, both Vincentian priests, speak of and include a larger body of people in a more encompassing description of those who are modern-day Vincentians. They posit that Vincentian Universities are "filled with thousands of *Vincentian* faculty, staff, students, administrators, and trustees who have made the mission their own" (Udovic, 2001, p. 8). Similarly, the thousands who gather for the sake of the mission on our campuses are Vincentian (Dosen, 2005; Holtschneider & Udovic, 2001; Kelly, 2008). This expansive notion of the Vincentian community is possible when considering that "DePaul is a community that is inclusive and 'conversational' rather than exclusive and 'confessional'" (Udovic, 2001, p. 6).

This Vincentian spirit is manifested in the mission and culture of the university. According to its mission statement, DePaul University educates "through their dedication to learning, their contributions to a personalistic environment, and their faith in the potential of their students, faculty and staff serve as a role model for students" (DePaul University Office of Mission & Values, 2011). The model of St. Vincent and the inclusiveness of the collective known as *Vincentians* help to deepen further the foundation for a culture that manifests *Vincentian personalism*.

### Vincentian Personalism Revisited

As noted earlier, Vincentian personalism is such a familiar term at DePaul University one might assume it easily found in St. Vincent's teachings or literature. However, St. Vincent de Paul did not coin the term, nor did he write about the concept of personalism directly. He did, however, embody this notion through his mission work and one can deepen an understanding of Vincentian personalism by studying and reflecting on his example. What is clear is that St. Vincent showed a tremendous appreciation for individual values and differences, while acknowledging the commonality of the human experience (Kelly, 1985; McKenna, 2005; O'Donoghue & Nass, 2006).

For St. Vincent, understanding God involved attending to personal experiences and encounters with the people and events of one's life. He taught that God is loved when a neighbor is loved and that evangelization occurs best through invitation rather than coercion (Dosen, 2005). In other words, he deeply valued the freedom and unique reality of the individual person. St. Vincent's teachings describe evangelization as building relationships and working side-by-side with others (Fr. P. McDevitt, C.M., personal communication, May 9, 2011). Working side-by-side with others and understanding that the process of learning and giving is mutual was part of the charism of St. Vincent (Dosen 2005; Kelly, 1985; McKenna, 2005).

St. Vincent clearly had an interest in the whole person—not just a person's physical or material needs. His saying, "first heart then work," demonstrates a person-oriented and integrated approach to his work (Kelly, 1985; Sullivan, 1997). He instructed his Vincentian colleagues, the confraternities of charity he developed, and the religious communities of women he helped to found to attend to the spiritual, social, and emotional needs of people rather than only providing them with bread. St. Vincent modeled a dynamic, compassionate, and synergistic spirit, which endured in the communities that he established.

St. Vincent was also known for his organizational abilities. His attention to detail and the rules he established for the institutions he created ensured that Vincentian personalism were embodied and sustained *in the institutions themselves*. Vincentian culture, as it has come to be known, manifests itself in a compassion organized to reach beyond the limits of just one person to make a broader impact on society (Dosen, 2005; Kelly, 1985).

The history of DePaul University models how an institution can embody this important mission element of Vincentian personalism. In an era

of rampant religious discrimination, the initial university charter precluded anyone from asking the religious persuasion of students and teachers in order to create a “special type of Catholic institution” (Meister, 1998, p. 8) welcoming potential non-Catholic students. This inclusive approach to religious personalism focused on attracting and serving *all* students. Additionally, the articles of incorporation expanded the dignity of a significantly underrepresented student population: women. The articles of incorporation stated the university would “provide, impart and furnish opportunities for all departments of higher education to persons of both sexes on equal terms” (p. 60). DePaul was the first Catholic university in the US to offer a co-educational program (Dosen, 2009). Sixty years before the trend of women enrolling at higher rates than men on college campuses in the United States began, DePaul University was already serving a significant number of women students (Barr, 2000).

Vincentian mission and the practice of Vincentian personalism is also institutionalized through guiding documents, such as mission statements, as well as through decisions about how to deliver services. The mission statements of the three Vincentian institutions of higher education in the United States reflect important dimensions of Vincentian mission and personalism:

- “to have compassion and a zeal for service” (St. John’s University, 2014, n.p.);
- “to develop the whole person for personal and professional life” (Niagara University, 2014, n.p.);
- “religious personalism is manifested by the members of the DePaul community in a sensitivity to and care for the needs of each other and those served” (DePaul University Office of Mission & Values, 2014, n. p.).

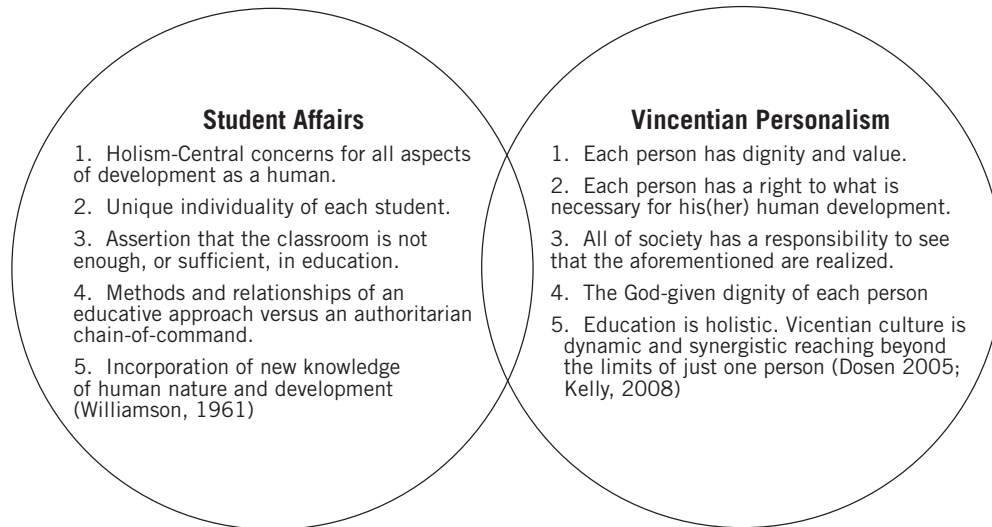
DePaul’s Vincentian leadership shaped a student-focused culture and a market-driven approach that has supported and sustained the mission for over a century by allowing the students more autonomy in designing their education through electives (Dosen, 2009; Logan & McCaffrey, 2001; Meister, 1998). The “early leaders created an organization open to change and responsive to the environment” (Meister, 1998, p. 8). Besides making decisions that embody Vincentian personalism, DePaul’s leaders also convey an attention to mission through their words at every opportunity. For example, DePaul University’s President, Fr. Dennis Holtschneider, includes in every commencement address, the following statement: “DePaul University will be happy for you if you go out and accomplish your goals. DePaul University will be proud of you if you further St. Vincent’s mission.”

Sub-units of the university institutionalize mission and Vincentian personalism relative to their particular duties and responsibilities. DePaul University Student Affairs staff made connections between St. Vincent's teachings and the institutional mission through focus groups on campus, which revealed mission-based beliefs and the principles of Vincentian personalism echoing the *Principles of Good Practice* (Estanek & James, 2007). The participants in the campus-wide focus groups made comments to the effect: "we reach out to the outliers and unfortunate" (p. 4). Another respondent described it this way: "We put the mission into practice relationally day by day, hour by hour. We do this by valuing all voices...not making exceptions for those with more power and influence. Mission happens in relationships above all" (p. 5). The leader of the study, Mark Laboe, said, in conclusion, "We have a lot of one-to-one 'mission moments'—attending to the person who walks through the door above all else and perhaps sometimes at the expense of other things" (Laboe, 2007, p. 5).

Vincentian personalism also is evident in how the faculty and staff honor the dignity of each student and each other through a culture of respect, engagement, and support. It is embodied in how they teach and help students learn. It can be seen in DePaul's commitment to service and inclusion, and the focus on student centered learning. This personal connection of students with the faculty and staff (i.e., teacher/learner) is the embodiment of this Vincentian personalism.

### **Arriving at an Integrated Perspective: Vincentian Mission and Student Affairs**

The year 2012 marked the 75th anniversary of a foundational document within the field of student affairs known as the *Student Personnel Point of View* (American Council on Education, 1937). This canonical piece was commissioned by the American Council on Education (ACE) and helped establish the foundations of the field as well shape the last 75 years of work for many practitioners (Nuss, 2003). Two lasting concepts have been the commitment of student personnel professionals to the development of the whole student and the need to support the mission of the university. The year 2013 marked 388 years since St. Vincent DePaul established the Congregation of the Mission to further his passion and service work (Dosen, 2005; Editions du Signe Publishers, 1995; Kelly, 2008; McKenna, 2005). While distinctive traditions, it is evident that they share a great deal in common, and that they can mutually enhance one another as they work—in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul—side-by-side (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1.* Intersection of student affairs and Vincentian personalism

Delving into a deeper understanding of Vincentian personalism confirmed my sense of comfort and connection with my work, my students, and the institution. The passion I feel for the field of student affairs was reified with my institutional surroundings. As an educator and scholar, this personal and professional congruence facilitates my ability to teach and mentor future practitioners in my field.

#### **From Mission Resistance to Mission Agency: A Reflection on Dr. Whitney's Journey by Mark Laboe**

The journey described above represents an example of one that Catholic colleges and universities need and want other faculty and staff to make, if the unique founding charisms and missions of their institutions are to be transmitted and sustained in today's context.

Dr. Whitney arrived at DePaul as an assistant professor in Counseling and College Student Development. While first finding himself a bit skeptical and even uninterested in pursuing the opportunity for a teaching position at DePaul because of its Catholic mission and heritage, the more he learned about DePaul, the more he realized that there was a greater convergence with his personal values and principles than he first noticed. In fact, because of his familiarity and grounding in the field of student affairs, he noticed how the

values promoted as “Vincentian” at DePaul seemed to connect to the fundamental operating principles of the student affairs profession. There began his journey at DePaul, including understanding more deeply DePaul’s *Catholic, Vincentian and urban* mission. This journey continued as he began to make the personal and intellectual connections between the Catholic-Vincentian mission of DePaul and his own profession and field of study, student affairs. He developed an ability to view his own discipline through a “Vincentian lens.” Various people and resources at the institution enabled him to understand the deeper heritage and culture of this mission. He began to notice that it permeated the culture of the school and wove like a thread through the history of the institution.

Dr. Whitney’s journey is valuable as a case study, illustrating a path that Catholic colleges and universities hope newly arriving faculty and staff in some way travel towards contributing to greater “mission effectiveness.” Orientation programs help. Formal “mission formation” programs may take things further. But, ultimately, the most important journey for faculty is the one that helps him or her make the personal and intellectual connections between their profession and field of study and the particular mission and charism of the institution.

Dr. Whitney’s journey highlights a number of key stages or steps in a mission-enculturation process that is still ongoing. He moved through a continuum from ground zero towards a vibrant application of mission in his individual discipline and a growing mission expertise. How did this process occur? Reflecting upon Dr. Whitney’s story, some key elements emerge as important on his journey. These elements—some of which are actions on the part of the faculty member and some of which are resources provided by the university—are important to highlight as significant pieces of a process of mission-enculturation, which may be relevant for other faculty and staff in different disciplines and different settings:

1. **Meeting individual people and forming relationships with those who embody, transmit, and help to translate mission** in helpful and concrete ways. People transmit mission most effectively (Holtzschneider, 2005). Finding effective ways to connect faculty with strong advocates for mission – those who are already highly engaged in mission and who embody the spirit of the mission – may be the most essential element in the process.



2. **Being provided accessible resources for further study and learning** about the mission of the institution. Faculty generally likes to learn. Having resources available for their further study and research, and to enable them to make the necessary intellectual connections is essential.
3. **Making accessible and known the established programs of formal and informal assistance** for faculty to integrate mission elements into teaching and curriculum. Beyond onboarding processes such as new faculty orientation, the availability of mission-based curriculum development programs, mission-based workshops, retreats, or faculty discussion groups, can be effective aids to the process of mission enculturation.
4. **Deepening mission expertise through formal and informal processes of recognition and affirmation.** Recognizing mission engagement in some way in the tenure and promotion process, awards or other forms recognition for service to advance the university mission, and course reductions or faculty development grants for the purpose of mission related research and learning are all potential forms of affirming and supporting faculty to move towards mission agency.
5. **Providing forums within one's particular field or academic department** to foster intellectual connections between institutional mission and one's specific discipline. Through intentional conversations with members from his department and others institutionally, Dr. Whitney was able to connect tenets of his earlier career formation and his particular discipline of student affairs to Vincentian personalism, creating a richer, more integrated context for his work at DePaul.
6. **Offering faculty the opportunities and incentive to share their mission learning and growing mission expertise through public speaking and writing.** The perspectives on mission from many different disciplines can expand and refresh the mission charism in exciting ways for the university community and for the founding religious community, adapting it in ways to make it more current and robust. In addition, nothing helps crystallize mission learning in quite the same way as faculty having to speak or write about it.

Many of these elements in Dr. Whitney's journey are likely to be common ones in different contexts for faculty who are progressing through a continuum from their arrival to the point of deeper mission understand and agency. Further qualitative research could be done with faculty in different disciplines and settings, which may highlight other key elements in the developmental path or process towards mission agency.

### Conclusion

DePaul University is one of 262 Catholic colleges and universities in the United States (Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, 2013). Its Vincentian charism is one of the central and guiding elements that makes DePaul distinctive and that serves to help navigate what has become an ever more complex context for higher education with our globalizing world, shifting economy, and increasingly pluralistic societies. Essential to this pursuit is the process of continuing to prepare faculty and staff to carry on its Vincentian mission. This requires an intentional process of moving and equipping them towards greater mission agency. While each of these individual faculty and staff journeys are sure to be unique, there are certain elements that are common. As shown above, the example of Dr. Whitney's journey as a professor of Student affairs highlights some of these essential steps along the way. Whether in the sciences, liberal arts, business, the arts, or other disciplines, faculty and staff must be given the resources to assist them in this journey, helping them to make the personal and intellectual connections between their own personal values, their field of study and work, and the university's distinctive charism and mission. Most importantly, what is clear is that the most essential resource of all in this process are the individual people who embody, articulate, and translate this mission in concrete and relevant ways.

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