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Adjunct Peer Mentoring at Manhattan University: A Twenty-First-Century Application of De La Salle's Seventeenth-Century Teacher Principles

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1. Introduction

To what extent do part-time (adjunct) instructors in higher education institutions provide value-added opportunities for Lasallian college and university faculty, chairpersons, and mission administrators to strategically expand teaching talent across the curriculum with minimal expense to the annual budget? This research paper shares the experiences of developing a strengthened connection among adjuncts to the Lasallian mission and principles through a peer mentorship program, Adjunct Peer Mentorship (APM), made possible by a grant awarded to Manhattan University (MU) by the Lilly Network of Church-Related Colleges and Universities. In appreciating the evolving role of colleges' adjuncts in today's academic landscape, the grant allows for an expansion of faculty development programming to teach adjunct faculty about Manhattan University's Lasallian Catholic educational mission, with a focus on strategies in student engagement and course development. Recently hired adjunct faculty teaching in the BS program, Organizational Leadership and Camino, the college's only associate degree program, are matched, in this grant-funded pilot program, with full-time or long-term adjunct faculty to delve into the teachings of St. John Baptist de La Salle to positively impact their teaching and relationship with the University.

2. A Peer-Mentorship Program for Adjunct Instructors

Through the peer mentorship program at MU, current trends in the De La Salle Christian Brothers' strategic focus to develop and launch innovative degree and non-degree program experiences for Lasallian students are examined. This strategic initiative is bolstered at MU through the APM, where mentors and mentees gain a more deeply rooted understanding of and connection to the Lasallian core principles to promote faith, respect, education, community, and social justice. These connections are affirmed to students in the classroom, further solidifying students' fidelity to these core values. Although we will never know how long Brothers served their communities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, evidence suggests that many remained full- or part-time to teach poor and disadvantaged children. De La Salle's teachers (his Brothers) embraced the commitment to education as a means of lifting the disadvantaged out of poverty. Hundreds of years later, De La Salle's mission inspires us today. These teachers (Brothers) joined the Lasallian community short on expectations. Early on, they were trained by

Saint John Baptist to speak, write, and conduct lessons in reading, mathematics, and appropriate social behaviors of the day.

2.1.Adjuncts

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines *adjunct* as "something joined or added to another thing but not essentially a part of it (noun); attached in a subordinate or temporary capacity to a staff//an adjunct professor."[4] Synonyms and antonyms include nouns adjutant, aid, aide, apprentice, assistant, coadjutor, deputy, helper, helpmate, helpmeet, lieutenant, mate, and sidekick.

2.2.Packer's Study on Adjunct Development Considerations

Colleen Packer's study "Participant-Centered Adjunct Faculty Development: A Case Study Using the Great Teachers Model" employs the adjunct faculty definition of the National Center for Education Statistics (page D-3): "those faculty members who have a 'temporary affiliation with an institution in performing a duty or service in an auxiliary capacity.'"[5] Part-time, contingent, and auxiliary faculty are other terms that have been used to describe these instructors. Adjunct faculty members teach part-time and are not on a tenure-track appointment at the institution. The adjunct instructors in her study have other full-time jobs either at the institution or other organizations not directly affiliated with the campus. Some were also retired from other organizations.

Over the last several decades, researchers have continued to examine the growing use of adjunct faculty to the point where they play a major role in the success of colleges in the United States. Rising instructional costs led to a steady increase in the number of courses taught by adjunct faculty members in colleges and universities. With this increase in adjunct faculty comes the challenge of meeting and supporting their professional development needs.[6]

2.3.Danaei's Research on Mentorship for Adjuncts

Kami Danaei conducted a literature review in 2019 and concurred with Parker's findings. Danaei states,

> The hiring of adjunct faculty in higher education has been on an upward trend since the 1970s. The role of the adjunct professor is continually expanding in education due to deflating budgets and the availability of numerous qualified applicants for few positions.[7]

The purpose of Danaei's research was to evaluate connections of professional development to adjunct faculty. The focus became adjunct professional development, specifically mentoring. Mentoring is one of the effective ways to narrow the divide between tenured and adjunct

faculty.[8] Her study highlights points of consideration and implications for mentoring programs within higher education and makes recommendations to higher education administrators.

2.4.Research on Shifting Role of Adjuncts in Higher Education

Elvira Nica's editorial, "Has the Shift to Overworked and Underpaid Adjunct Faculty Helped Educational Outcomes?" asserts,

> Adjuncts may be hired as they have competence in a certain sphere that permanent faculty members do not. Non-tenured track faculty who have a job outside of colleges bring in viewpoints and practices that are dissimilar from that of scholars who have gone immediately from graduate school into college teaching.[9]

Part-time positions are significantly common when uncertainty and turbulent change exist. These circumstances provide opportunities for a variety of job seekers to work a second, part-time position for additional income on a temporary basis. Retired professionals, contractors, and educators looking for part-time employment can collaborate with the full-time management teams in business settings and the department chairpersons in colleges and universities to sustain core subjects and elective topics of study that students are interested in exploring during their academic coursework.

Nica continues to emphasize the most valuable resource for today's higher education industry is to reassess the fundamental approach of hiring part-time instructors to take on coursework deemed critical to the mission of their institutions, particularly during financial decline and unsustainable enrollment strategies. "Higher education," she states,

> has flourished lately [2018] and does not adopt the model of other sectors being altered by contingent hiring. Teaching students should be the essential objective of higher education. Colleges have turned, increasingly, their frontline staff into part-time contractors. The expansion of non-tenure track faculty allows innovative teaching individuals into the college system, frequently scholars with more experience than the full-time faculty.[10]

Higher education administrators justify the termination of full-time faculty because of increased tuition fees, a decline in high school graduation, and lower student retention rates. In Nica's editorial, she suggests that adjunct faculty be offered satisfactory office space to reply to students' emails and meet them in person more frequently. In addition, she points out that "part-time teaching staff barely have time to meet with students outside of class, they can hardly constitute relevant connections with non-tenure track faculty."[11]

In her closing editorial remarks, Nica quotes Dan Edmonds to conclude,

> As the amount of non- tenure track faculty increases, and the amount of full-time faculty decreases, the latter will be requested progressively more recommendations from students they barely know. Well-paid and well-treated non-tenure track faculty are more likely to have the necessary time and be granted the backing required to lecture a first-rate class.[12]

Authors Tom Henkel and Gordon Haley conducted a quantitative study focusing on the recent college and university accreditation organizations requiring student retention and faculty work engagement as part of the effectiveness and accreditation process.[13] They state,

> The current study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by investigating adjunct faculty engagement. The goal is to help higher education institutions rethink their business strategies, to "better" leverage the knowledge, skills, and abilities of their adjunct faculty. This, in turn, will help them attract new students, retain current students, ensure effective delivery of courses, and increase graduation rates.[14]

The *Inside Higher Education* article "A Rough Month for Campus Cuts"[15] reports that the end of the academic year brought announcements of job and program cuts at many institutions. John Moody states,

> Some colleges are eliminating dozens of jobs to reduce operating costs. Cuts announced in May are among the deepest reported so far this year. Layoffs, program reductions and other belt-tightening measures are largely being driven by the usual suspects: declining enrollment and increased operating costs.

In the business world, leaders create workforce strategies that include creative partnerships to provide part-time (contract) employees with critical skill sets to join their organizations for a specified period of time. These contractors are interviewed on the same basis as full-time talent; however, the compensation and benefits are significantly different and similar to the hiring of adjunct instructors in the higher education industry.

Alison Ridge and Elizabeth Ritt remarked on the beneficial role many adjuncts employ. They contend that adjuncts add a richness to curricula through their direct connection to the workforce and business community. Further, adjuncts oftentimes can apply their real-world skills and abilities to their instruction, which allows students to gain practical knowledge, impacting their learning.[16]

3. A Lilly Grant in Support of Peer Mentorship

3.1. The Lilly Network

Manhattan University was awarded a two-year $12,000 grant dedicated to a peer mentorship program on campus by the Lilly Network in August 2023. The grant started in the fall 2023 term and ends in spring 2025. The funds go directly toward leading mentorship development, mentor and mentee stipends, learning materials, and related meetings. The Lilly Network focuses on supporting higher education institutions through fostering learning and application of their mission, as shared below on their website.

> Since its founding in 1991, the Lilly Network of Church-Related Colleges and Universities (formerly the Lilly Fellows Program) has fostered ongoing conversation about church- related higher learning and developed leaders in church-related colleges and universities. Its mission is to "strengthen the quality and shape the character of church-related institutions of higher learning in the twenty-first century." The Lilly Network supports fellowships, conferences, and grants to sustain and grow its mission. Mentoring grants are used to "nurture faculty at all stages of their careers and strengthen

their institutional mission through mentoring relationships. These programs encourage faculty ranging from new hires to junior, mid-career, and veteran faculty to understand and share the ethos of the school, to grow to love the questions that the institution holds dear, and to consider the importance of fundamental matters concerning the relationship between higher learning and the Christian faith.[17]

3.2. The Mentorship and University Connection

Each semester, mentors (long-term adjuncts and full-time faculty) and mentees (newer adjuncts) are invited to participate in four weeks of training that incorporates Manhattan University history, Lasallian identity, mission, and core principles into the courses the instructors are teaching. The mentorship is directed by a core curriculum that was developed by three lead mentors who possess a deep understanding of and education in the teachings of De La Salle. The beauty of the APM program is that it invites part-time instructors to engage with faculty and administrators through a unique focus on Manhattan University's Lasallian Catholic core identity and educational mission across the departmental curriculum. The program supports adjunct faculty professional development, providing a deeper understanding of Lasallian mission and principles that can be applied in the classroom. Instead of teaching and learning De La Salle Christian Brothers' history and mission in religious studies, all faculty are encouraged to apply the inclusive Lasallian Catholic core identity to contemporary and relevant topics of study, inclusive of the mission and strategic plan of Manhattan University.

3.3. Supporting the Lasallian Mission

What do the students at Catholic universities and colleges want to learn and how do they want to grow? The message from ACCU President, Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, CM, summarized the findings last December 2023 during the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The ACCU was asked to assist them in providing SYNOD consultations so that the voices of young adults would be heard. Reverend Holtschneider reported that the ACCU accepted the request and asked colleges and universities to gather Catholic students on their campuses to discuss the student's experiences with the Church. This summary was presented to Sister Nathalie Becquart in Rome's USCCB Office for the Synod, which collected all the responses for the United States for review at the Vatican. This consultation came to a close in the fall of 2023 at a worldwide synodal meeting with the Pope. Over 6,000 students provided feedback and indicated very active participation in and appreciation of their campus ministries.

It is suggested that the research findings from these rigorous initiatives be formally communicated during collaborative events with faculty and adjunct instructors. Professional development workshops offer significant opportunities for department chairpersons to bring the department teachers together for conversations and sharing of pedagogical approaches in their classrooms. This paper summarizes the Manhattan University APM and the greater opportunities the Lilly Foundation grant offers its community.

4. The Adjunct Peer Mentorship (APM) Program

The APM focuses on improving instructor engagement with students as well as their understanding of and alignment with the College's Lasallian Catholic core identity and educational mission, which supports the Lilly National Network Mission. This program also supports the mission and strategic plan of Manhattan University, allowing faculty to enhance their understanding and application of the Lasallian mission in the classroom and fostering a stronger bond with the University.

4.1.Program Purpose and Description

The purpose of the APM program is to create an environment in which adjunct instructors are supported by their peers as they learn about Manhattan University's programs, its students, and the inclusive Lasallian Catholic core identity and educational mission.

Mentees are adjunct faculty who have been teaching at the university for no more than two terms and mentors are faculty who have been teaching for no less than three years. Mentors participate in an information session where the goals and logistics of the mentorship program are reviewed. The inaugural mentors, two long-time faculty educated in the teachings of De La Salle and one mentor with a proven track record of engaging first generation students, developed the mentorship curriculum. Mentors and mentees are matched with the help of the grant's principal investigator and program directors. Once paired, mentors and mentees commit to meeting with each other at least four times during the semester as well as attending kick off meetings at the beginning of each term. With the continuous support of the University's Mission and Campus Ministry and Social Action directors, participants receive guidance through recommended readings and resources.

4.2.Goals of the Project

The main goals of the APM program are to align the university's Lasallian mission explicitly to the teaching and learning goals and to provide adjunct faculty with the skills and knowledge to become participants in Manhattan University's mission, strengthen engagement of students with the University and its mission, and create a strong mentorship program that will achieve the following:

- support the importance of sound, mission-focused teaching at Manhattan University
- guide new faculty through mentor guidance.
- develop relationships among faculty across disciplines and make connections with the university's Mission, Campus Ministry, and Social Action office.
- create a lasting peer mentoring program at Manhattan University.

4.3.Mentorship Logistics

The Lilly Foundation grant encourages the expansion of faculty development programming across the MU campus in 2023 and beyond. In the summer of 2023, the APM lead content developers devised a curriculum covering areas of focus for the four sessions that mentors use to guide work with their mentees. The same curriculum is used throughout the mentorship. Each of the four sessions weaves the background and teachings of De La Salle, the Lasallian Mission,

and the University's Lasallian principles with practical teaching goals. There is also an opportunity for mentees and mentors to conclude the mentorship with a debrief on ways in which the mentorship affected teaching and connection to the University. Mentors and mentees also provide their feedback about the experience, which helps to evaluate the grant.

To date, some of the senior, long-term, adjunct faculty in the BS and MS Organizational Leadership and Camino programs have completed two consecutive four-week APM programs and will conclude the third mentorship iteration in December 2024. Planning continues for the spring 2025 mentorship opportunity, where there will be an increase of mentee participation of adjunct faculty volunteers.

4.4.Program Development and Future Opportunities

The Manhattan University community participates in several professional development sessions and events that help inform the mentorship program. For example, each year, events are sponsored by the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU), Collegium (offices and ongoing operations located at the University of Portland, Oregon), the Lilly Network of Church-Related College and Universities, and The Lasallian Brothers of the Christian Schools programs: Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies, the Brother John Johnston Institute of Contemporary Lasallian Practice, and the Lasallian Social Justice Institute.

Educational programming is supported through sponsoring the Huether Lasallian Conference each November and partnering with the Lasallian Association of Secondary School Chief Administrators (LASSCA). Springtide Research Institute was founded in 2019 under the umbrella of the Lasallian Educational and Research Initiative (LERI), a nonprofit, tax-exempt member organization in the State of Minnesota. Its publishing is supported by the Christian Brothers of De La Salle (Lasallians), advocating for the young. Research projects are conducted by the Springtide team members, who are inspired by Saint John Baptist de La Salle's passion for building communities oriented toward the good of young people ages thirteen to twenty-five, especially those on the margins. Materials from the Institute are presented to participants in the annual De La Salle Christian Brothers NELAN Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies. The research summarizes collected data and makes findings accessible so that others, from educators to faith leaders to parents to policymakers, can take their own next steps, backed by social science.[18]

Participants return to their communities around the world to present generational trends to their administrators, faculty, teachers, and parents. Areas that support the Office of Mission and Strategic Planning can implement projects to address the changing landscapes of meaning, identity, and community back home. One significant focus requiring consideration is the mental health crisis among Gen Z, which is unlike those of previous generations of young people. Springtide presents research from the social sciences that shows a relationship between being religious or spiritual and one's well-being. The data supports this relationship and shows that many young people recognize the value of religion and spirituality for mental wellness. It is feasible to increase program offerings with APM program instructors.

The Springtide research presents opportunities for administrators and educators to support Gen Z's mental health. Twenty adjunct instructors can be brought on board to achieve the following:

- help students feel connected to the school community.
- make sure students are prepared to succeed.
- create mission.
- prioritize connection.
- set expectations and offer the tools to achieve them.
- help students to find purpose.

An example of the related topics presented at the 2024 Lilly Network National Fellows Conference[19] is Karen Eifler and Thomas Landy's *Becoming Beholders: Cultivating Sacramental Imagination and Actions in College Classrooms*.[20] Winner of the 2015 Lilly Fellows Program Book Award, *Becoming Beholders* is the first book to share pedagogical strategies about how to do that.

> Twenty faculty – from many religious backgrounds and teaching in fields as varied as chemistry, economics, English, history, mathematics, sociology, and theology – discuss ways that their teaching nourishes students' ability to find the transcendent in their studies.

"*Becoming Beholders"* truly has the potential to spark conversations about faith and scholarship in all sorts of unexpected places – and the larger discussion about faith and higher education will be that much richer as a result." [21]

The Collegium: A Colloquy on Faith and Intellectual Life was held in June of 2024 at the College of the Holy Cross.[22] Participants received reading materials in preparation for the week's agenda. One of the assigned reading materials relates to spiritual matters in the classroom: bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*, Routledge, NY, 2003).[23] The author describes her teaching career journey to Stanford University, California, from Virginia Street Baptist Church, Kentucky.

bell hooks states, "I was trained to keep all discussions of religion and spirituality out of the classroom."[24] She shares her story of being a "black person" in "an elite educational world." In chapter fifteen, "Teach," she goes on to share,

> For many smart students from backgrounds that are marginalized by race, class, geography, sexual preference, or some combination, the college continues to be a place of disconnection. Throughout my college experience, both during my undergraduate and graduate years, spirituality was the place where the connections were made for me. And even though there was no talk of spirituality at Stanford, the open doors of the church offered a constant validation of the place of the sacred in education.

She suggests that educators think out of the box in their specialized areas of study. Becoming "transformational" in our teaching methods that practice "new language" and connect "soulfulness and our ability to learn. All the movements for social justice succeeded when they

evoked an ethic of love rooted in the embrace of spirit."[25] She speaks of a classroom environment built into our teaching that provides a place where spirit matters, a place where our spirits can be renewed and our souls restored.

This holistic teaching approach includes storytelling of joys and optimistic hope for an improved future. Dwelling on the sadness and negativity in our world should be replaced with passion and possibility. There are opportunities for educators and adjunct faculty to teach the Lasallian core principles with spirit and positive thinking. Hooks concludes that her classroom continues to be a place to appreciate the elements of "paradise." (Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh teaches, "When you have suffered you know how to appreciate the elements of paradise that are present.") bell's closing sentence in the final paragraph of chapter fifteen states,

> To me, the classroom continues to be a place where paradise can be realized, a place of passion and possibility, a place where spirit matters, where all that we learn and know leads us into greater connection, into a greater understanding of life lived in community.[26]

An article by Karsonya Wise Whitehead and Jason Taylor, "Stories We Tell: From Baltimore to Denver," shares their learning experiences in 2012 when they decided to participate in the Collegium A Colloquy on Faith and Intellectual Life at Saint John's University.[27] It was there that they "discovered" their shared interest in service learning, social justice, and metacognitive reflection. Whitehead is an assistant professor of communication at Loyola University, Maryland, and Taylor is an assistant professor of philosophy at Regis University, Colorado.

After their learning experiences at the Colloquy, both professors were compelled to bring innovative teaching methods into the classroom with the cities of Baltimore and Denver as the backdrop for students to serve in their communities as part of the first-year experience. In addition, students enrolled in both semesters in a one-credit course that housed a three-to-four-hour weekly commitment to a service-learning placement and a weekly discussion section devoted to reflection on their placement experience. The De La Salle Christian Brothers Lasallian Huether Conference is sponsored annually.

The Manhattan University's Office of Mission posted a call for papers and the following *Lasallian Education Today* newsletter excerpt:

> Integral, Spiritual, and Transformational Human relationships are central elements of the Lasallian school. All the participants in school life are involved: students, teachers, parents, and indirectly, social and political Institutions. For De La Salle, there is also another essential agent in that personal growth and that, consequently, educational process depends essentially on human relationships. No wonder then that De La Salle asks teachers to win the hearts of children.[28]

The planning committee has surfaced the following as possible topics for the breakout sessions:

- evolving Lasallian pedagogy that is inclusive and innovative with the changing educational landscape while meeting needs.

- sharing practices that embrace a holistic education as we look to form young people academically, socially, and spiritually in our ministries.
- facilitating conversation grounded in the Lasallian charism as lived in the classroom/workplace: (a) how are De La Salle's teachings experienced in a core content classroom? and (b) how are De La Salle's teachings experienced in counseling or office settings?
- sharing practices that include self-care for educators to nurture and sustain their vocational call.
- nurturing the spiritual needs of the individual members of a community and the community at large.

4.5.Applying Lasallian Professional Development

These annual Lasallian programs offered to college and university communities for annual professional development create learning opportunities for part-time instructors to collaborate with their full-time faculty peers across the USA. When colleges and universities provide organized programs on campuses, department chairpersons can facilitate brainstorming and conversations between part-time and full-time expertise. This idea aligns with the goals of the APM mentorship at Manhattan University. Using the mission and its principles as the driving force, the grant aims to facilitate greater connection among instructors at all levels, open dialogue, and strengthen engagement of students across all departments.

5. Preliminary Evaluation of Lilly Fellows Grant

With the grant still in progress, information is currently being collected to determine the extent to which the grant's goals were met. In evaluating the grant, various data are being analyzed at the end of each semester, which will feed into a final review in summer 2025. Preliminary evaluation of the grant includes gauging participants' understanding and application of the University's Lasallian Mission, being collected through pre-post mentorship surveys, course observations, and participants' reflections.

5.1.Adjuncts' Feedback on Knowledge and Understanding of the University's Lasallian Mission

The impact of the Lilly Fellows grant is evaluated through a variety of measures including review of class evaluations, course observations, direct participant feedback, and mentee artifacts at the conclusion of their mentorship. Preliminary analysis has shown that both mentors and mentees have developed a deeper understanding of Lasallian teachings and principles as found in pre-post surveys. Participants are asked about the extent to which they are familiar and use principles of de La Salle in their teaching and their everyday life. Instructors noted a more comprehensive grasp and knowledge of the Lasallian teachings.

Table 1: Pre-Post Rating Questions for Mentors and Mentees

Respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement to the following statements:
Q1. I know the history of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and how his teachings inspire our mission. Q2. I incorporate Lasallian principles in my teaching. Q3. I incorporate Lasallian principles in my daily interactions at work. Q4. I can clearly explain the charism of a Lasallian institution of higher education. Q5. I view myself as a member of the Lasallian community in my institution. Q6. I view myself as a member of the Lasallian community around the world. Q7. My experience at this college would not be as effective without the Lasallian charism being present.

5.2.Adjuncts Use of Lasallian Mission in and out of Classroom Teaching

Observations and class evaluations are routinely conducted for all Manhattan University faculty. While these two measures indirectly measure instructors' abilities, they are a useful assessment to gauge any impact the mentorship might have on the participants. Through observing class engagement and teacher feedback, as documented in the course learning management system (LMS), mentees are consistently commenting on student work. Instructors provide encouraging thoughts and ideas to their students and appear "present" via the LMS. Class evaluations for all mentees are very favorable: students rate their instructors in the high "4" range on a 5-point scale. Student comments on instructors who served as mentees are positive. Instructors are described as helpful, caring, kind, and knowledgeable.

A more direct form of mentorship evaluation is found through mentee reflections. These written narratives demonstrate a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Lasallian principles gained through the mentorship. Mentees remarked on the value of learning about De La Salle's history and how lessons and strategies adopted by Saint John Baptiste De La Salle himself—lessons encompassing student centeredness and interpersonal relationships at their core—can be applied to teaching today. Mentees shared about how the mentorship reinforced ways in which the Lasallian principles can be embraced in everyday life, through listening, being vigilant in facing problems, finding patience in challenging times, and maintaining humility.

Further, the relationships that developed between the mentors and mentees reflect the Lasallian tenets Manhattan University instructors hope to impart to their students: a nurturing learning environment where inclusiveness, faith, and respect are fostered. For many, the mentor-mentee relationship does not end with mentorship; newfound support and friendships have developed in many instances.

Table 2: Excerpts from Mentee Reflections

Reflection 1: "As a Jasper myself, I was very familiar with the virtues, but had never contemplated them seriously in the new perspective of an educator. The Lilly Fellowship allowed me to turn each virtue on its head—to look at it from my past understanding as a student and current perspective as a teacher. It reinforced how important the work we do here at Manhattan University is, and how we can use the virtues as a solid foundation for any part of our lives, both in and out of the classroom.

The experience as a Lilly Fellow reinforces how much these virtues are a part of my everyday life. I remind myself to take a step back and be a better listener (reserve), to respond more thoughtfully to problems (vigilance), and to have more patience with challenges in my career as both an educator and a publisher, as well as within my personal relationships (humility). I also found that these virtues perfectly aligned with my educational values I acquired from Columbia University's Narrative Medicine program, which looks to close reading and active listening to develop a secure connection during health crises."

Reflection 2: "The mentors offered their professional expertise and personal knowledge of long-time service to the Manhattan University community. They shared specific teaching methods and examples to demonstrate the ease of incorporating [the] college's history, culture, principles, and virtues into the instructor's lesson-planning process during the semester. It is profoundly valuable to receive a historical background of Saint John Baptist De La Salle (DLS) during the first of four sessions. In addition, all MU faculty, no matter their years of service, will benefit from the mentors' stories of sharing the De La Salle Brothers and the mission of MU as it applies to our global challenges today. Each session highlighted the call for celebration of three hundred years of sustainable existence as a Lasallian institution of higher education we can be proud of.

The collaboration of mentors and mentees creates a welcoming environment open to learning and renewing methods of student engagement. In the new year, let's work together with zeal and commitment to sustain an "inclusive" college community of faculty, students, administrators, associates, and neighbors. This program is an asset for professional development, and we are thankful to be a part of its potential rewards for participants in the new year."

Reflection 3: "Being educated in and working at a Jesuit institution, which shares a similar mission to the Lasallian tradition, I was unsure if I would find this experience interesting and productive. I, however, found our conversations quite the contrary. While we did discuss similar principles, comprehensively discussing the twelve virtues and their impact in being a "good" teacher was a new learning experience for me, refreshing, and confirmed my personal beliefs. We also shared individual teaching techniques which are related to these virtues, practices which I will definitely use in future classes to both engage students and build their confidence. Learning more about Manhattan University's traditions only reinforces my experience with students and staff over the last two years where everyone was helpful with my introduction and supportive of my work/efforts, encouraging me to continue being a member of such a caring community."

Reflection 4: "Mentoring is about building a synergistic relationship based on common interests and goals. When I met my mentor during the Fellowship, we instantly developed a relationship based on shared passion for the profession and a shared goal for our shared set of Camino students, that is, to give the students the best possible academic experience and for the students not only to pass but to thrive in their studies. My mentor and I shared our experiences with each of the students, noting his or her strengths and weaknesses, and how best to approach each problem student. We not only shared teaching strategies, but more importantly, my mentor shared with me information on how best to maximize college resources, such as to whom I should refer students with an English language barrier or students who are on the verge of failing due to either absenteeism or performance. We were able to share how to draw the best from each student. This made me more confident with the decisions that I was making with the course I was teaching and its students.

Besides all of the benefits that I gained from this experience, I feel that the continuity and advancement of the profession is derived from such relationships, among others. The discovery of oneself through another helps us on the journey to having a successful achievement of teaching goals both for the students and the faculty.

6. Conclusion

The positive perception both of the mentees in this grant-funded, peer-mentored, mission-centric formation program and of the mentors in this faculty-led initiative bode well for the success of this first-time initiative in support of integrating adjuncts into the Lasallian culture of Manhattan University. After allowing a bit more time for the benefits of the program to take root, consideration will be given to the merits of replicating and/or expanding it in the future.

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