Faith, Service, Community

2nd Edition

Faculty Guide

Office of Mission Integration
and
University Ministry and Service
**Audience**

New students will tell you they know La Salle. They will describe it by its location, size, majors, selectivity, sports teams, and student activities. All understandable. During the courtship stage, this largely is what we’ve talked to them about when describing La Salle.

In 2008, a booklet called *Faith, Service, Community* was written to introduce La Salle University to new students. It described the University’s founding, the story of John Baptist De La Lalle, and the beginning of the Christian Brothers. Last fall, new students and new faculty received copies. An expanded second edition was published in the summer of 2009 and was given to all new students and all faculty prior to the start of the 2009-10 school year.

**Purpose**

The idea of writing the booklet originated with the University’s president, Brother Michael McGinniss. The concept was to create something that would lead to a deeper understanding of the University, its mission and values.

For faculty teaching an FYO course and others, the booklet may provide opportunities for conversations about an important element in developing community here: our Lasallian heritage. The booklet can be used to address broader topics as well – the search for personal identity, the demands of society, the tug of faith, the consequences of living in a culture defined by class distinctions, and concepts of community and justice. All of these are touched on in varying degrees in *Faith, Service, Community*.

The booklet also includes prayers and inspirational quotes from a variety of sources. From that standpoint, it can be revisited many times when one feels the urge.

In a very real sense, you could say the booklet is a way for La Salle University to sustain its mission. The reader can see something of the big picture of La Salle’s past: Philadelphia when the college first opened, the school’s founding purpose, the ideals it has held fast to, the students it has served over the years. We explain why we desire to provide an education for both mind and spirit.

We also want students to know the major players in the La Salle story because there are lessons to be learned from them. Their lives were filled with faith and doubt, success and disappointment. They took great personal risk for the sake of a larger purpose. They believed in the love of a benevolent God and they demonstrated tolerance, compassion, and awareness of one’s societal obligations. Their lives can be a companion and model for new students during their life at La Salle and beyond.
Making It Relevant

An implicit question that propels the booklet forward is “what does it mean to be La Salle University?” Much of the University’s sense of itself is rooted in its history and traditions. So, the narrative begins there.

The stories of De La Salle and the founding of La Salle College include some context. For example, De La Salle’s story tells something of his family and the France of his day. And the founding of La Salle College touches on the Irish diaspora and the turmoil and violence that tore at the city in the years leading to the Civil War. Both are examples of an injustice being addressed— a point that we hope is not lost by students. We provide this background to improve understanding. We don’t want the booklet to be simply a series of abstractions. We’d like students to see its relevance in today’s world.

To that end, you might ask students to consider the significance of these stories today in a world divided by class, culture, religion, and economic resources. In doing so, there is a chance to introduce a third story. Not just the De La Salle and University stories, but the student’s story too. Details—the oxygen of any story—lead naturally to the following questions which you might pose to students:

- What happened?
- When did it happen?
- How did it happen?
- Who took part?
- Why were the players motivated to make the decisions they made?

Even the most self-assured new student arrives grappling with questions: What should I major in? What will college be like? Will I be successful? What do I want to do in life? The booklet can be a way to introduce such questions and to talk about where students are at this moment in their lives.

Freshmen are not likely to have read La Salle’s mission statement but if they do (it’s included in its entirety in the booklet) they will find samples of essential questions similar to the ones they are now facing.

Here are the questions from the statement itself and then variations that might resonate more with students:

- Questions from La Salle’s mission statement:
  - Who am I? Where does my destiny lie? How am I to achieve it?
- Questions from a student’s perspective:
  - What are my best personal talents?
  - How do they influence my selection of a major?
  - How can I know what I want to study here?
  - How can I bring my talents to the wider world?
  - At this stage of my life, how would I describe my “mission”?
Other questions for your consideration:

1. In the story of La Salle University’s founding, one can see that the organizers were responding to rampant religious and ethnic intolerance. Explain this. Can you give examples in today’s world?

2. De La Salle’s world was characterized by extreme economic inequality and divisions based on class. In the midst of this, he enjoyed a comfortable, secure life in his youth. Yet, later in his adult life, he felt compelled to make choices that took him away from luxury to live – not just help, but live – with those who were at the greatest risk. Why? What was his motivation?

3. Economic inequality still exists in the U.S. today. Can you give examples? Have you personally experienced it? Do you feel this is something that can be remedied? How?

4. Is equality a matter of having material goods? Is it a matter of access to opportunities? Both?

5. A section of the booklet is devoted to “the Saints of La Salle University.” Perhaps “saints” is a word that students might not understand or readily accept. The word “heroes” might serve as a substitute. Questions for students: Beyond members of your family, who are your heroes? Why?

6. Faith, Service, Community contains the University mission statement. Are there ideas in it that you find surprising or perplexing? Are there goals in it that resonate with your personal goals?

7. How can you take full advantage of the resources of the University to help you to discern your future direction?

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