

# Translating Vincent de Paul for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Case Study of Vincentian Mission Effectiveness Efforts at DePaul University

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## **Introduction: Vincentian Mission Effectiveness**

Every year I do mission effectiveness consulting across the United States for a wide variety of Vincentian groups and institutions. My message is always the same: Vincentian mission effectiveness requires visionary leadership that challenges the status quo and translates Vincent de Paul and the Vincentian mission and values into institutions and services that effectively address the contemporary challenges facing our brothers and sisters who are poor. If the Vincentian mission and values remain relevant today it is because they remain needed, but they are only as relevant as they are effective, and they are only as effective as our leadership and commitment to charity and justice can make them in light of inadequate resources and societal pressures.

Every year I teach a Catholic Studies course to undergraduates at DePaul University that is entitled, *The Life and Times of Vincent de Paul*. The purpose of this course is not merely to undertake a study of Vincent de Paul as a figure of historical interest, but rather it also seeks to demonstrate how the legacy of this 17<sup>th</sup> century French, Roman Catholic priest and saint has had a worldwide “transhistorical” impact over the span of four centuries down to our own times.

For their final project I require my students to write an essay in which they evaluate the relevance of the Vincentian mission and values. As part of their research

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they must examine the websites of at least ten Vincentian organizations or institutions in the United States to see how these groups are living out the Vincentian legacy at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The students invariably conclude that the Vincentian mission and values are still highly relevant because they are still urgently needed. However, they also typically question whether traditional forms of Vincentian organizations and leadership are the most effective and meaningful ways for their generation to translate that mission and those values into action in the post modern era.

Every year, in my capacity as Senior Executive for University Mission, I also speak at employee, trustee, faculty and student orientations at DePaul. In each of these sessions I unequivocally state the view that what is *distinctive* about who we are as a *university* can be found in the “DePaul” half of the title DePaul University. From this perspective Vincent de Paul does not just represent a historical figure for whom the university happens to be harmlessly and quaintly named, but rather he stands as a challenging iconic figure whose legacy has had an undeniable “transhistorical” impact on trustees, faculty, students and staff at this institution for one hundred and five years. The extent of this impact is aptly captured in popular university parlance by the phrase, “We are DePaul.”

When the nascent St. Vincent’s College opened its doors on a September day in 1898 it welcomed sixty students and six faculty members to an institution with few tangible assets other than its ambitious Vincentian mission. From these rather tentative and highly leveraged beginnings DePaul has now become the largest Catholic university, and the seventh largest private university in the nation with an enrollment of over 23,000 students.

By any standard, DePaul University represents a success story not only in the annals of Catholic higher education in the United States, but also in the annals of American higher education. DePaul's success is founded upon an embedded institutional engagement with its Vincentian educational mission.<sup>2</sup>

In a recently published white paper on the university's Vincentian, Catholic and Urban identity I made this observation:

Since September 1898 succeeding generations of DePaul faculty, staff and students have accepted the vision of Vincent de Paul, and made it their own. The official Latin title of the Congregation of the Mission is *Congregatio Missionis*. A literal English translation of this would be 'a community gathered together for the sake of the mission.' From this perspective every student, faculty member and staff member can be said to be a 'Vincentian' for we are gathered together for the sake of fulfilling the educational mission of DePaul.<sup>3</sup>

#### **DePaul University: Taking our Mission and Values personally.**

The *Vincentian* reason for the distinctive educational mission, and thus the existence of DePaul University today is clear:

In the United States, a college degree is the single most effective way to lift a person out of poverty....Persons who are poor then, are half as likely to go to college as those who are wealthy. Those who do go are seven times less likely to graduate; seven times less likely to receive a private education, and are increasingly unable even to afford a public education. Less than 6% of the marginally poor receive a four year degree in the United States. The statistics for increasingly important graduate education are even more dismal. Trends show these educational disparities broadening each year. Access of underserved youth and adults to higher

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<sup>2</sup> John L. Rury and Charles S. Suchar, eds., *DePaul University: Centennial essays and images*, (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> Rev. Edward R. Udovic, C.M., *About Saint Vincent de Paul and DePaul University's Vincentian Catholic and Urban Identity*, (Chicago: DePaul University, 2003), 4. Hereinafter cited as *Identity*.

education-the best and increasingly primary route out of poverty-is slipping away from them.<sup>4</sup>

In its present strategic plan *Vision 2006*, the university established a mission-based strategy with three goals and numerous accompanying initiatives all designed to keep the dream of higher education and all it represents from “slipping away” from students who naturally look to it for educational opportunity. Specifically, the university committed itself to:

- Providing financially accessible education to large numbers of undergraduate students.
- Providing an accessible education to part-time students through scheduling and location, mode of delivery, and range of programs.
- Diversifying its faculty and staff.
- Improving retention and graduation rates. (Access without attainment, after all, is access to nothing).<sup>5</sup>
- Engaging the larger community through service learning, partnering with local communities and institutions, and being a social change agent.<sup>6</sup>

The classrooms at DePaul University are filled with first generation college students and other learners who reflect the wonderful diversity of the Chicago area communities that the institution predominantly seeks to serve. Fully one-third of DePaul’s undergraduates are now students of color, with large representations of

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<sup>4</sup> Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., and Rev. Edward R. Udovic, C.M., “The Vincentian Higher Education Apostolate in the United States,” *Vincentiana*, 45, no. 3 (2001). Reprinted, *Vincentian Heritage*, 22, no. 1, 2001, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Quotation from Dr. David H. Kalsbeek, Vice President for Enrollment Management, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>6</sup>Dr. Richard J.Meister, “Reflections on DePaul University in 2003,” *Academic Quarterly*, Special Edition, (Chicago: DePaul University, 2003), 6.

immigrant cultures and from families whose annual income is below the federally defined poverty level. The diversity profiles of our trustees, faculty and staff have also increased.

One result of this great ethnic, racial, cultural, political, religious, gender and sexual orientation diversity is an academic community and institutional culture with a unique perspective upon, and experience of, the university's Catholic identity. As I observed, however, in the identity white paper: "At DePaul it is difficult to view the university's Catholic character independently from its Vincentian character."<sup>7</sup>

From a Vincentian perspective, the university has prided itself on being a Catholic institution that genuinely welcomes and serves very diverse faculty, staff and students, inviting each person to find at DePaul a faith or values-based learning community that is 'inclusive' and 'conversational' rather than 'exclusive' and 'confessional.'"<sup>8</sup>

From the academic perspective, as a Catholic university, DePaul "provides a learning environment that *invites* all inquirers to engage in the compelling search for wisdom. The free examination of the beliefs and values of the Roman Catholic, and all other faith traditions and secular values systems is designed to lead to critical judgments about the respective contributions of these systems to the human enterprise past, present and future."<sup>9</sup>

While not without experiencing tensions, our Vincentian mission and Catholic identity have operated from a humanistic perspective as our "highest common denominator" engaging diverse individuals with our values-based educational mission in

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<sup>7</sup> Udovic, *Identity*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

ways that ideally even an atheist can support, and that personally enriches each member of the community.

### **A Vincentian University without “Vincentians.”**

At present, planning scenarios for the university’s future must take into account the fact that the Midwest Province of Congregation of the Mission, and indeed the Congregation throughout the United States, is experiencing a rapid aging and diminishment in numbers of members. This situation is the result of almost four decades of an uninterrupted decline in vocational recruitment that has created an ecclesial crisis not just for the Vincentians, but also for dioceses and religious communities throughout the United States and elsewhere in the Catholic world.

Nationwide there are only a very small number of Vincentians under the age of 40, and an even smaller number of members in formation. In my opinion, there are no signs that there is any realistic hope that this vocation free-fall will be reversed in our lifetimes. This situation leads some, including myself, to question the ultimate survivability of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States.<sup>10</sup> Be that as it may, what does this situation mean for the future of DePaul University?

There are presently sixteen Vincentians (with an average age of 54.6) employed in various full or part-time capacities at the university. There are an additional nine Vincentians from outside the university who serve on the Board of Trustees and/or the Members of the Corporation (with an average age of 56). The age profile of Vincentians

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<sup>10</sup>The five provinces of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States (headquartered in Hartford, Connecticut; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; St. Louis, Missouri; Dallas, Texas and Los Angeles, California) are presently in ongoing discussions about a future reconfiguration that may well lead to one national province within the next few years.

associated in one way or another with the university is at least ten years younger than the average age of all members of the Midwest Province itself. This personnel situation, in light of the larger vocational picture, leads me to suggest a few strategic planning assumptions for the university's consideration as it envisions what DePaul may look like as a Catholic and Vincentian university when it celebrates its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023, and how it might come to look like this:

- If the Rev. John P. Minogue, C.M. who presently serves as president of DePaul (the 10<sup>th</sup> successive Vincentian to do so), is not the last Vincentian president, he certainly will be the next to the last.<sup>11</sup> This leadership transition, whenever it takes place, will open the way for the first lay president to assume office.<sup>12</sup>
- Within a very few years there will be no new Vincentians available to work at the university. The Vincentians presently at the university will slowly retire one-by-one so that in 20-25 years there will be no Vincentians employed here.
- In 20-25 years, while the Vincentians in the United States may still be able to muster the minimum number of ten Vincentians to whom the university's present bylaws assign roles in university governance (either on the Board of Trustees and/or the Members of the Corporation) there

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<sup>11</sup> This year for the first time lay men or women serve as presidents for more than 50% of the Catholic colleges and universities in the United States.

<sup>12</sup>On October 16, 2003, the Rev. John Minogue, C.M., announced his resignation as president of DePaul University. At this writing a national search is underway for his successor and for the first time a national open search that will consider lay candidates as well as members of the Congregation of the Mission is underway.

may not be a critical mass of qualified Vincentians even to fulfill these minimal functions of canonical sponsorship and legal ownership.<sup>13</sup>

- Therefore, by 2023 the Vincentians may well have no physical presence, canonical sponsorship role, or governance role at DePaul University.

For purposes of this article I am assuming that this indeed will be the case.

Proceeding from this assumption I am suggesting the premise that *at DePaul there is a critical mass of people that have come together to create a leadership culture that is remarkably in tune with our higher education mission as a Catholic, Vincentian and urban university. This leadership represents our “mission capital” and is directly translated into a wonderful array of academic programs, student services, and support services that represent a notable level of mission effectiveness that is apparent throughout the institution, and is ultimately reflected in the success of our students.*

If this description of the mission capital of the university is indeed as I describe it above, then DePaul University is already well on the way of ensuring that as the first lay woman or man becomes president and is succeeded by lay presidents, as the last Vincentians gradually retire from the university, and *perhaps* even as the Congregation of the Mission itself regretfully withdraws its canonical sponsorship and legal connections with the university, that DePaul will confidently move into a new era of its history as a Catholic, Vincentian and urban institution. There is much hard work that remains to be done over the next two decades, however, to make this hoped for scenario into a reality.

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<sup>13</sup> For the text of the present Bylaws of DePaul University see, *2003-2004 Directory DePaul University Board of Trustees/Members of the Corporation*, (Chicago: DePaul University, 2003), 55-67. Hereinafter cited as, *Directory*.

### **Vincentian Mission Effectiveness at DePaul University: “What must be done?”**

On a January day in 1617, having again witnessed the spiritual plight of the peasants living on her family’s vast lands, Madame Françoise-Marguerite de Silly de Gondi turned to Vincent de Paul and posed a question to her faithful chaplain, “What must be done?” What Vincent’s patron meant by this question was, “What must I do?” “What must we do?” to meet the challenges that we see so clearly before us? Vincent de Paul spent the rest of his life answering this question.

In my view, as a Vincentian historian, this question posed by Madame de Gondi is “the” Vincentian question; the transcendent answer to which all of Vincentian history and praxis revolves at DePaul University and elsewhere.

When mission effectiveness colleagues from other Catholic higher educational or Vincentian institutions ask me to evaluate the level of institutional engagement with DePaul’s Catholic and Vincentian identity, I tell them what I said earlier in this article: *at DePaul there is a critical mass of people that have come together to create a leadership culture that is remarkably in tune with our higher education mission as a Catholic, Vincentian and urban university. This leadership represents our “mission capital” and is directly translated into a wonderful array of academic programs, student services, and support services that represent a notable level of mission effectiveness that is apparent throughout the institution, and is ultimately reflected in the success of our students.* When these same colleagues ask me the basis for this conclusion, I often reply by telling this story.

Several years ago DePaul’s nationally recognized Enrollment Management division, under the leadership of Dr. David Kalsbeek, wanted to establish an effective marketing

effort for the university's undergraduate programs. In any industry a successful marketing campaign requires a clearly defined "brand" to market. Simply put, a "brand" is the *public promise* that is made to a market as to what consumers can expect from an institution and its products. Enrollment Management's opening question therefore was: "What in fact is DePaul's educational brand?" What is the promise that DePaul can, and therefore should, make to its prospective students about the educational experience that they can expect to receive?

Instead of seeking to answer this question by doing a market analysis of what potential students might want from DePaul, and then slapping a boutique designer label on that and calling it DePaul's "brand," Enrollment Management engaged a brand consulting firm to do interviews and focus groups with faculty and staff to ask them what *they* thought were the characteristics of a DePaul University education, based on their own experience providing that education and support services to the students who we are most successful at educating.

Once the results of the interviews and focus groups were completed and analyzed the consulting firm delivered their preliminary report. Verna Donovan, the Assistant Vice President for Marketing Strategy asked me for my comments. My first reaction was as a member of the university community and as an alumnus. I told her that these self-identified characteristics rang true based on my own experiences over a three decades long association with the university. Going beyond this, however, I also related that if she had asked me as Vincentian historian to describe Saint Vincent de Paul I could come up with no better set of descriptors than the set identified by community members as descriptors of DePaul University today.

Later, as I was drafting the university's identity white paper, I used these characteristics to "translate" Saint Vincent de Paul and his leadership style into contemporary terms:

**VALUES-DRIVEN:** His motivation was always transparent-Providing service that honored the human dignity of the individual person.

**CONNECTED TO THE COMMUNITY:** He knew that community transformation demanded community involvement.

**SUPPORTIVE OF DIVERSITY:** He was always concerned about including those who found themselves excluded by society, by the economy, by the church, or by any human system.

**A RISK TAKER:** Since he felt that so much was at stake, he was always willing to take calculated risks to promote the greater good.

**INNOVATIVE:** He was guided by the motto: "Love is inventive to infinity."

**PRAGMATIC:** He was interested in results. "It is not enough to do good. It must be done well."<sup>14</sup>

For its part, after final word-smithing, the marketing division of Enrollment Management is now marketing the DePaul educational brand in this way:

### **The Essence of DePaul**

DePaul University is a growing and influential network that enables students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends to advance personally, professionally and intellectually. This vibrant network of people and programs creates lifelong benefits for all.

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<sup>14</sup> Udovic, *Identity*, 3.

**INNOVATIVE:** DePaul is never content with the status quo. DePaul's educational tradition is marked by innovation, by creativity and by a persistent pursuit of novel solutions to meet educational needs in the marketplace and society.

**DIVERSE:** DePaul provides access for all to higher education, regardless of class, race, ethnicity or economic barriers. The DePaul community is a welcoming one, marked by inclusivity, diversity and openness to a wide range of students, faculty and staff.

**RISK-TAKING:** DePaul dares to take a chance. Historically, the university has stepped outside tradition and beyond conservative approaches, consistently demonstrating an adventurous and entrepreneurial spirit.

**CONNECTED TO COMMUNITY:** DePaul is an ever-expanding network, locally and globally, of programs, students, faculty, staff and alumni. Through social engagement and with deep commitment, the university actively works to bring concrete solutions to society's challenges and problems.

**PRAGMATIC:** DePaul grounds education in the realities of everyday life. Through its academic curriculum and through the delivery of its programs and services, the university offers students practical solutions to their needs for advancement and growth.

**VALUES:** DePaul's mission is visible to all. Its education is grounded in values of personalism, holistic education and the commitment to creating opportunities for the disadvantaged and disenfranchised in society.<sup>15</sup>

This and similar daily experiences and conversations everywhere that I turn at the university are what lead me to the conclusion that who Saint Vincent de Paul was, what he valued, and what he stood for, is who DePaul University is, what it values, what it

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<sup>15</sup>DePaul University website, ([www.depaul.edu](http://www.depaul.edu)) *About DePaul*, (Chicago: DePaul University, 2003).

stands for today, and what to the best of its ability it promises and delivers to its students. I can think of no better description of mission effectiveness and no better foundation for the future of the university's mission and values and thus its Catholic and Vincentian identity. From the perspective then of institutional integrity I believe that we can stand by the statement found at the conclusion of the identity white paper, "Saint Vincent would feel very much at home today at the university that bears his name."<sup>16</sup>

**Mission Effectiveness: Putting your Money where your Mission is.**

As I write these paragraphs I have just returned from a round of university budget hearings. At these meetings each unit is asked to justify every dollar of its budget request in light of the direct or indirect relationship of proposed expenditures to the university's mission and its core academic, student support and operational activities. At today's hearings, for example, the Office of Diversity presented its budget proposals framed, as required, from this Mission and Values perspective:

The Diversity Office of DePaul University seeks to encourage DePaul's Catholic, Vincentian and urban character by promoting understanding, inclusion, equity and respect for the perspectives each individual brings to the teaching, learning and work environment...The mission and the distinguishing characteristics of DePaul University promote a value-based education. Among these values, diversity is a fundamental component. The Office of Diversity's ideology is constructed around the basic premise that diversity competency is fundamental to the performance of the university in completing its educational and public service missions. Accordingly the development of an employment culture that values diversity will enable the university to maximize its performance. Diversity, therefore, is values as a resource in creating a highly performing faculty and staff employment culture, which will benefit the student experience and organizational performance of DePaul University. This service is directly related to the core values of the university.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Udovic, *Identity*, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Ortiz, *Budget Proposal: Office of Diversity*, (Chicago: DePaul University, 2003).

When the Board of Trustees finally reviews and approves the budget they do so with the clear expectation that the university's financial bottom line is always viewed in its relationship to, and never in isolation from, its mission bottom line. This is particularly true when it comes to all important tuition and financial aid decisions. The university mission statement states this Vincentian principle in this way: "DePaul University manages its resources effectively so as to control the costs it charges students for programs and services. Moreover, it makes available as much financial aid as possible to assure a broad range of talented students."

While not downplaying the importance of mission statements, strategic planning documents, identity white papers and other similar efforts that seek to find the inspiring words that express how an institution understands its mission and values and commits itself to living them out, there is nothing that speaks louder than the budget priorities and choices that an institution makes in support of these efforts.

### **The Role of the Chief Mission Officer and the Office of Mission and Values**

Recently a colleague from another Catholic college sponsored by a religious congregation asked to speak with me about DePaul's experience with respect to having the position of a Chief Mission Officer and a Mission Effectiveness office. This colleague was facing some level of doubt from within his institution, as he was trying to develop a case statement in favor of devoting resources to establish a mission effectiveness position and office. Certainly, his colleagues were not against mission effectiveness *per se*, but rather thought that such efforts were better left decentralized and the shared responsibility of leadership at all levels of the institution.

Since I believe that the establishment of the position of a Chief Mission Officer at DePaul (in the person of the Senior Executive for University Mission) and a Mission Effectiveness Office (now called the Office of Mission and Values) over a decade ago have been among the key factors underlying the progress that the university has made in mission effectiveness, I pointed out to my colleague that while these efforts are indeed the responsibility of leadership at all levels of an organization, having a senior level mission officer with real authority and a mission effectiveness office with adequate resources sets the institutional leadership standard and the credible organizational base out of which these activities and conversations can be most effectively organized, supported and assessed throughout the institution.<sup>18</sup>

This goal is reflected in the mission statement of DePaul's Office of Mission and Values and is the aim of all its activities: "The Office of Mission and Values engages faculty, staff and students in ways that measurably enhance their understanding and support of DePaul's Catholic, Vincentian and urban identity. These internal constituencies in turn provide the leadership that enables DePaul to maximize its strategic capacities as the leading Catholic, Vincentan and urban University in the United States."<sup>19</sup>

This institutional engagement is supported by a wide range of programming efforts that represent a significant commitment in terms of resources and personnel on the part of the university. Allow me to present just one programmatic example, from among the many activities of the Office of Mission and Values that seeks to support this goal.

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<sup>18</sup>For more information on the Office of Mission and Values see: <http://mission.depaul.edu>.

<sup>19</sup>*2002-2003 Annual Report: Office of Mission and Values*, (Chicago: DePaul University, 2003), 1. Hereinafter cited as, *Annual Report*.

In 1992, the Vincentian priests and brothers at DePaul donated almost one million dollars to establish the Vincentian Endowment Fund. The purpose of this gift was to provide annual funding for grant proposals from faculty, staff and students for projects that in some way enhanced the university's Catholic and Vincentian identity. Since supplemented by additional gifts, the Vincentian Endowment Fund has proved very effective in encouraging faculty, staff and students to take the lead in creative curricular, co-curricular and community service efforts that directly express and support the university's identity. Some examples of these types of grants that are likely to be funded would include:

- Experimental efforts that have the potential of becoming long-term projects or programs supported by university funds;
- Short term projects, programs, symposia and workshops;
- Scholarly research into various aspects of DePaul's Catholic and Vincentian identity broadly considered leading to the publication of articles, monographs, or books;
- Scholarly research that leads to the development of curricular offerings for university academic programs that directly reflect the university's Catholic and Vincentian identity;
- Projects which result in physical, artistic, musical, theatrical, or symbolic expressions of the above identity;
- Community service efforts that embody these values, require reflection upon such services as integral to the program, and seek to serve those who are most in need.

- Collaborative efforts that accomplish the above.

Since its inception the Endowment has funded 206 projects for a total of \$733,000.<sup>20</sup>

### **Mission Effectiveness: Its Academic.**

Certainly the most important manifestations of mission effectiveness at any university are academic and intellectual in nature, and in these efforts the leadership of the chief academic officer, deans, full-time faculty, adjunct faculty and the entire academic enterprise are irreducible. Mission effectiveness from the Vincentian, or any other perspective, demands a commitment to quality in teaching, research and public service. DePaul, however, “in pursuing its own purposes...places highest priority on programs of instruction and learning.”<sup>21</sup>

As I noted in the university’s identity white paper, “DePaul’s true place in American higher education, and its true contribution to society, has everything to do with the kind of diverse students it serves and the educational outcomes of those students given its identity as a Catholic, Vincentian and urban university.”<sup>22</sup> As always, educational outcomes are the result of the faculty design and delivery of curricula that at DePaul in addition to content “emphasize the skills and attitudes that educate students to be lifelong, independent learners.”<sup>23</sup> These educational outcomes are also the result of the attention and personal support that students receive inside and outside of the classroom to ensure their success. At DePaul this attention is classically defined as “Vincentian personalism.”

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<sup>20</sup> *Annual Report*, 9.

<sup>21</sup> Board of Trustees, *The Mission of DePaul University*, (Chicago: DePaul University, 1991), 1. Hereinafter cited as *Mission*.

<sup>22</sup> Udovic, *Identity*, 5.

<sup>23</sup> *Mission*, 1.

To “expand and enhance DePaul’s demonstrated dedication to quality undergraduate education and to recognize and celebrate faculty invested in this endeavor” the university under the leadership of the new Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. John Kozak, has recently established the “Vincent de Paul Professorship.” The goal of this new program is “to continue to infuse into the seminal introductory or first year courses in each discipline the most accomplished and pedagogically effective senior faculty (full, associate or tenured assistant professors) at DePaul; to encourage our outstanding scholars to translate their scholarly agenda into meaningful experiences for our students; and, to inspire and foster professional growth and pedagogical expertise in junior faculty.”<sup>24</sup>

Over and above academic excellence as the *sine qua non* of mission effectiveness there are many ways for a university to use innovative curricular and co-curricular programs to advance its distinctive mission as an institution of higher education. At DePaul expressions of our institutional identity, mission and values are appropriately found in curricula and programs embedded throughout the academic enterprise. Examples of this mission engagement are found, for example, in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences where the Religious Studies Department has a Catholic Studies Program within which there is a Vincentian Studies Component. There is the Center for Church/States Studies also within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the International Human Rights Law Institute in the College of Law.

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<sup>24</sup> John F. Kozak, email announcement to the DePaul University community, (September 27, 2003).

DePaul's Irwin I. Steans Center for Community Based Service Learning has also been a leader in the national movement to support the paradigm of the "New American University." The Steans Center:

promotes the concept that with service, activism and assistance, people can realize their own abilities to resolve issues that they thought themselves incapable of overcoming. The Steans Center works to integrate Community Based Service Learning into the DePaul curricula thus creating opportunities for students, faculty and staff to address issues of personal and community empowerment, critical knowledge, ethical values, and participatory democracy. CbSL socially engages students, faculty and community-based organization in relationships that fulfill the DePaul mission and benefit the Chicago community.<sup>25</sup>

As one would expect, a full listing of the present curricular and co-curricular expressions of DePaul's Catholic and Vincentian identity would fill an article of at least the length of the present effort.

### **Vincentian Mission Effectiveness Metrics:**

#### **Beyond anecdotes, stories, intuitions and impressions**

One of recent trends in American higher education is an emphasis on the metrics based assessment of educational outcomes. Driven by legislative mandates, new accreditation requirements and institutions' own desires for these measures of progress, this new tool is being fully integrated into the mission effectiveness efforts at DePaul University.

While not discounting the important role that shared anecdotes, stories, intuition and impressions can make in assessing mission effectiveness, these measures with the addition of appropriate and accurate assessment metrics can be woven together not only

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<sup>25</sup> Undated brochure, *The Steans Center for Community-Based Service Learning*, (Chicago: DePaul University).

into a compelling institutional narrative but most importantly into goals and measures that can inform strategic planning efforts.<sup>26</sup>

Toward this end the Office of Mission and Values, along with Joseph Ferrari, Ph.D., developed a reliable self-reporting instrument to assess faculty and staff perceptions of the university's Catholic, Vincentian and Urban identity, and the relative effectiveness of the institution's many attempts to live out that identity.<sup>27</sup>

In the fall 2002 quarter, 178 staff members were surveyed. The primary purpose of surveying this initial group was to confirm the validity of a 39-item self-reporting instrument, called the *DePaul Mission and Values (DMV)* survey. All items of the DMV center on DePaul's distinguishing characteristics as a Catholic, Vincentian and urban university as laid out in the identity white paper. The DMV scale is thus an essential component in exploring faculty/staff understanding and support of the mission and values of DePaul University, and how DePaul carries out this mission.

In the spring 2003, this survey was administered to a second sample of staff members through an on-line format. Responses from both the paper and on-line surveys then were merged yielding a total staff sample size of 592, representing 33% of both part-time and full-time staff (1,794).

Subsequently, in the fall 2003 quarter, the *DMV* survey was administered to faculty through an on-line format, producing a total sample size of 305 faculty members.

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<sup>26</sup>For a full text of the survey results see, Drexler, Thomas, Ferrari, Joseph, and Edward Udovic, C.M., *Office of University Mission and Values, 2003-2004 Faculty and Staff Survey. DePaul University's Vincentian, Catholic, and Urban Identity*, (Chicago: DePaul University, 2004).

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Ferrari, Ph.D. is a professor of psychology at DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois. He has also been involved in longitudinal research on the impact of a DePaul education on students' values.

This response rate represents 11% of both part-time and full-time faculty (2,609). It should be noted that 209 (25%) of full-time faculty (852) and 93 (5%) of part-time Faculty (1,757) took the survey. Thus, a total of 897 full and part-time faculty and staff responded to the survey, representing 20% of all DePaul employees.

Given this relatively high return rate and the questions used to determine if bias or social desirability were at play (they were not), it is fair to say that the findings are representative of how faculty and staff members presently understand the mission and values of DePaul University.

Results found no significant difference across campuses and between genders on self-reported demographic items (e.g. age, ethnic identity), nor employee status characteristics (e.g., tenure status, exempt status). There were only slight differences between religious affiliations, and only in terms of specific Catholic experiences (worship, sacraments). More women (529) than men (368) took the survey.

These survey results validate that there truly is a critical mass of people that have come together at DePaul to create a leadership culture that is remarkably in tune with our higher education mission as a Catholic, Vincentian and urban university. The results also confirm the shared anecdotes, stories, intuition and impressions, that all attest to a high level of mission ownership and effectiveness.

### **Some significant survey findings:**

#### ***Catholic Identity***

- As a testament to DePaul's academic mission in the Catholic intellectual tradition, a very high positive response, roughly 75%, of both Catholic and Non-Catholic faculty and staff strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that "DePaul invites

all inquirers to freely examine Catholicism, other faith traditions and other secular values systems in light of their respective contributions to the human experience.”

- When asked whether “the curricula of DePaul’s schools and colleges have appropriate expressions of the university’s Catholic identity” 55% of faculty agreed or strongly agreed, 4% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 22% were indifferent. (Obviously the curricula in some schools and colleges lend themselves more naturally to such expressions.)
- Throughout the survey DePaul’s self-defined Catholic character was consistently affirmed by large majorities of both Catholics and non-Catholics.

#### *Activities that support DePaul’s Catholic Identity*

- Interfaith worship services were seen as important or very important by the majority of respondents, (both Catholic and non-Catholic).
- The availability of Catholic worship and sacramental opportunities were important for 65% of faculty and staff respondents who identified themselves as Catholics. Interestingly, 66% of this same population reported that interfaith worship services were important or very important to them.

#### *Vincentian Identity*

- Affirming our strong Vincentian identity, two-thirds of our faculty and staff strongly agree or agree that “the heritage of Saint Vincent de Paul remains relevant to the university today.”
- Over 60% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed to DePaul’s Vincentian identity as expressed through the values of, “innovation, inclusiveness, risk-taking, connected to community, and pragmatism.”

- Consistent with reported perceptions on diversity as a primary Vincentian characteristic 74% of staff and 81% of faculty agreed or strongly agreed that DePaul University is an “inclusive” institution.

#### *Activities that Support DePaul’s Vincentian Identity*

- 81% of all respondents reported the mission orientation programs (for new students, faculty and staff) are important or very important.
- The Vincentian Endowment Fund (which provides funding for faculty, student, staff grant projects in support of the university’s Catholic and Vincentian identity) was rated as important or very important by 65% of faculty and staff.
- The Vincentian Assistance Fund (providing emergency personal assistance for students, staff, and faculty) was rated as important or very important by 83% of faculty and staff.
- Other Vincentian educational efforts such as lectures and workshops generally were rated lower in importance (with only 45-50% of respondents saying these activities were important or very important).

#### *Urban Identity*

- Speaking to our urban identity, throughout the entire survey DePaul’s diversity was consistently held in high regard. In addition to the statistic already cited above on inclusiveness, 89% of faculty and 85% of staff responded that DePaul’s diversity efforts are either important or very important. (This represents the highest positive response of any question in the survey.)

### *Activities Supporting DePaul's Urban Identity*

- 80% of faculty and staff responded that DePaul's community initiatives are important or very important.
- 82% of faculty and staff reported that Community-based Service Learning efforts are important or very important.
- 75% of faculty and staff reported that the programs of the DePaul Community Service Association (University Ministry) were important or very important.

### *Some areas calling for further investigation*

- A reason for the low response rate by part time faculty (5%) needs to be determined. Perhaps this rate reflects a lack of awareness of DePaul's mission and values on the part of the part time faculty, a lack of commitment to its mission and values, or a lack of personal connection to the university.
- Likewise, there is a considerable disproportionate response rate between Caucasians and People of Color. Reasons for this disproportionate return need to be determined as well.
- A more sophisticated analysis of faculty responses college-by-college, and for staff unit-by-unit, would yield information as to whether there are specific pockets of strength or weakness in mission understanding and support throughout the institution.

In addition to the faculty and staff surveys, the survey will be administered to the student population in the fall of 2004. The student results will be reported at an appropriate time. Additional research will be done to further analyze faculty and staff responses including the use of focus groups. The university's senior leadership will also

be the focus of special study. Work will also be done to weave these results into the university's strategic planning efforts and those of the Office of Mission and Values. It is foreseen that in the future faculty, staff and students will be surveyed at regular intervals to gauge results to this baseline survey.

### **The Vincentian Leadership Project**

The level of mission effectiveness at DePaul University, as I have indicated, is a direct result of the engagement of university leadership at all levels with the institution's identity, mission and values. Understanding the process by which university leadership has come to understand the Vincentian mission, make its values its own and transmit this heritage to new institutional leaders are important questions and the focus for DePaul's Vincent de Paul Leadership Project generously funded by DePaul trustee William Hay, and his wife Mary Pat Gannon Hay.

This project is a study of contemporary leadership practices based on the values and vision of Vincent de Paul. The study is planned to have a DePaul University phase, a national phase, and an international phase. The goals of the project include:

- Insuring the continuity of the vision and values of Vincent de Paul for the future.
- Documenting the Vincentian management and leadership style as practiced by Vincentian organizations throughout the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Promoting a higher level of intentional managing and working in Vincentian organization and in the personal lives of organizational members.

- Developing Vincentian content for management and leadership curricula, particularly for leaders in Vincentian organizations.<sup>28</sup>

The Hay project is also developing a Vincentian Leadership Assessment instrument that will offer participants “the possibility to evaluate and grow in their (Vincentian) leadership competencies in terms of mission (vision, innovation, commitment), people (communication, diversity, collaboration), and service (service to the poor, empowerment, and social justice.”<sup>29</sup> The institutional uses of the results of this study for Vincentian leadership recruitment, leadership development programs and assessment, both at DePaul and elsewhere are obvious.

#### **The Leadership Transition to a non-Vincentian president.**

In the late 1960s seismic changes swept through Catholic higher education in the United States as a result of the optimistic and positive spirit of renewal engendered by the Second Vatican Council. As part of this shift almost all Catholic colleges and universities made substantial changes in their governance structures. The then president of DePaul the late Rev. John R. Cortelyou, C.M., and the Rev. John T. Richardson C.M. established a farsighted two-tier governance structure for the university whose wisdom is now apparent.

From 1898 to 1967 the Board of Trustees had been completely comprised by Vincentians. In the 1950s a board of lay trustees was established but it was merely advisory in nature. All effective governance remained vested in the Congregation of the

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<sup>28</sup> Rev. J.P. Murphy, C.M., Ph.D. and Marco Tavanti, Ph.D., *Vincentian Leadership Project Overview*, (Chicago: DePaul University, 2002). 1.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

Mission. The new governance structure created a Board of Trustees fully vested with the power and authority necessary to govern the university.

Unlike other sponsoring religious communities, who often nervously hedged their bets and reserved numerous board seats for their membership, the DePaul Board reserved only one position *ex officio* for a Vincentian, in the person of the provincial superior of the Midwest Province of the Congregation of the Mission.<sup>30</sup> Any other Vincentian who may be elected to the board is elected on the same basis as any other trustee. At present only five of DePaul's 50 trustees are members of the Congregation of the Mission.

The Members of the Corporation represent the second tier of university governance. The 1967 governance structure reserved only one power to the Members that of electing and removing Trustees. The Members of the Corporation as established are fifteen in number, ten of who must be Vincentians and five who are university trustees. The Members of the Corporation are self-electing in that the provincial superior of the Vincentians, even though he serves as an *ex officio* Member of the Corporation, has no authority over or among the Members individually or corporately.<sup>31</sup>

In the past the Members of the Corporation, quite frankly, were reduced to rubber stamping the election and re-election of Trustees. In recent years, however, the Members have appropriately insisted on fulfilling their responsibilities in reviewing the recommendations for election and re-election of trustees, and in dialoguing with the Nominating and Personnel Committee of the Board of Trustees concerning a statement of Trustee responsibilities and the ideal Board composition and mix on the Board to support the university's mission.

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<sup>30</sup> Article IV, Section 1, *Bylaws*.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Article III, Sections 1-4.

The Members of the Corporation have also served as an unofficial resource for the Trustees especially with regard to issues related to the university's Catholic and Vincentian identity. It would be accurate to say that the Members have served as a *de facto* Mission and Values committee for the Board. This consultative role was particularly helpful to the Trustees during the discussions relative to the development of the United States application of John Paul II's apostolic exhortation, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, on the nature and role of the Catholic University in the modern world. Yet in the end, the primary responsibility to "preserve and promote the university's Catholic and Vincentian identity" belongs to the Board of Trustees and not the Members of the Corporation.<sup>32</sup>

The minimal presence of Vincentians in the governing bodies of the university, and their minimal reserved authority long ago set the course for entrusting leadership and thus fiduciary and mission responsibility to lay trustees at the Board level and to lay academic and operational administrators, faculty and staff within and throughout the university. This shift to a collegial shared responsibility has reaped long-term rewards that have vindicated the faith of that remarkable era of leadership in Catholic higher education in the United States, and at DePaul University. At DePaul the reward is the institution's present level of mission leadership, awareness and effectiveness.

The 1967 bylaws of DePaul University do not require that a Vincentian hold the presidency. In the two presidential transitions that have taken place since the adoption of the present governance structure, it was a decision of the Board of Trustees to limit the search to qualified members of the Congregation of the Mission. Whether there is presently an individual Vincentian in the United States who has the background, the

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<sup>32</sup>"Statement of Trustee Responsibilities," *Directory*, 3.

depth of experience and the appropriate credentials to be president of DePaul University is an open question. However, there certainly is not a qualified “pool” of Vincentian candidates that could justify any attempt to limit the next search to Vincentian candidates, or even to state a preference for a Vincentian candidate.<sup>33</sup>

While I cannot speak for the Midwest Province of the Congregation of the Mission, or for the Members of the Corporation, I can speak personally from my perspectives as a member of the province, as a Member of the Corporation, as a Vincentian employed at the university in an executive leadership capacity, and as someone who has been associated with the university for more than three decades. I have consistently and publicly recommended that at the time of the next presidential succession at DePaul that the Board of Trustees *not* limit the search to members of the Congregation of the Mission, nor frame an open national search in terms of having a preference for a Vincentian president.

DePaul University in 2003 is not the institution that it was at the time of the last presidential succession in 1992. By every conceivable measure the university has undergone a tremendous growth, and with this growth has come a concomitant growth in complexity. In short, it takes much more today to be president of DePaul University than it did in 1992. From a mission perspective, it seems to me that, the university simply cannot responsibly afford to limit its presidency to a Vincentian. This conclusion is

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<sup>33</sup> It should be noted in this context that the Vincentians in the United States have two additional presidential successions to be concerned about; St. John’s University in Jamaica, New York, and Niagara University in Niagara Falls, New York. This means in theory that all three of these institutions could be competing for a suitable Vincentian candidate for President.

supported by the evidence that at this time DePaul seems well prepared for the transition to a non-Vincentian president.

It is certainly true that the Board of Trustees is not required to consult with the Midwest province in the person of its provincial superior, or even the Members of the Corporation, concerning the question of presidential succession and specifically whether or not the next president should or must be a Vincentian. Such a consultation would be essential, however, since even though the Vincentians' official role in university governance is limited, its sponsorship is a canonical, historical and moral reality that must be respected. In the end, however, a consultation is only a consultation. The responsibility for deciding the parameters of the next presidential succession lies squarely with the Board of Trustees.<sup>34</sup>

At that transition point, whenever it is, as the Board consults with the Vincentian and university constituencies as to what the job description and thus the leadership qualifications of the next president should be, certainly a successful candidate will have to be a woman or man who personally understands, supports and will work tirelessly to enhance the university's Vincentian and Catholic identity, *and* someone who can lead a great urban teaching university as it responds to the challenges of the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Last year DePaul University replaced both its Executive Vice President for Operations (the Chief Operations Officer) and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (the Chief Academic Officer). In both cases the Board search committees comprised of trustees, faculty and staff were very clear that a successful candidate would

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<sup>34</sup> It is worth noting that in the present instance this consultation did take place

be someone who not only had sterling professional credentials to fill these positions, but who would also come with an absolute commitment to support DePaul's institutional identity and its mission and values. As important as presidential leadership is in any organization, ensuring that leadership at the Board, executive and every level of the university keeps a laser focus on mission and values is just as important.

### **One Final proposal: A Sponsorship Agreement**

Assuming that at some point in the foreseeable future there will be a president at DePaul who is not a member of the Congregation of the Mission, and assuming that there is a two decade window that the institution and the Vincentians have before the university becomes solely responsible for its religious identity I am suggesting that the University and the Congregation of the Mission in the very near future enter into a formal sponsorship agreement.<sup>35</sup>

This agreement would set out the conditions and expectations that both sides have with respect to the goal of DePaul reaching complete institutional self-sufficiency with regards to its Catholic and Vincentian identity, the means that should be taken toward this end, and the ways in which progress to this goal are to be measured over time. The renewable term of this agreement should be approximately every three to five years. To ensure buy-in, by both the Vincentians and the university, there should be a substantial annual sponsorship fee that is roughly equivalent to the president's annual salary. The renewal of the sponsorship agreement would come as a result of an institutional mission/values self-study or audit equivalent to the North Central Accreditation process.

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<sup>35</sup> In the event that the Congregation of the Mission were to withdraw its canonical sponsorship of the University, under Canon Law the university would have to establish itself as a public juridic person in the eyes of the Church.

Under this scenario the Members of the Corporation could serve as the bridge between the Board of Trustees and the Vincentian province overseeing the fulfillment of the terms of the agreement, and its renewal.

**Moving Forward: Remembering what is at stake.**

Every year I always try to teach at least one course at the university. As I stand in my classroom and look at the faces of those students, hear their questions, discuss issues with them, and grade their papers and exams I am reminded that what DePaul University is all about is these students and what their educational success will mean to them, their families, and our world. I think the same thing as I watch thousands of those students walk across the stage each June and be handed that precious piece of paper that symbolizes the amazing power and unquenchable hope that is always engendered by the pursuit of wisdom.

The mission of DePaul University, as informed by its distinctive Catholic, Vincentian and Urban identity, is a noble and compelling one. The stakes for this mission are incredibly high in terms of the potential contained in our students' lives, in light of the obstacles that so many of them and their families face each day, and in light of the challenges of the post-modern world.

Generations of DePaul trustees, faculty and staff have dedicated much of their lives to this mission and serving these students. As long as DePaul unswervingly keeps its institutional focus on our students as required by our mission and values, then the mission capital that we have accumulated in the first 105 years of our history will prove to be an investment that will provide us the resources that will ensure DePaul's success as a Catholic, Vincentian and urban university to our 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary and beyond.

As I often point out, the official Latin title of the Congregation of the Mission is *Congregatio Missionis*. I translate this as *a gathering of people for the sake of the mission*. In the end, the presence or absence of members of the Congregation of the Mission at DePaul University is relatively unimportant as long as each generation of leaders at DePaul considers themselves to be Vincentians who belong to the DePaul University community gathered together for the sake of its educational mission.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Udovic, *Identity*, 4.