Note from the VP’s Office

The dedicated staff of MSA entered into the Academic Year 2019-2020 aware we were collectively in a liminal moment - a transitional year under an interim vice president, with expectation for a new divisional structure on the horizon. We knew it would be a year that would call us to look at our work with fresh eyes, with an abiding commitment to our rich mission and core traditions and passion for the work we do to support students’ personal, intellectual and spiritual development. What we did not know, could not have known in the summer of 2019, was the ways in which this academic year would push us to know and trust one another more fully, collaborate effectively, and prioritize and innovate our efforts to meet the most pressing needs of our students.

Now in the summer of 2020, we recognize that the year we made it through prepares us all the better for the coming year - one that will again demand we communicate openly, work together smartly, and remain flexible and open. I say with full confidence, we are up to the challenge!

Recall that we did a deep dive into work at the unit level in our February report to the board, and in May 2020 we offered quick updates and descriptions of the ways in which we adapted our work for the COVID-19 context. In this report you will find:

- An overview of progress on our fall 2019 priorities, including examples of our assessment work
- An overview of our revised priorities from January 2020 and updates on that work
- A look out at the horizon - touching on summer and fall work

The success of our division is clearly rooted in the stellar work of each and every member of our team. Unexpectedly to us all, I will once again walk with them as interim vice president. It is with pride in my talented colleagues, that I take this on confident that we will continue to bring to life the college’s ancient and abiding mission in ways ever new!

In communio,

Julie Massey
Interim Vice President for Student Affairs
Fall 2019

In the waning days of summer 2019 we articulated what would serve as our North Star for the academic year: *Working together to maximize student thriving!* Our goals included:

1. Developing skills to effectively assess student learning
2. Deliberately attending to relationship-building within our division
3. Mining the data gleaned through the NASPA evaluation implemented in late spring 2019
4. Engaging in deep dialogue to inform the reorganization process

Developing skills to effectively assess student learning

The MSA assessment committee (Nancy Mathias, Corday Goddard, and Chris Stewart) with the support of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, led the MSA assessors through the process of creating an assessment plan, gathering and analyzing data, and planning improvements for the next cycle. Assessors met monthly as a group to learn new information, share progress, and support each other’s work. The MSA assessment committee provided additional support through individual coaching between sessions. Assessors from 8 of 15 units completed a total of 13 assessment projects. Three additional projects were incomplete due to the COVID-19 interruption. At the year-end Assessment Celebration, staff shared highlights from 12 different projects. Ray Zurawski from OIE offered encouragement, recommendations and suggested ways he would use this information in his own institutional reporting. Next year we will continue to train and support staff on assessment, begin to map program learning outcomes to the College Wide Learning Outcomes, and include more students in learning outcome assessment.

At the end of this report you will find five infographics which provide examples of the student learning assessment for this year. These reports highlight the following work:

- ALIVE Team (Peer Ministry)
- Catholic Social Teaching and the TRIPS Program
- Men of Distinction (Black Male Student Retention Effort)
- Navigate (Vocation Exploration Program) - Reflection on Vocation in Light of COVID-19
- Thin Place (Protestant Worship Service)

Deliberately attending to relationship-building within our division

Peggy Shallue led a committee of five MSA colleagues who developed plans to build relationships within the division. The committee communicates with the division on a monthly basis and offers opportunities to gather throughout the year. One effort of this committee that has translated beautifully to our online experience is asking each MSA colleague to create a fun, informational slide that includes photos and offers personal information about pets, hobbies, favorite restaurants and the like. At our monthly staff meetings, several people share their slides. We are a fairly large division and not all members work closely with one another - this practice has fostered a sense of community and brought to light shared interests and unique talents. This, in turn, helps us as we work together to maximize student thriving!
Mining the data gleaned through the NASPA evaluation implemented in late spring 2019

The MSA division completed the NASPA PRACTICES survey in May 2019 to initiate a self-study to inform immediate action steps and future reorganization. 34 staff participated in one or more of these projects steps: completing the survey, reviewing results, discussing and analyzing the reviews of results, and recommending ways we might better serve students. The survey and follow-up discussions helped build understanding and consensus around planning in nine key functional areas. The staff identified six areas where actions were needed immediately: Academics, Evidence, Compliance, Policy, Resources, and Students. They also recommended longer term strategies to close gaps identified in all 9 areas. We anticipate continuing to use this data as a touchpoint in our development of both priorities and professional development efforts within our division.

Engaging in deep dialogue to inform the reorganization process

The deep dialogue we envisioned in August did not play out as imagined. That said, there was an interplay between questions and ideas arising at the division level and needs and focus areas identified by college leadership. The organizational changes in place at this time include:

- Center for Norbertine Studies and the Norman Miller Center have moved to the division of Academic Affairs
- Our division is now known as the division of Student Affairs
- At the time of this writing, a new mission leader is expected to be named shortly, and likely before this committee meets
- Student Affairs will carry focused responsibility for college-wide efforts around retention and equity, diversity and inclusion

Winter/Spring 2020

Mid-point in the year, our division leadership spent time taking a deep look at the values that guide our work together and a goal that could move us forward in our efforts to maximize student thriving. The values were articulated as ACE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MSA Guiding Values</th>
<th>Spring 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Accountability**
(Working together to build a culture of accountability in the division and on campus)

**Collaboration**
(Working together to build a division greater than the sum of its parts)

**Engagement**
(Working together to build an exceptional, developmental experience for every admitted student)
The goal we identified was testing a new approach in support of the college’s 88% retention goal. Because of our role at the college we focused on student engagement, and specifically on the group of students who appeared to be neither engaged in the most positive ways, nor engaged in ways that were already being responded to and supported (AEP, student conduct, etc). In particular, we identified students who met at least three of the criteria below, identified in part from student development theory and in part from anecdotal experience:

- Had been noted as “of concern” to some degree during a Gateway Seminar one-on-one conversation
- Had not yet declared an academic major
- Were not employed anywhere on campus
- Were not part of any athletic team

Though a complete statistical analysis has not yet been completed, and the final results of the college’s collective retention efforts will not be known until September, there does seem to be some merit to (a) our notion that lack of engagement may be correlated meaningfully with likelihood to persist and (b) our thoughts about what “engagement” looks like (i.e. what factors are we counting as meaningful evidence of engagement?) for current SNC students. More work needs to be done, but this is interesting enough that going forward a retention plan should likely attend to issues of engagement in a proactive and quickly responsive manner. (A more detailed report on this work is available to any trustees who wish to review it.)

A final note related to our spring 2020 work: all areas within Mission & Student Affairs adapted their work to effectively meet student needs when the college switched to remote instruction in March. These adaptations were described in our May 2020 report to the full board. Work has continued this summer as we plan for providing key services and supporting opportunities for engagement this fall. The college’s summer orientation program was revamped as a fully virtual experience in multiple phases. Work was coordinated by Shelly Mumma (director of leadership, student engagement and the first year experience) and involved colleagues from every department in the division.

On the horizon

The division of Student Affairs will continue active engagement in critical efforts that cross departmental and divisional areas. These include More Than Numbers, accreditation efforts, strategic planning, our VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) grant, adapting to changes brought on by new Title IX regulations, the Respect Initiative, Wellness by Design, and more! While each department in our division is responsible for the important work with which it is charged, we recognize the importance of collaborative, systemic work in moving such initiatives forward.

We anticipate adaptations in our divisional structure to allow us to focus more deliberately on two areas of work that were highlighted in the VPSA/DSE search process: 1) equity, diversity
and inclusion, and 2) retention. By our fall board meeting we will be able to share more fully on the impact these critical focus areas have on our priorities, structure, and responsibilities.

Finally, we recognize that as individual professionals and as a division, we will need to remain nimble in the coming year. We continue our full commitment to maximizing student thriving while adapting to the circumstances in which our students live and learn. We have faced challenges before, and are confident we have developed the trust and the skills that make us:

![Image](image)

(Don’t forget to keep reading for examples of our assessment work from the year!)
Can first-year ALIVE apprentices plan and execute a gathering with a clear purpose that contributes to the spiritual wellbeing of their peers?

Resources:
This year’s assessment question and outcomes draw upon the work of Priya Parker in *Art of Gathering* and Alexander W. Astin, et. al. in *Cultivating the Spirit*. Both works have been valuable resources in grounding and growing the peer ministry work of ALIVE.

Main Activity and Outcomes:
Apprentices spend the fall semester planning meaningful gatherings for fellow first-year students in their residence halls under the mentorship of an older student coordinator and in partnership with another apprentice. To assess their learning and to provide a valuable leadership experience, each ALIVE apprentice is asked to plan and lead their own program February-March, 2020. Students are supported in the development of these programs with two outcomes in mind:

- Program has a clear, unique and disputable purpose (*Art of Gathering*, Priya Parker)
- Program contributes to at least one facet of their peers' spirituality (*Cultivating the Spirit*, Alexander W. Astin, et. al.)

Collection and Assessment of Evidence:
Each of the 6 programs were observed by the program supervisor. 3 of the 6 were also observed by the student team coordinator for a total of 9 sets of observations.

2 rubrics were used after the observations to assess the purposeful planning and contribution to students' spiritual development. Rubrics drew upon the work of *Art of Gathering* and *Cultivating the Spirit*.

Apprentices were also asked to evaluate their programs and articulate the program’s purpose and contribution to their peers' spirituality.
RESULTS

PURPOSEFUL PROGRAMMING
Rated on a scale of 1 to 3.
3 = Purpose is specific, unique and disputable

- #3 Rating 100%

SUPPORTS PEERS’ SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT
Rated on a scale of 1 to 5.
5 = Clearly connects to two or more facets of spirituality, with program elements intentionally aimed at supporting growth in those areas.

- #4 Rating 44.4%
- #5 Rating 55.6%

Gleanings

Apprentices were adept at crafting a program with a clear purpose in mind. Focusing on Parker’s *Art of Gathering* during August training clearly set the stage for being intentional in our gatherings. As for spirituality, we observed that apprentices did offer programs that connected to at least 1 of the 5 facets of spirituality outlined in *Cultivating the Spirit*. In their evaluations, apprentices could articulate that their programs did, in fact, contribute to the spiritual well-being of their peers, even if the program was not specifically religious in nature.

However, in their descriptions of how their programs contributed to the spiritual well-being or growth of their peers, no one used the specific language from *Cultivating the Spirit*. This likely reflects the fact that we introduced the 5 facets at the beginning of the spring semester without much time to dive into them. Next year, we will begin to use them in August training and throughout the fall semester. Hopefully, next year’s apprentices will then be able to use those facets of spirituality to understand and articulate the impact and importance of their work.

Rebecca Lahti, Emmaus Center for Spiritual Life & Vocation - May 7, 2020
STUDENTS WERE ASKED TO REFLECT ON A TRIPS SERVICE EXPERIENCE WHEN THEY ENCOUNTERED CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING.

2.8 Average response quality score out of 4

70 student responses

52 - LIFE & DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON
10 - OPTION FOR THE POOR
8 - SOLIDARITY

A 4-point rubric was developed based on resources from the US Council of Catholic Bishops to assess students' articulation of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

The strongest student responses articulated a specific connection between a service experience on their trip and Catholic Social Teaching with convincing evidence of a change in their perspective or values through reflection on the experience.

Give students quotes from the US Council of Catholic Bishops to deepen their reflection and ask how the encounter will inform future actions as well as values.

“THIS ENCOUNTER HAS REMINDED ME THAT PEOPLE OF ALL FINANCIAL BACKGROUNDS HAVE A RIGHT TO HEALTH CARE. AS CHRISTIANS AND AS GOOD CITIZENS OF THIS COUNTRY, WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP THOSE LESS FORTUNATE RECEIVE THIS TOP-LEVEL OF CARE.”

“I HAVE AND ALWAYS WILL CONSIDER EDUCATION ONE OF THE MOST BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS. AFTER SERVING ON THIS TRIP, I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BETTER UNDERSTAND WHAT IT'S LIKE TO GO TO SCHOOL IN UNDERFUNDED COMMUNITIES, AND HOW THAT CAN AFFECT THE STUDENTS.”
Increasing Black Male Retention at St. Norbert College

What are we doing about it?

MEN OF DISTINCTION PROGRAM AT SNC

DID YOU KNOW?

16.4 % is the National graduation rate for African American/Black Males who enroll in a four-year Bachelor’s Degree Programs!
(National Center for Education Statistics, 2015)

33% is the 6-year graduation rate at SNC for African American/Black Males.
(Office of Institutional Effectivness SNC Fact Book 2013)

MEN OF DISTINCTION PROGRAM

Men of Distinction is a peer led mentoring program for black men on campus. MOD is intended to give the participants a place to cultivate pride in their black identities, lift up one another in hard times, tackle life's hard questions, and challenge each other to be the best men they can be. By being peer led, MOD also allows participants the opportunity to hone their leadership skills. In addition, MOD shares with the participants resources on campus to support their success.

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT,

"Students who are actively engaged in educationally purposeful activities and experiences, both inside and outside the classroom are more likely than their disengaged peers to persist through graduation.

(Harper, 2012, p. 13)

100% of participants indicated that MOD made them aware of resources on campus and also contributed to their retention at SNC.

"Having that group of people around me made me feel like I wasn't by myself and while there weren't a lot of us, the bond we had helped us lookout for each other"

"I enjoy every moment I had as an MOD member. I have some great memories at SNC because of MOD"

"I stayed at SNC because I found friends at MOD that shared similar interests, as well as, used similar language and were affected by similar issues".

2019-2020 Men of Distinction Program
Assessment of Vocation Application to Uncertain/Unexpected Life Circumstances

A small group vocation exploration experience led by the Emmaus Center

Top 3 areas of application:
- Importance of vulnerability
- Seeing Uncertainty as OK and an opportunity for growth
- Role of community

A 3-point rubric was developed to assess the strength and specificity of the connection students could make from their Navigate conversations or readings to the current unexpected circumstances. The variety of responses speaks to the breadth of topics that we explore and the toolbox with which students walk away.

38 student responses
16 unique applications

"As we go through these coming weeks, filled with challenges and the unknown, I reflect on a Navigate session where we talked about what happens when things do not go as planned. Learning to be flexible, while difficult and time consuming, can be necessary when pursuing our vocation. Not everything we do will always have the outcome we want, so learning how to adapt can be a great tool, especially when faced with uncertainty."

"This situation brings up new emotions and thoughts in me and in others that we haven’t necessarily dealt with before. Many of the situations that make us vulnerable and exposed are occurring every day in this situation. Learning to be okay with being vulnerable and asking others for help will be vital to coming out of the pandemic better than we entered."

NEXT YEAR

- Offer students a similar real-life question or case study on the final paper
- Knowing the pandemic will continue into next year, explore ways to incorporate the current reality into discussions and perhaps readings

2.76
Average response quality score out of 3

FINAL PAPER QUESTION:
"What is one thing that you read or learned that could be helpful as you and others around the world move through these coming weeks of unexpected challenges?" (Re: sudden switch to remote learning amidst global pandemic)
A 4-level rubric was developed based on the work of Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza to assess the quality of students’ application of scripture during Lectio Divina at Thin Place.

Students were invited to write an encouraging message to someone facing a challenge utilizing the wisdom of Isaiah 11. A sample of those messages was scored.

The strongest students employed multiple dimensions of scripture and engaged with the ideas of others to express meaningful messages of hope and wisdom.

A collision of earth & heaven

Fall Assessment

Lectio Divina is a Christian practice dating to 5th century Benedictines who read and discussed passages of scripture in repetition to allow its wisdom to speak directly to their experiences and transform their hearts.

A more than half scored 3 or 4.

Reflection Scores

Can students utilize the wisdom of scripture to skillfully respond to challenging circumstances?

Spring Assessment

Students gathered virtually in April 2020 due to COVID-19 and no formal assessment was done. Instead, students reflected on John 20 and posted pictures they recognized as “signs of life” in the world around us. The pictures and explanations demonstrated informally that students are making strong connections between scripture and their lives.

Next Year:

Introduce students to a third component of meaning making based on Anne E. Streaty Wimberly’s work in Soul Stories: African American Christian Education. Students are now familiar with the process of linking their own experience with the wisdom of scripture. Wimberly adds a third component in which an experience from the life of a significant historical figure is presented to ground the mythic significance of scripture in the socio-political realities of human experience. With these three components, students are equipped to face life with wisdom that is rooted in the sacred, historical, and personal.