

Assessing Intentional Community within DCSA Leadership

To what extent do DePaul Community Service Association (DCSA) student leaders understand and implement intentional community in their daily lives?

Learning Outcome

- Students who participate in a Vincentians in Action (VIA) community will foster the Vincentian value of intentional community in fighting injustice.

Methodology

- During April and May 2017, the DCSA senior team and coordinators were invited to participate in face-to-face interviews conducted by a department staff member.
- Staff developed an analytic rubric with 4 domains to assess the quality of students' implementation of intentional community in their daily lives.
- The four domains of intentional community included: reflecting on the dignity of the human story, Vincentian personalism, Vincentian simplicity and social justice relationships.
- Interviewers additionally identified qualitative themes prevalent across participants' responses.

Demographics

- Of the 25 DCSA leaders, 12 students (48%) volunteered to participate.
- From the two tiers of leadership, 4 out of 5 senior team leaders (80%) participated and 8 out of 20 coordinators (40%) participated.
- 3 of the senior team leaders had at least 2 years of experience as a DCSA leader, while only 1 senior team leader had 1 year of experience.
- For the 8 coordinators, only 3 had 2 or more years of DCSA leadership experience, while 5 were in their first year as DCSA leaders.

Key Findings

- All 12 leaders (100%) received at least 22 out of 30 total possible points on the rubric, indicating successful learning.
- All 12 leaders (100%) scored 'sufficient' or 'above average' in the dignity of the human story domain of the rubric and frequently described the importance of reflection in their daily lives.
- All 12 leaders (100%) demonstrated 'sufficient' or 'above average' understanding and valuing on the Vincentian simplicity domain; however, they did not immediately identify that way of being with the words "Vincentian simplicity".
- 11 out of 12 students (92%) strongly articulated the need for community in seeking social justice, and how community is essential in accomplishing and sustaining the work towards a just society.

Plan of Action

- Develop a Weekly VIA reflection activity, solely focused on Vincentian simplicity, to be implemented each quarter to help students understand the importance of living authentically as linked to the words 'Vincentian simplicity'.
- Provide stronger support and structure for leaders to be involved in advocacy work paired with their DCSA community partner in order to build upon students' competency in building relationships for social justice work.
- Share project findings about the value of reflection for DCSA student leaders with other departments where student leaders are passionate about social change.

"If you don't reflect on what you're doing, you're basically just going through the motions... Reflection brings some grounding and meaning...a sense of direction."