

People

Collaboration, inclusiveness, and communication comprise the People orientation of the Vincentian Leadership Model. The People orientation identifies leaders who lead by promoting teamwork, treating others with respect, and communicate their expectations to motivate people.

Collaboration

Vincentian leaders are collaborators. They promote teamwork and collaboration, delegate responsibilities within a group. They communicate enthusiasm and confidence to encourage teamwork.

Coming Full Circle

“Today’s efforts will make tomorrow’s easier.”
St. Vincent de Paul

I have often thought that my employment at DePaul University brings my life full-circle since I grew up around the Daughters of Charity’s Marillac House, a social services facility on the west-side of Chicago.

Though not Catholic, I connect with Vincent’s love for Christ that empowered him to work on behalf of the poor and those marginalized by society. As an African American, I see similarities in Vincent’s work and the work of early civil rights organizations that emboldened Christian activists in their fight for equality in America. As a youngster, I witnessed my grandmother confront storekeepers about their poor service and mistreatment of patrons and her compassion to assist the incarcerated and poor families in Chicago.

It is no wonder that I, a beneficiary of the civil rights movement through the charity of the nuns of the Marillac House, and my grandmother’s example, would find my life’s work assisting students in higher education, disadvantaged by societal stereotypes and poverty. I see de Paul’s Vincentian legacy in action through my work in partnership with the Austin Community.

Austin is the largest neighborhood in Chicago with more than 100,000 residents, and is home to significant areas of poverty and poorly performing schools. As members of a newly formed Westside Education Coalition, the Center for Access and Attainment’s Office of Community Outreach provided tutors in an eight-week pilot program helping youth ages 10-17 with their reading and math skills. As director of the office, I was moved by the paucity of such initiatives in such a populated and the seemingly entrenched illiteracy in the community. Vincent’s

words, “It is our duty to prefer the service of the poor to everything else and to offer such services as quickly as possible,” empowered our response to create a pilot program and engage as members in the Westside Education Coalition.

Witnessing the interaction of DePaul tutors and their students reminds me of images of Vincent. These tutors not only assist with addressing the educational needs of these children but also openly offer their care, concern, and love for them. As one particular heart-tugging session came to a close, I watched as a youngster gave his tutor a joy-filled hug. I am confident, that as Vincent said, “Today’s efforts will make tomorrow’s easier.”

Glenna Ousley

Reflection

This story illustrates how reducing poverty and making a difference in the world is not something one can do individually.

1. How do you build support networks and foster collaboration with others?
2. When did you experience successful collaboration and what contributed to it?

The Benefits of Community

“What a benefit to be in a community where each single person participates in the good done by all its members.”
St. Vincent de Paul

St. Vincent de Paul's life of servant leadership inspires my daily work of serving impoverished senior citizens in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood. As a Case Manager for Catholic Charities, I coordinate community-based services for homebound senior citizens. As a servant leader, I have the additional duty of providing these services with compassion, respect, and empathy, as St. Vincent de Paul taught.

Edward was a seventy-eight year old, isolated senior, who received home delivered meals through Catholic Charities. He was an intelligent and gracious individual who suffered from a debilitating visual impairment and loneliness. I always looked forward to my visit with Edward, as we both enjoyed discussing the history of Chicago and old films from the nineteen-forties. One day, Ethel, Edward's property owner, phoned me to discuss Edward's well-being.

Ethel stated that Edward's health declined rapidly over the last few months and he may need to move to a safer environment. I visited Edward and immediately noticed his deteriorating health. Edward was now completely blind and incontinent. Garbage and stacks of unpaid bills cluttered his home. Edward reluctantly agreed to meet with Lorene from a Catholic Charities supportive living facility to discuss the possibility of moving to their center.

Within two weeks after our meeting, Edward moved to his new home at the Catholic Charities supportive living center facility — a community of caring individuals embodying Vincentian values. I arranged for Edward's apartment to be cleaned, Lorene offered to personally pack his belongings and

arranged for a representative payee to handle his finances, and Ethel agreed to return his security deposit while forgiving the debt owed for breaking the lease. Six months after the move, Lorene shared that Edward was happier than ever. He often told her how blessed he felt to have a new family with staff and residents at the Catholic Charities supportive living facility.

I am blessed and proud to serve at Catholic Charities, where, “we live our values as we journey with our clients” (Rev. Michael Boland). Our organization’s mission and the teachings of St. Vincent de Paul empower me to serve the poor with compassion and empathy. Each time I train new Catholic Charities Case Managers creates the opportunity to uphold St. Vincent de Paul’s example of empowering others to become servant leaders. Edward’s success story illustrates how a community’s commitment to Vincentian values can dramatically improve an individual’s life. Edward’s story reminds me that my duties as a servant leader go beyond my duties as a Case Manager. I am committed to further developing my Vincentian values, inspiring others to become servant leaders, and living by St. Vincent de Paul’s words, “it is not enough to do good, it must be done well.”

Amy Magnusson

Reflection

In this story, collaboration and teamwork successfully meet Edward’s needs.

1. Do you have a story of how collaboration helped you in achieving a goal?

2. Is there a project or challenge you currently face that could benefit by collaboration?

Inclusiveness

Vincentian leaders are inclusive. They treat others with respect and dignity. They welcome people who come to them with their problems because they accept people's ideas and personalities.

Patience as Inclusiveness

“Kindness is the key to hearts”
St. Vincent de Paul

Mike Lindsey is the ultimate customer service professional. As an advisor in DePaul Central, he works with hundreds of students every week and is always friendly and professional. Students and parents constantly tell me how wonderful he is. Colleagues often ask me who he is when they witness his interactions with students at our front desk. After I identify him, they inevitably tell me what a great job he is doing with students. I should mention that Mike is a petite man, and looks much younger than his 37 years.

One day, Mike was at the front desk with an upset student almost yelling in his face — demanding to see an advisor, not a student. I could tell Mike was getting nervous — he started pulling on one of his braided locks, always a sign of distress — but was maintaining composure. He told the student, in his most pleasant and calming voice, that he was an advisor and would be happy to assist him. Mike’s charm and composed manner eventually won the student over. At the end of the encounter, the student apologized for assuming Mike was a student. Mike made light of the mistaken identity by telling the student in his most beguiling voice, “Yes, I do have boyish good looks, but I’m really 37!” They both ended up laughing and the student left our office with his problem solved and a positive feeling toward DePaul.

Like Mike, we all encounter students or people who approach us with anger, confusion, or frustration. What makes Mike successful in dealing with those situations is that he deflects rather than absorbs the emotion and is able to see past the frustration and anger, to the person who needs our help — and helping students is the reason we are here. Mike is an example for all of us who feel our patience tested now and

then, and represents the DePaul mission in action.

Paula Luff

Reflection

1. Recall a time when you were confronted by someone who presented you a challenge. How did you respond? What might you have done differently knowing Mike's example of Vincentian leadership?
2. How do you build inclusiveness among those with whom you work?

Knowledge for the Good of All

“Some persons look and never see.
Others see and never look.”
St. Vincent de Paul

I entered college as a Political Science major with the frame of mind that I would one day become a U.S. Senator. After a year of taking political science classes, I realized that I knew nothing about politics, nor did I have the passion or drive to enter the political arena. I had to reevaluate what I wanted to do. Based on my grades, I excelled in English; therefore, I declared an English major. At the end of my junior year, I found myself in the same place once again, unsatisfied with my major. I dropped two majors within a three-year period and am finally finishing my third major, Catholic Studies.

I am happy with the way my college career unfolded but at the same time, I find myself asking, “Did any of those political science or english classes matter?” The answer in the end is always, “Yes.” While it is important to focus and concentrate on an area of study, it is also important to be well-rounded and educated. This means not limiting oneself to only one way of thinking or viewing the world. Rather, to be open to new ideas, opinions, and perspectives. It can be difficult to enter into a classroom or a discussion that challenges everything one believes. It is from these challenges and the obstacles of life that one grows and learns more about community and him or herself. I cannot walk around life with blinders that prevent me from seeing what is around. I must be open to others, even if that means I forget about my own self-interest. How will someone know who I am unless I see who I am not? I can only do this by engaging with other people from different backgrounds and lifestyles. This is what I do in a classroom full of students, ideas, and knowledge. Each one of my peers has something to offer me. It is up to me to see this and take advantage of the opportunity to grow.

Although, I may not enter into a career in either Political Science or English, I will always have the knowledge I gained from those classes. Do I use what I learned in my Shakespeare class in my daily life? Yes. I now see the beauty and power that language possesses. I am conscious of my own words and how they reflect the message I convey. More importantly, I recall the impact that people make upon the world. The overarching themes I learned from Political Science and English are the lasting implications that people's actions have upon their community and history.

I do not regret taking the classes that I have throughout college. Each class offered me something unique and different. I cannot imagine going through college unexposed to a breadth of knowledge. The course material, the professors, and my classmates inspired, discouraged, challenged, and upset me but never have I felt under-educated.

I know that I am able to enter into roles of leadership with a background of knowledge that is as diverse as the people that I am serving. I can actively listen to others and be open to what they are saying, even if I may disagree. I know that this is possible because of the exposure in my classes. Four years ago, I would have stopped talking to someone if I disagreed with what they said, but now I embrace and welcome this diversity of ideas because I am more aware of my community, peers, and my own set of beliefs and values.

I continue to work on viewing situations from a variety of perspectives — an area where I fall short. By hearing other perspectives and viewpoints, I see new ideas. There are times when I face a decision and think there is only one choice. I know there are more; I just cannot see them. I am striving to open my eyes and apply all that I learned within every aspect of my life. Otherwise, how will I know what decision is best if I do not know the worst?

As I conclude my third year at DePaul, I look back upon all I learned, exposed myself to, and experienced within such a short time. I am grateful for all I know and hope that my final year at DePaul will continue to educate and shape me into the socially responsible leader I aspire to be.

Mary Carlton

Reflection

1. Recall a time when you closed yourself off to someone or something. Why did you close yourself off? What do you think you could have learned if you remained open?

2. What are three things you can do to build a community that fosters dignity and respect?

Communication

Vincentian leaders are communicators. They clearly communicate their expectations by disseminating appropriate information to those at all levels of the organization.

Unity Makes Strength

“What a benefit to be in a community where each single person participates in the good done by all of its members.”
St. Vincent de Paul

To be part of a community in which we unite energy and ability to further our work with the young and with the poor is a gift that we do not always find easy to value and accept gratefully. I am convinced that teamwork is indispensable to mutually enrich our lives, to deliver our personal treasures to every individual and to achieve our goals.

In 2003, the VMY International Office in Madrid, Spain invited me to work as a volunteer. I shared my love for the Vincentian charism with people from many different cultures: Gustavo from Venezuela, Dorys Castillo from Ecuador, and Pamela Manthuhac from the Philippines. In spite of our differences, from the moment we were in touch, we discovered our strong points and we committed to working as a team.

The main goals of the Secretariat are to organize and implement international meetings and activities that promote spirituality and apostolically the life of the Association. Our work must be accurate and on time. Every document or project must be translated into five languages and be uploaded onto the website to be available to any country where the Association is present. As a member of a cross-cultural team, it was often stressful to know my actions might have a positive or negative influence on others. I discovered teamwork was very complicated; it is not only about doing my share of the work, but requires constant coordination so that everyone's contributions are in service to a common goal.

Through this experience, I discovered the reality I had always had but never seen, “Unity makes the strength, as written on the flag of my native country, Haiti.. While working in a team, one realizes that nothing is impossible. We learn

to recognize and evaluate our own limits, as well as those of our team and are able to work on our dreams of creating a world where the terms “rich” and “poor” become synonymous with “brotherhood” and “responsibility.” Our community supports us considerably, becoming a place to find oneself and to find God. It is a foundation of rejuvenating hopes and the will to serve.

Like St. Vincent de Paul, each day I try to become a living example of the special Vincentian charism, knowing that I can say that the key words for working as a real Vincentian team is communication and positive attitude. Many elements of St. Vincent’s life and work affect my own. Two of the most valuable of elements without a doubt the importance of teamwork and communication.

Yasmine Cajuste

Reflection

1. What are some struggles you face in developing communication with a team?
2. What steps can you take to become a better communicator?

The Telling of Stories

“Do you wish to find God?
He communicates Himself through the simple.”
St. Vincent de Paul

One day at work, my boss, Pat, handed me a slip of paper with a quote. “The telling of your stories is a revolutionary act.” -Sam Keen, author. As Pat handed it to me, she said she thought it would help with the work I am doing for the Reflections book. At first reading, I liked the quote but was not sure how it was going to help me. I still needed six additional reflections, reflections to edit and typeset, and continue to work on the layout of the book with the goal of having printed copies before June 2010 when my graduate assistance position with The Hay Project would conclude. I tacked this quote to my cubicle wall and figured it would hit me at some point. I thought it may provide me with a dose of motivation to continue working on the tedious parts of this Reflections book.

This quote sat, untouched, on my cubicle wall for more than three months. I would stare at it when I forced my eyes to take a break from staring at the computer screen but it did not sink in enough to force me to work on parts of the tedious project. Finally, one Saturday afternoon in my apartment while I completed an application for the Vincentian Lay Missionaries, it hit me, the significance of this quote. As I sat writing about my volunteer experiences in Newburgh, NY and St. Louis, MO, it occurred to me that I had never really written about my two years of volunteer experience. I verbally shared little stories here and there about students, clients, community life, and the service I performed, but never wrote about it—or began telling my story. As I wrote about my experience and my personal growth, I realized that the telling of my story is a revolutionary

act. It is through story telling that I convey my values, beliefs, morals and give insight into who I am as an individual. It is an opportunity for me to open myself and welcome others to be part of my life. Stories provide people with an avenue to understand each other and a way for us to relate to one another.

St. Vincent de Paul used stories to communicate his mission, vision, and values. He took his life experiences and shared them as stories to teach others. When he gave his sermon about the family who needed help, he did not stand up there and tell people what to do. He told a story about this family and their needs, leading to a community response. In his letters to St. Louise De Marillac and other members of the Congregation of the Mission, Vincent tells stories of his experiences as examples for how one should go about doing their work, leading other members, and living their life. More than 350 years after his death, Vincent's stories illustrate how things are to be done and how to approach work. The telling of Vincent's story is how he came to be remembered as a leader. For if no one told his story, would we still be living out his mission 350 years after his death and following his values, mission, and vision?

Jenny Mohan

Reflection

Vincent de Paul used various forms of communication to instill his mission and values to those at various levels within his organizations. Through the use of stories, he communicated how to accomplish tasks allowing his legacy to survive.

1. What are other forms of communication you can use when instructing or supervising others?
2. How can you use your story to communicate with others?