

## Life as a Lasallian Educator

By  
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We had left at five in the morning. Drove up from Los Angeles, my parents in the front seats, myself in the back seat, meager belongings stuffed in the trunk and piled next to me. Overtired, overanxious, and overwhelmed we made the left turn onto St. Mary's Road and immediately noticed the red and blue balloons and signs telling me I was almost there. Making the left turn onto campus, I was immediately struck by the welcoming and exciting atmosphere; students waving and cheering, all wearing bright and fun matching shirts. We pulled up to Mitty Hall where we were greeted by cheering groups of current students who converged on my parent's car with giant smiles and helping hands. Before we knew it, we were escorted to my hall, given keys and an abundance of paperwork, and had a trail of students diligently delivering to my new home every last item from the car. I was now a member of Saint Mary's.

Little did I know that seventeen years later I would be working at Saint Mary's, helping create that very welcoming and unique community for our new students and families. We throw that word 'community' around a lot at Saint Mary's. It is a word I have always heard associated with Saint Mary's and- whether good times or bad- is a foundation we lean on to describe our campus. An inclusive community; a community of learners; living learning communities; community engagement...we are a campus filled with community! Where did this identity, so closely associated with our campus, come from? What is it that makes this community at Saint Mary's so unique?

The Brothers of the Christian Schools dedicate their lives to a vocation of faith, service, and community. The Christian Brothers call upon their schools to be more than a place of education. The school is only the setting, but the students are the heart of the institution. The core principles of the Lasallian education challenges the school to not simply be satisfied with a quality education, but to engage the whole student through the Lasallian core principles. These principles challenge the institution to positively affect the whole student, not just the mind. The Christian Brothers at Saint Mary's embody this vocation by not only teaching but living in residence halls, mentoring students, sharing their passions and life's work, and continuing a legacy of service and faith. The Christian Brothers do not simply educate; they serve the students to which they are entrusted.

The Brothers of the Christian Schools model what it means to live in community. Within the Alemany and Saint Mary's Communities at Saint Mary's, a wide breadth of opinions, expertise, and passions converge together. Having had the pleasure of sitting in on meals with the Communities, I see a living model of what our Intercollegiate Seminar courses aim to achieve. These lively and engaging dialogues, with participation and insight from each Brother around the table, are a daily example of the sort of community we strive to engage our students within at Saint Mary's. Creating an engaged community is not simply about finding the answers, but about the process and journey to get there. This process- what might be called critical thinking- is echoed as a core strength of our College and a unique trait shared by my fellow alums of the institution.

As a partner in the Lasallian mission I, too, feel called upon to serve our students. This has never been simply a job. I have never felt like I have 'punched' into work, or felt the clock ticking. Much as when I was a student, I feel I am learning something new every day. It is an honor to continue to learn from our students and my colleagues on a daily basis. This campus community of learners inspires, challenges, and engages me each day. We do not always agree and we do not always share the same views, but I know that an opportunity for a lively conversation always awaits. This community thrives on the

opportunities for dialogue and engagement, and the more difficult the conversation the more likely we are to hold it.

Saint John Baptist de La Salle said, "Union in a community is a precious gem, which is why Our Lord so often recommended it to his apostles before he died. If we love this, we love everything. Preserve it with care, therefore, if you want your community to survive." The idea of preserving our community with care is what I feel I am called to do on a daily basis. As a partner in the Lasallian mission, I am called upon to actively ensure that the community and its persons are cared and loved. The core principles, such guiding values, challenge us to help carry the mission of de La Salle forward. Such keywords like inclusivity, social justice and concern are not goals we hope to achieve. We, as Lasallian educators, are called upon to live these principles; not encouraged, nor speak to, nor even teach, but to live and model. That calling, to live a life as a Lasallian educator, is a truly unique and inspirational opportunity for us as partners of the Christian Brothers.

I feel that by being called to preserve this community with care, I am not only impacting the Saint Mary's campus, but the entire Lasallian community. Connections in the Lasallian community are bountiful and endless. My impact on the Lasallian community goes well beyond the entrance to the Moraga campus. Students entrusted to our care (many from Christian Brother secondary schools) have an opportunity to make an impact in the greater community. As a Lasallian educator, it is my responsibility to guide our students in reflecting on their impact in the world. From service work to the business world, the sciences to teaching, students moving on from our community make a greater impact in the world. I believe it is my responsibility as a Lasallian educator to promote an environment that challenges students to be productive and ethical contributors to society. Those contributions begin and are fostered through the engaged community that exists at Saint Mary's. Students welcomed into this community never leave; they physically may move, but the spirit and education that the community provides remains with them forever.

Families of new students often ask me how we get so many students to help at that initial move in; why are they spending hours of time carrying boxes to students' new rooms and still smiling as the sweat drips down their faces. All of these students are volunteers, I reply. They do it because they believe in it- they believe in the community that welcomed them, and they thrive in sharing that experience with new members of the community. For these students, it is a calling to give back. Similarly, my life as a Lasallian educator is a calling. It defines my work, my life philosophy and my education. I cherish the opportunity to contribute to a community that so openly advocates for positive social change, and growth of the body, mind and spirit. I share a special bond with other Lasallian educators and, most critically, the Christian Brothers who are living models for the dedication and devotion it takes to truly fulfill the mission developed so many years ago. We do not simply educate; we care, we love and we nurture. We do this because the special community it creates impacts the world like no other education.