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Faculty Formation in the Jesuit and Mercy Traditions

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Abstract

Mentorship plays a major role in engaging faculty and supporting their development and growth within an academic institution. In order to support new faculty members' success and belonging, the host institution piloted the Faculty Formation Program during the 2022-2023 academic year. The foundation of this mentorship program is based on Jesuit and Mercy values that align with the mission of the university. The program has engaged new and seasoned faculty in shared conversations about their roles as faculty members and their place in Jesuit and Mercy higher education. This paper articulates the foundation and characteristics of high-impact mentorship and describes how a mission-centered mentoring program was implemented at the host institution, along with lessons learned and future program enhancements. The paper also offers faculty members' reflections on their relationship to Catholic higher education and how working in a Jesuit and Mercy institution informs their roles as faculty. The Faculty Formation Program can be adapted by other mission-focused institutions as a tool for faculty development and retention.

Introduction

As a Catholic university in the Jesuit and Mercy traditions, University of Detroit Mercy's mission is to provide excellent, student-centered education in an urban context. Both Jesuit and Mercy principles are integral to the university's approach to mission, which is also grounded in Catholic social teaching and the Catholic intellectual tradition. Whatever their course of study, students are guided by values and experiences that emanate from their exposure to the Jesuit and Mercy charisms, which emphasize, among other features, hospitality and community-building; an affirmation of the world and "finding God in all things"; persistent growth and reflectivity; dialogue across cultures; an emphasis on service and social justice; and the development of "men and women for and with others".¹ Ignatian pedagogy prioritizes educating the whole person, integrating students' intellectual, social, ethical,

and spiritual growth with an emphasis on transformative learning that leads to action.² The "Mercy Way" in higher education involves similar principles, including a holistic approach to education, foregrounding action as a consequence of compassion, and commissioning students to be a force for change in their communities and families.³ Both Jesuit and Mercy traditions are attentive to location, with emphasis placed on understanding and meeting the needs of one's time and place. Not only do lay people play a critical role in fostering Jesuit and Mercy values in the university, so too do non-Catholic faculty, staff, and students. Core tenets of these traditions can offer guidance and meaning to faculty from diverse backgrounds and identities.

Although mission and vision are often discussed through a student-centered lens, a truly mission-centered institution will help faculty "live the mission" through pedagogy and curriculum

design; scholarship and dissemination of research; and service to the institution, profession, and community. Within Catholic higher education, understanding of and engagement with mission is a key element of campus culture.⁴ Faculty are critical to shaping the culture of colleges and universities, including students' understanding of and engagement with institutional mission. Along with co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, students are exposed to mission through course content and classroom dialogue. For this reason, faculty members are uniquely positioned to articulate and bolster institutional mission while accompanying students in learning. Moreover, one of the hallmarks of the Jesuit educational mission, *cura personalis*, has significant consequences for student well-being. Research shows that feeling cared for and supported by faculty members is strongly correlated with retention and student success. According to the 2014 Gallup-Purdue Index, based on responses from over 30,000 graduates, the support and care of faculty members is one of the most important predictors of long-term outcomes, including overall well-being, engagement at work, and a strong connection to the institution from which students graduated.⁵ The ultimate goal of *cura personalis* is to foster feelings of inclusion and belonging for each member of the university community.

In this context, faculty mentorship should be recognized as a mission-forward priority with the goal of forming qualified faculty who foster and enhance mission. High-quality mentorship is equally significant for supporting the successful transition of faculty members to a new institutional context and increasing faculty retention.⁶ Rarely are entry-level faculty prepared to juggle all of the responsibilities that come with a new position.⁷ New faculty are learning how to teach while trying to balance their responsibilities for scholarship and service, all while navigating unfamiliar institutional structures and cultures. Faculty members transitioning from non-academic contexts experience additional pressures. Saito identified three main stressors faced by ex-practitioners who transition to higher education.⁸ Novice faculty struggle to adjust their occupational identities; are uncertain about their new work environment; and feel intimidated by the prospect of research. Even experienced academics who move to a new institution and

tenure-track faculty members who transition from a non-tenure-track role benefit from mentorship by experienced faculty members in their home institution.

The benefits of high-quality mentorship are well-established. Etzkorn and Braddock conducted a multi-campus faculty survey ($n = 1,017$) which supported previous research that recommended a "culture of mentoring" within universities.⁹ Both junior and senior faculty respondents recognized the value of mentoring, with junior faculty having a strong desire to be mentored and senior faculty recognizing that need among untenured junior faculty. According to Etzkorn and Braddock, junior faculty consider active collegial mentorship with a senior faculty a valuable factor for a successful tenure application.¹⁰ Mylona et al. conducted a 26-institute medical school faculty survey ($n = 11,953$) and concluded that mentored faculty are significantly more satisfied and engaged with their institutions, potentially leading to higher faculty retention and commitment to the university mission.¹¹ The literature indicates mentees report feeling less isolation; have greater job satisfaction; are more productive scholars and confident instructors; and advance further in their careers.¹² Senior faculty also receive benefits from the mentor/mentee relationship. Borders et al. reported that collaborations between junior and senior faculty can energize experienced faculty and offer fresh insights and ideas for curriculum enhancement and scholarship.¹³ Denard Thomas, Lunsford, and Rodrigues found mentors have the opportunity to learn about issues of concern that might have gone unrecognized among established faculty inured to the departmental or college culture.¹⁴ Moreover, junior faculty who have received mentoring are prepared to step into their roles as educators, researchers, and citizens of the university, helping ease the workload of senior faculty. In these ways, mentorship can be mutually beneficial for junior and senior colleagues—and have a referred impact on student success.

Although there is no "right" way for mentorship to occur, research on the topic offers recommendations and best practices. Rice, Sorcinelli, and Austin conducted a series of structured interviews with over 350 junior faculty and graduate students and identified three core concerns among the subjects: lack of community,

the need for greater work-life balance, and uncertainty about tenure and review processes.¹⁵ Sorcinelli utilized the data from the interviews to develop ten principles of good practice in supporting early career faculty.¹⁶ The principles included: communicating performance expectations that align junior faculty goals with the university's mission; encouraging senior faculty to act as mentors; providing honest, constructive feedback on progress; improving the tenure process with written guidelines, educational seminars, and ongoing discussions; supporting instruction, especially at the undergraduate level; supporting scholarship; and encouraging work-life balance. Borders et al. utilized Sorcinelli's principles of good practice to develop a mentoring program within their counselor education department.¹⁷ Their experience provided additional insights into best practices for mentorship programs. Mentoring should be voluntary. Not all faculty are good mentors, nor do all senior faculty want to fulfill that role. Additionally, mentorship should be a two-way street. For their part, junior faculty need to be proactive and willing to contact senior colleagues to ask questions and voice concerns. Borders et al. proposed recommendations for practice that included scheduling discussions about mentoring involvement, encouraging open communication, and permitting flexibility in the mentoring relationship.¹⁸ Etzkorn and Braddock's research also supports flexibility.¹⁹ Frequently mentors and mentees have differing assumptions for how the relationship should progress, so relationships should be allowed to develop to suit both parties. However, other findings suggest a lack of structure might be problematic. In their examination of mentoring networks, Denard Thomas, Lunsford, and Rodrigues found that mentees value informal communication with their mentors, where they gain an understanding of the promotion and tenure process, obtain research feedback, and discuss issues of concern.²⁰ However, they also found that most mentors waited for mentees to initiate contact.²¹ This "hands-off" approach places the mentorship burden on mentees, who might not know what questions to ask or are apprehensive about being perceived as incompetent if they request assistance. This finding suggests that mentors should be proactive and anticipate questions and areas of need. Topics of interest to junior faculty

include: career planning; the promotion and tenure process; grant writing; finding funding; teaching support; handling "problem" students; and identifying community resources. Denard Thomas, Lunsford, and Rodrigues identified a commonality to mentorship needs across disciplines, indicating that mentoring support can occur at the institutional level rather than placing the onus on individual disciplines.²² Additional findings from Etzkorn and Braddock emphasized that mentoring should be considered university service for senior faculty members.²³ Faculty members already carry significant obligations and responsibilities, so mentorship should be supported by university administration and recognized for promotion and annual review.

Faculty Formation Program: A New Model for Mentorship

The purpose of this paper is to describe a newly formed faculty mentorship program inspired by Jesuit and Mercy values and rooted in the mission of the host institution. The Faculty Formation Program draws on best practices, but it is not the typical faculty mentorship program offered in other universities. An emphasis on hospitality and *cura personalis* underpins the program with foundational values of belonging and care. Ignatian pedagogy inspires an accompaniment model based in collaborative interaction between mentor and mentee rather than a unidirectional approach.²⁴ Finally, both mentors and mentees engage in self-reflection and dialogue, elements of discernment that result in a deeper understanding of and emotional engagement with the mentoring experience.

This paper will describe the goals of the Faculty Formation Program along with details about its structure, format, and delivery and lessons learned for future implementation. Feedback from participants—both faculty mentors and mentees—will be explored, including faculty members' reflections on their relationship to Jesuit and Mercy values and traditions. The Faculty Formation Program can be adopted or adapted by other mission-focused institutions as a tool for faculty development and retention.

Recognizing the critical importance of high-quality mentorship to faculty development, the host

institution piloted the Faculty Formation Program in AY 2022-2023. The goals of the program were to assist new faculty members in navigating their academic roles and expectations and engage them in the university's Jesuit and Mercy traditions. The program was sponsored by the university's Office of Academic Affairs and Office of Mission Integration and directed by one of the authors of this paper, Mary-Catherine Harrison, who developed the program as her Mission Project for the Ignatian Colleagues Program (ICP). ICP, an Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU)-sponsored program established in 2008, works to educate and form individuals working in Jesuit higher education. The ICP integrates a shared intellectual foundation with experiences rooted in Ignatian spirituality, including retreat and immersion trips. Mission Projects are the implementation component of ICP. Joe DeFeo, Executive Director of the Ignatian Colleagues Program, describes the goal of Mission Projects as "developing Ignatian discerning leadership practices" by transforming "each participant's experiences, insights, and reflections into actions in ways that foster the Jesuit and Catholic mission on one's home campus."²⁵

ICP Mission Projects offer AJCU administrators and faculty the opportunity to engage campus stakeholders in conversations about the purpose and impact of mission-related work while they cultivate mission in their respective areas.

The Faculty Formation Program is a year-long orientation and mentorship program for newly hired full-time faculty at the host institution. In the pilot year, twenty-seven new faculty members and nine senior faculty mentors participated in the program. (The university's law school and dental school did not participate during the pilot year). The goals of the Faculty Formation Program are to foster relationships of mutual support between and among new and established faculty at Detroit Mercy; serve as a space for mentorship and dialogue throughout faculty members' first year at the university; and engage new and returning faculty members in conversations about their roles as faculty members and their place in Jesuit and Mercy higher education. Additionally, the program serves as a foundation for ongoing support and community between mentors and mentees and among members of the new faculty cohort. As

part of the institution's commitment to the Detroit community, shared meals were purchased from local restaurants, including Black, Latinx, Muslim, immigrant, and LGBTQ-owned businesses.

Utilizing Jesuit and Mercy Principles in Faculty Formation

Hospitality and Community-Building

Hospitality, extending (and receiving) warm and open-hearted welcome, is rooted in both Jesuit and Mercy traditions. The life of Jesus began with exclusion—Mary and Joseph were not welcome at the inn—but his life's example was defined by welcoming and loving one's neighbor, in the Good Samaritan sense of that word. Catherine McAuley also epitomized radical hospitality, welcoming thousands of sick, poor, and marginalized people to Baggot Street and other houses of Mercy. Within higher education, hospitality towards students and their families is essential to promote inclusion and belonging. We must be equally cognizant of extending hospitality towards our colleagues—both new and old—in order to promote a culture of community and mutual care. Senior mentors strove to extend hospitality throughout the Faculty Formation Program. The year began and ended with a reading of "Blessing the Threshold," a poem by writer, artist, and ordained Methodist minister Jan L. Richardson that offers a blessing upon a new beginning, "crying / welcome / welcome / welcome."²⁶ This spirit of welcome was nurtured through conversation, communion, and shared meals. While sharing food is not essential to community-building, breaking bread is a resonant embodiment of hospitality in diverse faith and cultural traditions. Eating together fosters openness and broader sharing of ideas and experience. In the gospels, Jesus both offers food and receives it; he breaks bread with strangers and with outcasts. As Boston College faculty member Hosffman Ospino described in an op-ed, "There is something revelatory about eating together... The more we eat with others, the easier it is to love them and affirm who they are as human beings. When we eat with others, it becomes somewhat easier to see the face of Christ in them."²⁷ In this way, hospitality evokes and mirrors God's care, a

model to emulate within Catholic higher education.

Cura personalis

Jesuit education emphasizes the inherent worth of each person and prioritizes concern for the development of mind, body, and spirit. Similarly, the “Mercy Way” emphasizes a holistic approach to education that “attends to the whole person in the context of the human community and the wider community of Earth.”²⁸ As a core element of Jesuit education, *cura personalis*, or “care for the whole person,” is woven throughout the Faculty Formation Program, not only as an approach we aspire to in our teaching, but also in our relationships with colleagues. The invitation to reflect on one’s path in life and work demonstrates care of the whole person by attending to intellectual, ethical, social, and spiritual growth as well as physical and mental well-being. Essential to *cura personalis* is recognition of and respect for individuals’ lived experiences, including diverse cultures, faiths, and social identities. The Faculty Formation Program is designed with a deep respect for human dignity and open-mindedness towards participants’ views and perspectives while emphasizing the importance of compassion and dialogue.

Magis

The Faculty Formation Program is informed by the Jesuit value of doing more for God and neighbors. *Magis*, the Latin word meaning “more” or “to a greater degree,” embodies the objective of seeking that which gives greater glory to God and serves the more universal good.²⁹ Faculty Formation Program participants are encouraged to strive towards the *magis* by applying what they gained through the program to their faculty roles. Individual and communal discernment is necessary to identify what constitutes the *magis* in specific contexts; however, shared values provide useful signposts to a Jesuit way of proceeding. Jesuit institutions welcome students from various backgrounds and beliefs; respect and value diversity; and advocate for positive change. These mindsets can be enacted through campus and community engagement, research, and supporting students’ holistic growth. Faculty at Jesuit colleges and universities seek to recognize students’

context and experience and accompany them in learning, thus exemplifying care for the whole person. Jesuit education also prioritizes contemplation in action; faith that does justice; and standing in solidarity with the communities we serve. These tenets engage and support the university’s mission of producing exceptional faculty and students who attend to the needs of the world.

Discernment

As members of a Jesuit community, discernment offers a valuable spiritual practice for employees and students.³⁰ Through discernment, we learn to observe our interior movements—both consolations and desolations—in order to recognize that which brings us contentment and sustenance and that which leaves us dry or depleted. St. Ignatius of Loyola invites us to utilize attention and self-reflection as tools for decision-making. For example, during his convalescence Ignatius recognized that reading about the lives of saints fulfilled him in a way that chivalric romances did not; this self-awareness contributed to his decision to alter his path in life.³¹ Discernment is integrated throughout the Faculty Formation Program by inviting faculty members to engage in self-reflection and dialogue, exploring our feelings regarding the mentorship experience and the role we play as faculty in Jesuit higher education. For faculty members from within a faith tradition, discernment can be understood as seeking God’s guidance in one’s daily life. For faculty members who are not in a faith tradition, discernment is equally valuable as a practice of contemplation and decision-making. As Pope Francis expressed it, “In order to make good decisions, one must listen to one’s own heart.”³²

Program Structure, Implementation, and Delivery

New full-time faculty was invited to participate during the university’s new faculty orientation before the start of the academic year, with follow-up invitations by email. Senior mentors were selected by the program director based upon recommendations of their respective deans. Mentors were tenured faculty members (associate or full professors) with a commitment to supporting new faculty in aspects of teaching,

service, and scholarship. Each mentor was assigned two to four mentees for the academic year 2022-2023. The anticipated time commitment of the program was three hours a month for new faculty and four hours a month for senior mentors. Mentors and mentees were encouraged to include participation in the Faculty Formation Program on their faculty annual report as well as future applications for promotion and tenure.

During the academic year there were five large-group gatherings with shared meals and two smaller gatherings hosted by faculty members' colleges/schools. The topics and activities undertaken in each gathering are presented in Table 1. In addition to attending program gatherings, it was recommended that senior mentors and new faculty mentees meet at least twice a semester one-on-one or in small groups. Key resources related to student support, Jesuit and Mercy identity, the annual report/dossier process, and other topics were shared with new faculty, helping individuals navigate institution-specific processes as well as broader issues in higher education. Many of the mentors and mentees also communicated by email or text. A number of senior mentors took it upon themselves to meet with their mentees beyond the recommended timeframe as they built rapport and became committed to their new colleagues' welfare and success.

Breaking Bread; Building Community

If we were to identify a single goal for the program's in-person gatherings, it was building community between and among faculty members. The goal was to *welcome* new faculty to the campus community and into relationships with colleagues. Radical hospitality—hospitality that knows no stranger—emerges out of Catholic social teaching and facilitates inclusion and belonging. Shared meals created opportunities for informal conversation about the fullness of faculty members' lives and experiences. During the first part of every gathering, participants were invited to eat, drink, and converse informally with each other. Colleagues talked about family and students, transitions at home and work, worries and weekend plans. These informal conversations are as valuable as the more structured topics included in each session. Encouraging a warm and

inviting environment contributes to more productive and collegial work life.

Another goal of the in-person gatherings was to make a purposeful investment in the local economy. A critical element of the university's mission is commitment to its urban context and engagement with the local community. The hospitality budget for the program was spent intentionally, investing funds in the local economy—including Black, Latinx, Muslim, immigrant, and LGBTQ-owned businesses. The economic impact of supporting local businesses extends beyond the events themselves by introducing faculty, many of whom are new to the area, to nearby restaurants. Many of the extraordinary entrepreneurs who make their home in Detroit come from across the globe. Inviting participants to share in diverse cuisines promotes core Jesuit values related to cultural dialogue, inclusivity, and finding God in all things.

Reflection and Dialogue

After breaking bread (or tearing pita) together, the group turned to more formal discussion. The goal of conversation is to engage new and returning faculty members in self-reflection and dialogue about our roles as faculty members and our place in Jesuit and Mercy higher education. For example, the initial gathering invited senior mentors to share strategies for balancing life and work obligations. This was a frank conversation, with senior colleagues discussing their own challenges as well as sharing hard-won lessons about establishing boundaries and choosing service obligations wisely. The importance of saying no was balanced with the value of “saying yes” to institutional service that allows faculty members to positively impact the institution and students' and colleagues' lives. This conversation embodied *cura personalis* in its approach to faculty development: senior faculty clearly desire professional success for new faculty colleagues, but they equally desire their colleagues to have fulfilling personal lives—joy, relationships, health, hobbies, etc. The goal, as one mentor put it, goes far beyond the benchmark of promotion and tenure; it is for our new colleagues to flourish for the rest of their careers.

Although mentorship often follows a top-down support model (mentor to mentee), the emphasis of many of the in-person gatherings was the *exchange* of ideas between faculty participants. For example, the conversation about our dual Jesuit and Mercy charisms invited small groups of faculty to share concrete examples of how they can and do integrate mission into their teaching. This conversation inspired both mentees and mentors to consider how curriculum and pedagogy can be enhanced by the Jesuit and Mercy traditions—and how our work as faculty, in turn, contributes to the mission of our university. As evident in the session descriptions in Table 1, gatherings often served as a vehicle for self-reflection and dialogue, two essential components of discernment. For example, a spring gathering invited rotating pairs of faculty members to engage in “generous listening”³³ as they shared intimate reflections about their past experience and hopes for the future. Conversations such as these invite faculty to engage in the affective dimension of relationship-building. For example, a recurrent (and unanticipated) theme that emerged over a year was imposter syndrome. Knowing that other faculty members experience feelings of insecurity and self-doubt helps combat feelings of isolation and enhances inclusion and belonging.

Another important element of successfully transitioning to a new position is ready access to information and resources and an environment in which questions can be asked openly and without

judgment. The Faculty Formation Program provided a helpful structure for information-sharing to occur. At the beginning of the year, for example, the director compiled resources related to student mental health and student support that were distributed to new faculty in hard copy and online. A guide to student support was subsequently developed as a resource to share with the faculty-at-large. Later in the year the director of the program received feedback that junior colleagues were unclear about the probationary review process, so a meeting was organized on the topic of completing the annual report and presenting evidence of teaching, research, and service in the probationary dossier. This was a valuable opportunity for asking questions in a non-judgmental atmosphere and hearing from senior colleagues about their own approach to annual review and promotion and tenure. Participants left feeling more confident about how to proceed with these key aspects of documenting their labor and accomplishments as faculty members. College-wide gatherings were also an opportunity for information exchange. For example, the College of Health Professors hosted a discussion on classroom management, online teaching and learning, and the university’s learning management system, providing helpful infrastructure for faculty teaching. Unlike resource and information-sharing that is top-down (from a department chair or dean, for example), sharing knowledge within a faculty-led program fosters an environment of mutual concern and support.

Table 1. In-person gatherings

Session Topics	Activities
New Faculty Orientation	<p>Introduced key aspects of mission in faculty life, including care of the whole person, social justice, and engagement with the local community/urban context. Invited faculty to participate in the year-long Faculty Formation Program and distributed a roster for the program, including contact information for new faculty colleagues and senior mentors.</p> <p>Discussion themes: Diverse constituents support the university’s mission, including non-Catholic faculty members and individuals who are not part of a faith tradition.</p>
Balancing Life and Work as a New Faculty Member	<p>Senior mentors share personal experiences with challenges of work-life balance and the importance of setting boundaries that prioritize activities and relationships beyond work.</p> <p>Discussion themes: time management, maintaining physical and mental health, meeting teaching, service and scholarship expectations without compromising quality of life.</p>

<p>Engaging with the Jesuit and Mercy Mission</p>	<p>Discuss shared readings on Ignatian pedagogy; characteristics of Mercy higher education; the Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy; and the Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus.</p> <p>Discussion themes: Jesuit and Mercy values with a focus on teaching; connecting the university’s dual charisms with faculty members’ vocation and teaching praxis.</p> <p>Questions for discussion include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Which of the goals of the Jesuit and Mercy educational traditions resonate with you? ● What might “whole-person” teaching look like in the context of your classes and your discipline? ● What points of connection do you see between your course content and the Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy and/or Universal Apostolic Preference of the Society of Jesus?
<p>College-Specific Gathering: Promotion and Tenure (P&T)</p>	<p>Discuss the Promotion and Tenure process within mentees’ college/school. Mentee Q&A on promotion and tenure expectations.</p> <p>Discussion themes: P&T as a tool for self reflection and vocation-building; identifying core values and connecting with career development.</p>
<p>Discernment: Self-Reflection and Dialogue</p>	<p>In rotating pairs, discuss the following questions in the spirit of “generous listening”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● When did you know you wanted to take this path—in work or in life? How did you know? What did it feel like? ● Who is someone who has inspired or challenged you up until this moment? What did they do or say? How did it feel? ● Describe a moment of joy this academic year. ● Describe an obstacle this academic year. ● Ten years from now, how would you like your students to describe you? ● What impact does your scholarship or field of study have on the broader community? <i>If this is difficult to answer, imagine yourself answering a prospective student who wants to know how they can make a difference in the world.</i>
<p>Annual Report and Dossier</p>	<p>Provide information about the university’s annual review process, including examples from senior mentors’ annual reports. Senior mentors share approaches to the annual report and promotion and tenure. Mentee Q & A.</p> <p>Discussion themes: Faculty can reflect engagement with mission through teaching, research, and service, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student-centeredness ● <i>Cura personalis</i> (care of the whole person, integration of the whole person) ● Accompanying students in learning ● Community engagement (service to/solidarity with) ● Service/promotion of justice ● Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging ● Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm ● Engaging students in questions of purpose, meaning, vocation, faith ● Ethics-based ● Dignity of the person

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Detroit-based, urban context ● Promotion of one or more of the Society of Jesus Universal Apostolic Preferences or Sisters of Mercy Critical Concerns ● Engagement with Catholic social teaching or the Catholic intellectual tradition
Embedded Mentorship: Learning from Advanced Assistant Professors	<p>Assistant professor guest speakers. Four faculty members spoke, two concluding their second year and two preparing to apply for promotion and tenure.</p> <p>Discussion themes: Challenges and joys as faculty members; what would have been helpful to know in the two years; strategies for developing a summer plan, i.e. using summer for research and recuperation.</p>

Pilot Program Evaluation

At the conclusion of the program, participants were given an opportunity to provide feedback on the Faculty Formation Program through completion of a confidential online survey. Institutional Review Board approval was received from the host institution to evaluate the outcome of the program. Completion of the program survey was voluntary and no identifiable information was collected or reported for the purpose of dissemination in this paper. The participants were informed that completion of the survey was anonymous and that information collected would be presented as research data and used to develop future Faculty Formation programming at the host institution.

Results

Six open-ended questions were asked via a confidential evaluation survey, which was distributed in spring 2023 in hard copy with QR code and by email. Participants articulated what they found most and least valuable in the program and provided recommendations for future programming. They were also asked to reflect on how working in a Jesuit and Mercy institution informs (or will inform) their roles as faculty members. Twenty-eight ($n = 28$) survey responses were received, representing a 78% response rate. The three researchers in this paper conducted a review of respondents' feedback and looked for meaningful patterns across survey responses. The researchers analyzed responses in order to identify common themes (Table 2 and 3). Themes were then grouped into categories and presented in a cohesive manner based on 100% agreement between all three researchers.

The first question asked what features of the program participants found most valuable. As shown in Table 2, the top two themes participants valued were relationships and networking (77%, $n = 21$) and creating community/collegiality (66%, $n = 18$). Other features identified as valuable included fellowship, engagement with place, engagement with mission, learning opportunities, and the atmosphere and pacing of the program. Significantly, building relationships occurred between departments and colleges, allowing participants to feel like they are part of a larger community: "One of the most valuable experiences in this mentorship was the ability to network with colleagues across various disciplines throughout the university." An important element of community-building was combating feelings of isolation and promoting a sense of belonging: "I found the most valuable parts to be the hospitality and sense of belonging that was built through the program." Both senior mentors and new faculty members found the interpersonal connections formed through the program to be positive and meaningful. As a new faculty member reported: "It was most valuable for me to connect with faculty outside of my department. Connecting with the new cohort also established a peer-group who became friends, co-investigators, and simply connections. Parts of the mentorship that allowed senior faculty to share their stories about various topics (work life balance, incorporating the mission, departmental support, etc.) were especially helpful in relaying the collegial atmosphere of the school, as no two schools are alike. Hearing from a diverse group of senior mentors gave me confidence that I would be welcomed and supported."

The second question asked what features of the program the participants found least valuable. The top two responses were that all aspects were valuable (73%, $n = 14$) followed by challenges with timing (10%, $n = 2$). Most participants felt that all features of the program were helpful to their growth as faculty: “I don’t recall any parts that were not valuable. Even though I have served in various roles at the institution, there was still a lot to learn from the faculty member perspective.” Timing of in-person meetings is a challenge, especially with a large group with various teaching schedules and work and family obligations. As one participant expressed: “I wouldn’t call this least valuable by any means, [but] with so many participants it is always difficult to organize events at a time that works for everyone.” One respondent did note that “it takes more than 1 year to build [a] sense of belonging and maintain...relationships,” suggesting the need for programming to extend beyond one year.

The third question asked what elements of the program worked well and should be KEPT as well as what participants think we could ADD or CHANGE to make it better. The most common elements to keep were: Sharing of food (20%, $n = 6$) and Keep as is (20%, $n = 6$). The most common suggestion for adjustment was Timing and spacing of in-person meetings (27%, $n = 8$). Some participants suggested that the timing of in-person meetings (typically in the evening) could be adjusted or varied to accommodate participants’ availability: “Having dinner is awesome, but for faculty with kids it is difficult to arrange it”. On the other hand, the impact of shared meals was appreciated: “Even though I couldn’t make it [to] all, the dinners were great for meeting people and fostering a sense of community.” There was some variation in the frequency of mentor-mentee meetings; providing clearer guidelines about the goals and outcomes of those meetings could be beneficial. Other suggestions included providing additional opportunities for mentees to share their feelings and experiences with the group; hosting visitors from across the university; and incorporating additional off-campus socialization.

The fourth question asked if there is anything else about the Faculty Formation Program experience that participants would like to share with us. The overall consensus from participants was that their

experience was worthwhile, meaningful, and positive. As one faculty mentee reported: “This program was just what I needed to feel inclusion and belonging. Even through this year, I questioned if this faculty role was right for me. The relationships, discussion, and fellowship in Faculty Formation helped me to realize that the role is a good fit and I do belong. It helped me realize that this is where I want to be!”

The fifth question asked what would participants like to see happen next, i.e., what might a “Part 2” look like for them and/or the other participants? A large number of participants expressed interest in Continued engagement with the Faculty Formation Program (92%, $n = 25$). As one respondent put it: “I could envision the group continuing as a space for introspection and discussion of our roles at the university. How is our teaching, research, and service feeding or detracting from our well-being? How are we working in deliberate and meaningful ways? It would also be a productive space for navigating the tenure process, from the third-year review to the final stages.” Respondents also expressed support for holding “Pass the baton” transition meetings (18%, $n = 5$) between faculty cohorts and Offer[ing] program to future faculty cohorts (14%, $n = 4$). Participants desire continuity in community and mentorship, “to see continued engagement and support between the mentors and mentees beyond this program.”

The sixth question was a reflection question that asked participants to describe how working in a Jesuit and Mercy institution informs (or will inform) their roles as a faculty member. As shown in Table 3, a number of faculty report that mission informs their faculty roles (teaching/research/service) (38%, $n = 10$) while others expressed desire to learn more about core Jesuit and Mercy concepts (15%, $n = 4$): “I am interested in continuing to learn about both charisms and understanding my relation to the world and my work through Mercy and Jesuit frameworks.” Both types of response suggest that faculty find meaning and purpose in the university’s dual charisms, even as they seek to understand them more fully. Notably there was not a singular interpretation of the Jesuit and Mercy charisms; rather, participants identified (and identified with) a range of values they align with those traditions:

social justice; hospitality; community engagement; diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging; women’s wisdom; humanitarianism; anti-racism; non-violence. Individuals also called attention to the Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus and the Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy, in addition to the practice of discernment. It is worth noting that neither faith nor prayer was identified as a core value that informs individuals’ roles as faculty members.

The Jesuit value that was identified most often by faculty participants was *cura personalis* / care of the whole person (38%, *n* = 10). Even if a faculty member was not familiar with this language before the Faculty Formation Program, many strongly resonated with pedagogical approaches inherent to *cura personalis*: adopting a student-centered

approach; recognizing the full context and experience of students’ lives; and welcoming diverse identities and experiences into the classroom. Many faculty made explicit connections between the Jesuit and Mercy traditions and their approach to teaching (38%, *n* = 10), including an interest in Ignatian pedagogy and an emphasis on holistic approaches that integrate students’ intellectual, social, spiritual, and ethical development. It is evident from faculty responses that they take seriously their role in guiding students and integrating Jesuit and Mercy values into teaching praxis: “One of the things I take into my role as a faculty member is the idea of *cura personalis*, and I think students value the relationships and personal attention they get from faculty here.”

Table 2. Common themes in response to Survey Question 1

What features of the faculty formation mentorship program did you find most valuable ?
<p>Relationships / Networking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● relationship building (<i>n</i> = 11) ● building relationships with faculty from other disciplines (<i>n</i> = 7) ● collaboration opportunities/networking (<i>n</i> = 3) <p>Creating Community / Collegiality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● sense of belonging (<i>n</i> = 8) ● community with others (<i>n</i> = 4) ● socializing / meeting new colleagues (<i>n</i> = 4) ● collegiality (<i>n</i> = 2) <p>Fellowship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● shared meals (<i>n</i> = 4) ● fellowship (<i>n</i> = 2) ● hospitality (<i>n</i> = 1) <p>Engagement with Place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● local business support (<i>n</i> = 1) ● engagement with Detroit (<i>n</i> = 1) <p>Engagement with Mission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● enhanced understanding of university mission (<i>n</i> = 3) ● integrating mission to faculty life (<i>n</i> = 2) <p>Learning Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● learning from senior mentors (<i>n</i> = 4) ● resource and information on resources (<i>n</i> = 3) ● advice and support (<i>n</i> = 2) ● sharing wisdom, experiences, stories (<i>n</i> = 5) <p>Atmosphere</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● informal setting (<i>n</i> = 2) ● relaxed atmosphere (<i>n</i> = 1) ● comfortable pace (<i>n</i> = 1)

Note: Number of responses for each theme is noted in parenthesis

Table 3. Common themes in response to Survey Question 6

Describe how working in a Jesuit and Mercy institution informs (or will inform) your roles as a faculty member.
<p>Faculty Members' Relationship to Mission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mission informs faculty roles (teaching/research/service) ($n = 10$) ● Desire to learn more about core Jesuit and Mercy concepts ($n = 4$) <p>Jesuit Tradition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Care of the whole person/ <i>cura personalis</i> ($n = 10$) ● Discernment ($n = 1$) ● Social justice ($n = 4$) ● Universal Apostolic Preferences ($n = 1$) <p>Mercy Tradition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hospitality ($n = 3$) ● Mercy values ($n = 1$) ● Amplifying women's wisdom ($n = 1$) ● Sisters of Mercy Critical Concerns ($n = 2$) <p>Approaches to Teaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student-centered teaching ($n = 2$) ● Holistic education ($n = 4$) ● Context and experience of students ($n = 2$) ● Spiritual connection to teaching ($n = 1$) ● Ignatian pedagogy/Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm ($n = 2$) <p>Other values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community engagement ($n = 3$) ● Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging ($n = 3$) ● Anti-racism/decolonizing the curriculum ($n = 1$) ● Humanitarianism ($n = 1$) ● Non-violence ($n = 1$)

Note: Number of responses for each theme is noted in parenthesis

Discussion

Based on participants' overwhelmingly positive feedback, both on the confidential evaluation survey and written and verbal expressions of appreciation, the year-long pilot of the Faculty Formation Program was a success. Faculty members articulated that the program expanded their knowledge and understanding and helped them establish strong connections with other members of the university community. Faculty also valued discussions about the Jesuit and Mercy traditions, which will help guide their work as faculty members in supporting the mission of the institution.

Community, Collaboration, and Belonging

A lack of community and sense of belonging was identified as a core concern in the literature.³⁴ The Faculty Formation Program fostered both professional and social relationships among peers, contributing to a sense of belonging at the university. Participants came from diverse backgrounds and identities and have had a variety of experiences within academia, which enhanced the inclusiveness of the community. The program emphasized a welcoming, relaxed atmosphere which helped participants, especially junior faculty, feel at ease and able to express themselves freely without the fear of being judged or misunderstood. Throughout the mentorship program, senior faculty exhibited care for junior faculty members, irrespective of discipline. This

collegial expression of support resonated with junior faculty, and many credit the mentorship program as a major support in their professional development and transition into academic life and/or the institution. Attendees also felt that they were part of a community with others who shared similar experiences and were reassured to learn that they were not alone in their feelings and experiences. Finally, participants indicated that this program models the institution's mission, inspiring attendees to be proactive and involved with colleagues and students.

Sharing Stories of Work Life Balance

Good practice balances one's professional and personal commitments and interests.³⁵ Many incoming junior faculty are apprehensive about how to adjust to their new norm and fear losing time for themselves, family, and friends. Maintaining work-life balance while navigating full-time teaching responsibilities is also a common concern expressed by early-career faculty.³⁶ A healthy work-life balance was a focus throughout the Faculty Formation Program. Resources within and outside the university were offered to assist faculty in working effectively and efficiently while maintaining personal relationships and a healthy mind and body. Along with information, senior faculty mentors practiced *cura personalis* by offering suggestions for maintaining balance, setting reasonable boundaries, and prioritizing meaningful work without compromising one's quality of life. Throughout this mentorship program, junior faculty expressed appreciation for the stories and experiences shared by senior faculty and invited guests. Open conversations like these are important for faculty to sustain productivity and flourish in the long term.

Reflecting on Mission

Good practice includes clearly communicating performance expectations and assisting early-career faculty in setting goals that align with institutional mission.³⁷ Faculty in Catholic colleges and universities benefit from a guided introduction to mission,³⁸ including its relationship to Catholic social teaching, the Catholic intellectual tradition, and their institution's sponsoring charism(s). At the host

institution, faculty members are asked to reflect on how mission is integrated into their scholarship, teaching, and service as part of the annual review process. Many new faculty, regardless of their background, have a limited understanding of the institution's dual charisms. Through the Faculty Formation Program, faculty gained insights about the diverse ways faculty integrate mission to teaching, research, and service. As a result, most participants found mission directly relevant to their work lives. A response from a non-Catholic faculty member indicated that it was still a steep learning curve to articulate and reflect on Jesuit and Mercy values, but the Faculty Formation Program was able to break down key concepts with explicit connections to faculty roles.

Lessons Learned and Goals for Future Programming

As with any initiative, there are opportunities for program improvements or enhancements. As described in Table 1, the program afforded multiple opportunities to learn about faculty formation principles that are useful for new and seasoned faculty. For instance, faculty learn about Ignatian pedagogy as well as Jesuit and Mercy values and traditions and how they impact their roles at the institution. In some cases, connections built through the program created opportunities for further collaboration between faculty across the university in teaching, research, and service. Making space to identify potential areas for collaboration could be a more explicit goal of the program. While in-person gatherings were an important component of the formation program, some participants found it difficult to attend events in the evening, when the majority of gatherings were held. Responsibilities to family and community were the most common reasons for inability to participate. Survey results indicated that some participants felt the program would benefit from offering additional program sessions and/or scheduling programming at additional times of the day. Participants also indicated the possibility of adding activities that allow new faculty to lead. By having new faculty guide certain activities within the program, they feel valued and engaged, reflecting Jesuit and Mercy values. It was also suggested that participation in the program extend beyond a single year so that faculty can continue to establish relationships and build community. All of these suggestions will be

considered as the Faculty Formation Program evolves. In response to the evaluation survey, the program will also be expanded to include a reunion gathering for senior mentors and mentees from the pilot year. In addition, mentees who participated in the program during the pilot year will be invited to share their experiences with the next faculty cohort, enhancing the program's embedded mentorship model. Having practiced a shared foundation of self-reflection and dialogue, a more in-depth introduction to Ignatian discernment is planned for the 2023-2024 academic year.

Conclusion

To institute a university-wide faculty mentorship program is a significant undertaking. In order for an initiative of this scale to be successful, it is crucial to have strong institutional champions—in this case sponsorship by the host institution's Office of Academic Affairs and Office of Mission Integration. While it is helpful to have a point person coordinating the program, it is also important to engage a wide range of campus stakeholders in planning and implementation.

The investment of time and institutional resources has had a significant payoff for individual faculty members and the broader culture of the institution. Working in a Jesuit and Mercy institution, faculty are charged with welcoming students and accompanying them in their intellectual, spiritual, social, and ethical development. This is no less true of our responsibility to colleagues. Helping faculty members reach their full potential while caring for their whole, unique person is strongly aligned with core values of Jesuit higher education. Faculty, in turn, can model hospitality, *cura personalis*, *magis*, and discernment in their interactions with students, colleagues, and community members. Faculty Formation Program participants articulated the value of learning about institutional mission and how Jesuit and Mercy values can inform teaching, research, and service. They will be able to utilize what they learned and experienced to nurture the university's mission of excellent, student-centered education; commitment to service and social justice; and solidarity with our local community.

The Faculty Formation Program had myriad benefits for both mentees and senior mentors. New faculty members received mentorship from seasoned faculty who shared their own experiences (successes and challenges) and how they were successful in meeting promotion and tenure requirements. Mentees had the opportunity to meet with their mentors one-on-one and develop a broader network of relationships with senior faculty and colleagues in their cohort. Senior mentors' participation in the Faculty Formation Program constitutes significant university service, which is required when applying for promotion to full professor in the host university. Each faculty mentor received a formal letter of appreciation from the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; this letter is evidence of their commitment to support junior faculty members' success in teaching, research, and service. Most importantly, mentors were guided by intrinsic motivation and rewarded with benefits similar to mentees: relationship-building, community, and a greater sense of connection to their institution and colleagues.

For both new faculty and senior mentors, the Faculty Formation Program created opportunities for ongoing collaborations across disciplines and departments. Participants in the program have worked together to develop research projects and writing for publication; exchanged ideas about teaching and curriculum; visited each other's classes; and embarked on institutional service like committee and team work (and, in one case, a design project for a student space). Participants felt that with their new-found community of colleagues increased their ability to establish peer groups, identify co-investigators, and network with colleagues across disciplines. Participants have also introduced each other to colleagues within their respective programs or colleges, extending the program's impact on relationship- and community-building. Some mentees are conducting research with their mentors, collaborative relationships that will continue after the program has ended. Equally important are more informal relationships. As an email from one new faculty member suggests, networking can take many forms, all of them valuable: "I have been able to keep in touch with a few new faculty members thanks to Faculty Formation. One relationship likely bearing a strong collaborative

research project/paper! Another, quarterly taco lunches. Another, sporadic notes on car maintenance.”³⁹

As the Faculty Formation Program concludes this academic year, the relationships formed among program participants will continue. Mentors have expressed their continued commitment to mentees’ professional success and overall well-being. Their experience as mentors will naturally extend to their relationships with other junior faculty in their departments and colleges. Similarly,

new faculty members have expressed that they will use what they have learned in this program to grow in their academic roles. We are confident that junior colleagues will become mentors themselves and utilize their experience in the program to assist others. Finally, the Faculty Formation Program has created a network of colleagues across the university, individuals who are willing to share expertise and demonstrate care in supporting each other. These are Jesuit and Mercy values that will serve the mission in the short and long term. HJE

Endnotes

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²¹ Denard Thomas, Lunsford, and Rodrigues,” 320.

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