Lasallian Assessment: In the Footsteps of the Founder or a Badly-Put Question?\(^1\)

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It has been a great pleasure and a distinct honor to write this paper and to use it as the basis of my presentation at the 16\(^{th}\) Lasallian Convocation at Manhattan College, my alma mater. My experience at Manhattan transformed me, but I would have to admit that that transformation has taken a good bit of time and continues today. If you would have asked me at my Commencement in 1973 who John Baptist de La Salle was and what “Lasallian” referred to I would have been utterly clueless. We didn’t talk about De La Salle, unless I just wasn’t paying attention, which is a possibility. What was perfectly clear, though, was that the Christian Brothers embodied something special. I can name names. Brother Gabriel Costello taught me Renaissance and Reformation history; Brother Austin O’Malley taught me medieval history; and Brother Patrick McGarry taught me early modern European history and was my academic advisor. These men changed my life and they did so in a perfectly Lasallian way: by their example.

In the *Tenth Meditation for the Time of Retreat* (202.3) De La Salle writes:

> Your zeal for the children you instruct would not go very far and would not have much result or success if it limited itself only to words. To make it effective it is necessary that your example support your instructions, and this is one of the main signs of your zeal…. It is easy to conclude from these examples that your zeal for the children who are under your guidance would be very imperfect if you exercised it only by instructing them; it will only become perfect if you practice yourselves what you are teaching them. Example makes a much greater impression on the mind and heart than words, especially for children, since they

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\(^1\) I would like to dedicate this essay to Brother Luke Salm, FSC and Brother Robert Smith, FSC, for the simple reason that without them it would never have been written.
do not yet have minds sufficiently able to reflect, and they ordinarily model themselves on the example of their teachers.”

It was only some twenty years after graduation that I realized that I had chosen my own fields in European history in an exact modeling of the teaching example of these Brothers. Such is the power of the Lasallian charism and the ability of the Brothers to teach minds and to touch hearts.

Those Brothers embodied “Lasallian” to the highest degree. I can only guess that it was the result of their own discernment and the process of formation they had completed. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Via Consecrata* Pope John Paul II wrote of consecrated life as a process of forming “the new man or woman.” This new identity used to be noted by the Brothers abandoning their baptismal name for a new religious one. This “new life,” to paraphrase Dante, is an elusive yet essential thing.

We have gotten off to a very quick start and have already established some key ideas that we need to consider further. The first is that Lasallian must always refer in some concrete and specific way to the life and thought of John Baptist De La Salle and the tradition of the Christian Schools, as practiced by the Brothers for more than three hundred years. “Lasallian” can contain many other things but to lose these two traits is to veer off into something inauthentic. But secondly, we have also seen that the Brothers practiced what we may call a super-authentic Lasallian approach to education as vowed religious who underwent a deep process of formation. I would suggest that we lay partners, if this is the term that we wish to use, cannot become true coworkers unless we

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undergo some sort of formation process as well. Brother Antonio Botana, in his “Thematic Vocabulary of Lasallian Association,” writes that lay partners are “...the overall group of persons who participate in the Lasallian mission in very diverse ways. The distinctive characteristic is participation in the mission, and not simply an affective relationship or a religious devotion.” Botana refers to this participation as a journey of collaboration, “...a call to deepen the charism, spirituality and Lasallian communion....”

I would suggest that Lasallian assessment can function as at least a part of a formation program, a journey of collaboration, for Lasallian partners who are engaged in tertiary education. Then there is the historical problem of translating the ideas and practices of those primary schools for poor boys in the seventeenth-century France into a tertiary education for the twenty-first century. It’s no wonder that creating a university that is truly Lasallian is such a challenge.

But there is a still greater challenge that has been profoundly explored by Brother Luke Salm in two extraordinary essays. The first has the provocative title “Is the Lasallian University an Oxymoron?” In it Brother Luke suggests that the Lasallian university is not an oxymoron, but he articulates some real threats to the Lasallian identity of our universities. These warning signs include the substitution of brotherhood, an essential associational and horizontal relationship, by increasing bureaucratization and compartmentalization. These fraternal relationships apply not only between teachers but also between them and administrators and students, respectively. They permeate – or

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5 “Thematic Vocabulary, 27. He is in fact quoting from Circular 447, “The Documents of the 43rd General Chapter.”
6 Presented at Christian Brothers University, Memphis, Tennessee, March 17, 1988.
ought to - the Lasallian university. The second threat is making teaching, viewed as a calling, less important than research and administration. What I interpret as the intrinsic tension between “Lasallian” and “university” is the starting point for this paper. But this tension, this force, is exerted largely in one direction: the Lasallian university can become too much a university and too little a Lasallian institution.

In an even more penetrating essay entitled “The Lasallian Tradition and the Liberal Arts,” Brother Luke explores the deep tensions between these two traditions. He contrasts the emphasis placed by the liberal arts on learning for its own sake with the practicality of the Christian Schools. “Learning for its own sake, liberal arts in that sense, was a luxury that the clientele of the Christian Schools simply could not afford.”

Additional stresses between the two traditions include the elitist nature of the liberal arts versus the Lasallian emphasis on finding a way to make education available to all; the centrality of the Latin classics in the liberal arts tradition versus the use of the vernacular in the Christian Schools; and the catechetical approach of the latter versus the academic theology of the former. Brother Luke summarizes his argument with this extraordinary conclusion:

In sum, we might say that the evidence we have concerning the policies and practices established by John Baptist de La Salle at the origins of the Institute of the Brothers yields very little to support an educational theory based on the liberal arts, understood as a curriculum devoted to liberal learning for its own sake. Rather, the opposite seems to be the case.

Having established the potential oxymoronic character of the Lasallian university, Brother Luke then proceeds to describe how the two traditions can be reconciled. This

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7 “Oxymoron,” 4-5.
8 “The Lasallian Tradition and the Liberal Arts.” Presented at Saint Mary’s College of California, April 7, 1988, 18. The copy of the essay in typescript, kindly supplied by Brother Luke Salm, begins on p. 16.
9 Passim but especially 23.
10 “Lasallian Tradition,” 19.
occurred in the United States as the Brothers entered higher education for the first time and did so originally in establishing Manhattan College in 1853. This propelled the Brothers into teaching Latin and those liberal arts classics and also into much controversy. But the motivation for entering into tertiary education was entirely practical and traditionally Lasallian: to serve the educational needs of Catholic immigrants.

The highpoint of the essay is an extended quotation from a talk by Jacques Maritain delivered at Manhattan College in 1951 on the occasion of the three hundredth anniversary of De La Salle’s birth. Praising the Brothers he said:

From the very start they have understood that as concerns the working classes...education must equip youth with a genuine and efficient professional training and the means of making a living. And they have understood at the same time that the formation of the soul and of the intellect, the bringing up of man as man, remains the highest and indispensable aim of education. That integration...of the practical and the theoretical, of vocational preparation and the cultivation of the mind – with the implied general enlightenment, ability to think and judge by oneself, and orientation toward wisdom – that integration is natural for them, and they work it out spontaneously, because they are neither idealists despising matter nor technocrats despising disinterred knowledge...¹¹

With typical Salmian pointedness Brother Luke responds with skepticism asking “Is it, in fact, integration that we have achieved, or rather something between peaceful coexistence and an armed truce?”¹²

While ever the realist in demolishing Maritain’s well-meaning praise, Brother Luke does not succumb to cynicism. Indeed he enters into a high theological mode by identifying the common element between the Lasallian and liberal arts traditions as the recognition of humanity as the children of God. He writes: “For all of its orientation to the practical, the Lasallian tradition from the beginning has had an almost awesome

respect for the student as a human person, called to be a child of God…. However career-oriented the curriculum or standardized the methodology, Lasallian education was centered on the fundamental human and religious values that make life worth living.”

We need to pause for a moment and be true to our method. Does Brother Luke’s analysis of the relationship between the Lasallian and liberal arts traditions have support in the writings of De La Salle? The answer is yes, and I cite a section in The Conduct of Schools, entitled “Preparing Students for Promotions.” The last part reads:

They [the teachers] will do this [inform students that they will not be promoted] in such a manner that these students will be content to remain in the lesson or in the level where they are. They will persuade them by means of some reward, by assigning to them an office such as that of the first student in the bench, making them understand that it is better [my emphasis] to be the first, or among the first, in a lower grade than the last in a more advanced one.

Better for whom? Clearly, for the student, perhaps also for the class. This is a profoundly humane approach to education, one which places first the welfare of the student. But I would argue that it is an approach largely foreign to the university and Academia.

What did the university bring to education that hadn’t existed in the cathedral and monastic schools it replaced? The answer is in a sense the very administration that Brother Luke alluded to above as a danger to our Lasallian identity. For what the university brought was organization and standards: disciplines, schools, colleges, organizations of faculty and students (universitates), chancellors, rectors, and deans, the notion of a curriculum of study definitively established, a distinct program of study, and perhaps most of all the academic degree, a certification that those standards had been

reached and that program had been completed. In a word the university brought us rigor, an inflexibility that set out certain requirements that had to be fulfilled if that much-desired certification - the degree - was to be acquired. What are our syllabi but requirements for the successful completion of the course; and what are our catalogs but certain widely established standards for graduation? So, the university emphasizes the rigor of requirements to which students must be held and the idea of matriculating towards earning a degree. On the other hand, the Lasallian school emphasizes a compassion for the human being even at the expense of intellectual progress. The Conduct has the following advice for dealing with “slow” students:

The faults children like these commit ordinarily include not following the lesson, not reading well, not remembering or reciting catechism well, and learning nothing or very little. What is beyond their capacity must not be required of them. Neither should teachers let them become discouraged but should manage somehow to advance them, encourage them from time to time, and be satisfied with the little progress that they make.

The idea of somehow advancing students who have not achieved the learning objectives is a real challenge to traditional notions of academic rigor.

In sum, we have clarified that the Lasallian university partakes of two traditions. The university emphasizes 1) the compartmentalization of disciplines and schools; 2) the bureaucracy necessary to establish strict standards, the rigor of applying those standards for the matriculation and graduation of students, and for the hiring, tenure, and promotion for faculty; and 3) the liberal arts tradition of learning for its own sake. On the other hand, the Christian Schools stress 1) brotherhood and strong associational relationships; 2) practical education designed toward the goal of gainful employment; and 3) a

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16 *Conduct*, 149.
curriculum and pedagogy centered on human and religious values. In addition, 4) we need to factor in that the Lasallian tradition was created by and for vowed religious who underwent a strict religious formation, and 5) the task of finding relevance in a pedagogy designed for the primary education of largely poor boys in seventeenth-century France. And this brings us finally to the key question in our inquiry: How can we better integrate a Lasallian approach to teaching and learning with the university tradition? How can Lasallian partners actually accomplish what Maritain claimed the Brothers had done but which Brother Luke found overly optimistic? We have before us a challenge of monumental proportions.

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In this section I will focus on the significance of the presentation’s title. We begin with a syllogism:

- Assessment is a product of the administrative nature of the university
- The university tradition and the Lasallian tradition are in tension with one another
- Assessment is not a product of a Lasallian university

Is this true? On some grounds perhaps it is. After all nowadays nothing is more bureaucratized and administered at universities than assessment. Indeed, one could argue that assessment, with all of its accumulation of data, is dehumanizing and that the question of Lasallian assessment is indeed a badly-put question and an oxymoron. And as Brother Luke points out, these characteristics of the modern, secular university are threats to the Lasallian university. But we must be true to the method and ask if assessment follows in the footsteps of the Founder?
We must turn to *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, the greatest of all Lasallian sources on teaching. In the very first paragraph of the very first edition of the *Conduct* (1706) De La Salle wrote the following:

This guide has been prepared and put in order (by the late M. De La Salle) only after a great number of conferences between him and the oldest Brothers of the Institute and those most capable of running a school well, and after several years of experience. Nothing has been added that has not been thoroughly deliberated and well tested, nothing of which the advantages and disadvantages have not been weighed and, as far as possible, of which the good or bad consequences have not been foreseen.”¹⁷

We need to define assessment and will do so below. For now it will be sufficient to suggest that assessment is the systematic collection and review of information for the purpose of improving student learning. Clearly, this is exactly what De La Salle and the Brothers were doing in the *Conduct*, keeping in mind that “running a school well” refers most of all to students learning well by means of effective pedagogy.

Within the *Conduct* there are even more specific clues to what we may begin to call Lasallian assessment. The 1706 manuscript mandates the maintenance of six registers: 1) the Admissions Register; 2) the Register of Promotion in Lessons; 3) the Register of Levels of Lessons; 4) the Register of the Good and Bad Qualities of Students; 5) the Register of the Bench Leader; and 6) the Register of Home Visitations.¹⁸ These registers are nothing more and nothing less than the systematic collection and review of information on students. What is so interesting about them is that the *Conduct* assigns the first two for the use of the Inspector of Schools, the second two for the use of the teacher; and places the last two in the hands of the students. The Inspector was in

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¹⁷ *Conduct*, 45. References to the last De La Salle were added by Brother Timothée in the 1720 published edition. See Brother Edward Everett’s Introduction, 26.

¹⁸ *Conduct*, 239.
modern terms the “administration.”\textsuperscript{19} So, the registers are distributed evenly among the administration, the teachers, and the students, a model of those horizontal relationships that Brother Luke identified as essentially Lasallian.

Most of the registers contain straightforward information such as the names of students promoted, the names of all the students currently at the same level of study, and the number of absences and tardies. But three contain information of an extraordinary kind. The Admissions Register is a snapshot of the student as he enters into the Christian School. It contains the date admitted, name and surname of the students and parents, name of parish, whether the child had received Communion and Confirmation. But it also contained some educational information such as whether the child had ever attended school before, with whom and for how long, and why the child left that school. It also mandates leaving some blank space to be filled in later on the child’s character and disposition.\textsuperscript{20}

This last interest is taken up by the register of the Good and Bad Qualities of Students. This register was drawn up at the end of the year and based on the teacher’s observations. Again, it contains basic information of name and surname and the level of class. But most of the register is devoted to evaluating the child’s piety, intelligence, good will, response to correction, punctuality, attendance, diligence, whether he can learn easily and if not whether this is due to “dullness” or lack of effort. These we may call dispositions. But then there are two extraordinary instructions:

If it is a different teacher from that of the previous year, the new teacher shall make use of this register for the first three months. In this way, \textit{the teacher shall get to know the students better and learn how to treat them} (my emphasis).

\textsuperscript{19} Conduct, Introduction, 41.
\textsuperscript{20} Conduct, 239-240.
The director shall keep all these registers and shall compare those of previous years with those of subsequent years, comparing those drawn up by different teachers who have taught this same class and these same students to see if their perceptions agree or differ, in whole or in part.\textsuperscript{21}

Plainly, the purpose of the register is to know the students better and how to treat them more effectively, that is, how to promote successful learning. Similarly, the Director acts in a “macro” sense of tracking the information gathered by different teachers over time. Thus the data on the student is collated with the Director’s data on the teachers. Presumably, the Director had a good grasp of the foibles of each teacher.\textsuperscript{22}

Even more extraordinary were the two registers entrusted to students. In the Register of the First Student in the Bench the chosen student was in charge of recording the absences and tardies of the students on his bench.\textsuperscript{23} The Register of Home Visitations is a register of students who lived in the same neighborhood. This was in the hands of the teacher. It was also a register in the hands of Student-Visitors of those students who lived near each other.\textsuperscript{24} Each Visitor was obliged to visit absentee students at their home after school. There they should determine why the students were absent and when they would return to class. If sick, the Visitor was to console the absentees and urge them to suffer their illness patiently.\textsuperscript{25} Two important principles are being employed here. First, the Conduct is giving extraordinary responsibility to selected students to keep their eye on the absences of their fellow students and to try to determine why they have been absent. This is yet another application of Lasallian brotherhood. Second, once again we

\textsuperscript{21} Conduct, 242.
\textsuperscript{22} The “Director” seems to refer to the office of the Director of the Community, the Brother who supervised the entire house of Brothers. One house might staff two or more schools in a single city. See Conduct, Introduction, 40.
\textsuperscript{23} Conduct, 251.
\textsuperscript{24} Conduct, 245.
\textsuperscript{25} Conduct, 252.
see that the purpose of this data gathering is to insure student learning. Here is what

Brother Léon Lauraire writes on these Student-Visitors:

“What is really interesting is not the way this system works, but rather the concern shown not to allow pupils to cut off contact with the school, and the sense of responsibility on the part of the teacher for all the pupils in his charge. This includes his desire to see his pupils make progress. This is part of the teacher-pupil relationship. It is also a means of preparing and facilitating the return of absent pupils to school, and their reintegration in the class group.”

In the Christian Schools there is nearly an anthropological sense of community fraught with fraternal relationships of all kinds.

We have established that John Baptist de La Salle and the Brothers practiced an advanced form of assessment. In the Conduct De La Salle makes constant reference to a well run school. To this end the Brothers consciously devised a new pedagogy, different from that of the Little Schools and the Charity Schools of the time with which the Christian Schools competed. This pedagogy developed over time and by trial and error, but also by the assiduous collection of data. But the Brothers practiced a particular form of assessment can be called Lasallian and its principal distinguishing characteristics were: first, a personalized knowledge of each pupil and second, a warm reciprocal relationship between student and teacher.

The third characteristic of Lasallian assessment is its theological imperative, for never is the Christian School disconnected from God. Meditation 33 is one of the most important articulations of all three these principles. But it also refers to the necessity of pedagogy and assessment:

In today’s Gospel Jesus Christ compares those who have charge of souls to a good shepherd who has great care for the sheep. One quality he must possess,

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27 Lauraire, 178-185.
according to our Savior, is to know each one of them individually. This should also be one of the main concerns of those who instruct others: to be able to understand their pupils and to discern the right way to guide them. They must show more mildness toward some, more firmness toward others. There are those who call for much patience, those who need to be stimulated and spurred on, some who need to be reproved and punished to correct them of their faults, others who must be constantly watched over to prevent them from being lost or going astray. This guidance requires understanding and discernment of spirits, qualities you should frequently and earnestly ask of God, for they are most necessary for you in the guidance of those placed in your care. (33.1) The members of the flock of Jesus Christ are also obliged to hear their shepherd’s voice. It is, then, your duty to teach the children entrusted to you; this is your duty everyday. They must understand what you say, so you must give them instructions adapted to their capacity, otherwise what you say would be of little use. For this purpose, you must prepare yourself and train yourself, so that your questions and your answers in the catechism lessons are understood well, so that you explain the text clearly and use words which will be easily understood. (33.3)

This is De la Salle at his most integrated. There is no separation between the evangelical message, its relevance to the lives of the Brothers, to their role as professional teachers, to student learning, and the intensely individualized and spiritual pedagogy of the Christian Schools.

Before we turn to an actual paradigm of Lasallian assessment we need to add one more characteristic of Lasallian assessment, the fourth: integration. The product of the Catholic intellectual tradition, reinforced by the huge influence of Scholasticism and the revival of Aristotelian studies, this integration can be demonstrated in at least three ways. The first is goals. The goal of the Christian schools was, as suggested by Brother Luke Salm, highly practical and vocational but also highly humane and spiritual. So, while the ordinary goal was to help graduates get a good job and better their lives, the ultimate goal was the pupil’s salvation.28 The second is curriculum. Most of the school day was spent on reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic. But the most important part of the

28 Meditations for the Time of Retreat, 193.3 and many other places.
curriculum was the catechism because knowledge of the faith was essential to salvation.\textsuperscript{29} And this essentially secular curriculum was constantly interrupted by prayer.\textsuperscript{30} The third is assessment. As we have seen, much of Lasallian assessment focuses on effective teaching and learning, but this is thoroughly integrated with the welfare of the individual.

In sum, Lasallian assessment, in the context of the Lasallian university, is like the assessment at every other university and with similar goals. But Lasallian assessment is also unique in two ways: in what it additionally assesses (the objects of assessment) and how it assesses (the method of assessment). In both cases it is guided by the authentic Lasallian characteristics of 1) a personalized knowledge of each pupil; 2) a warm reciprocal relationship between student and teacher; 3) the theological imperative; and 4) integration. These characteristics are authentic because they are derived from the thought and practice of John Baptist de La Salle and the Brothers of the Christian Schools. We turn now to the relationship between Lasallian assessment and its academic counterpart.

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The literature on assessment is enormous and I have no intention of surveying it. I would like to make only three points. The first is to offer a brief definition of assessment. Assessment can be defined as “...the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development.”\textsuperscript{31} We will come back to this definition in a moment.

Second, according to Hutchings and Marchese the meaning of assessment is captured

\textsuperscript{29} Meditations for the Time of Retreat, 199.
\textsuperscript{30} Conduct, 170-173.
best by its key questions such as what should college graduates know, be able to do, and value?\textsuperscript{32} This last question is particularly important in general education programs that have traditionally emphasized “…providing broad exposure to the skills and attitudes that help graduates function in society, rather than on developing specialized knowledge about particular disciplines…”\textsuperscript{33} The notion of functioning in society is at the heart of Lasallian education. The \textit{Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility}, written by De La Salle and used as a classroom reader proposes Christian love as the foundation of cultural refinement, and civility as the key to a well-ordered society.\textsuperscript{34}

Values, not just any values but Christian, Lasallian ones, are the most difficult part of students’ educations to assess, yet, arguably, they are the most important in distinguishing the Lasallian university from others. As we have clearly seen, Lasallian schools are distinguished by strong values such as the value of each student as a child of God and the value of the teacher-student relationship. These values are embedded in mission through Lasallian assessment, and learning goals and are transferable to students. According to Polomba and Banta “Assessment is intimately linked to an institution’s mission and learning goals.”\textsuperscript{35} Therefore, Christian, Lasallian values are an especially important part of Lasallian assessment in that they promote the most distinctive aspects of the Catholic Lasallian university’s mission. This is our second point. We offer this definition: Values are the priorities individuals and societies attach to certain beliefs, experiences, and objects, in deciding how they shall live and what they shall treasure.

\textsuperscript{33} Polomba and Banta, 239.
\textsuperscript{35} Polomba and Banta, 3.
Therefore, they are not mere cognitive states of mind but an active positioning of self in regard to a whole-person decision, readiness, or disposition to act in certain ways.

Values are moral, religious, intellectual, aesthetic, political, economic, and social. They relate self to the world. Ultimately, values are part of our identity and determine the way we put our lives together. Therefore, the mission of a Catholic Lasallian university is to offer students a clear sense of Catholic Lasallian values, with an invitation to embrace them in forming their identity and living their lives. This is easier said than done because we are on the cusp between articulating objective values and making those values part of an individual’s life in a very subjective and personal way.

Palomba and Banta define assessment in terms of programs:

The overriding purpose of assessment is to understand how educational programs are working and to determine whether they are contributing to student growth and development. Hence, the ultimate emphasis of assessment is on programs rather than on individual students. (My emphasis) At its most useful, assessment provides information about students as a group – information that can be aggregated across sections of a single course and is meaningful across courses.

While Lasallian assessment certainly assesses programs and their goals, it also directs assessment from programs to individual students and their welfare. This is the third point and is consistent with what was said above, that Lasallian assessment does everything that assessment does at other universities. But Lasallian assessment is distinctive in both what it also assesses and how it assesses. Recognizing the value of each individual student is perhaps the most important distinguishing feature of Lasallian assessment.

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37 Palomba and Banta, 5.
Therefore, Lasallian assessment finds ways of not only assessing the effectiveness of programs but also the progress of students as individuals.

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In spring of 2007 four members of the Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota faculty formed the Lasallian Assessment Group (LAG). It set as its goal the creation of a paradigm for Lasallian assessment. At this writing this task is ongoing. Therefore, I can only sketch out how this process is unfolding.

Because of the Lasallian principle of integration, LAG has operated from the assumption that the Lasallian university is truly a university and truly Catholic. Therefore, it has begun its construction of Lasallian assessment with first considering the university and then the special characteristics of the Catholic university. For the latter, it has integrated documents such as *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Then, we have identified six distinguishing goals of Lasallian universities whose achievement must be assessed. They are:

1. Responds to specific and changing educational needs, especially focused on individual students
2. Develops an identity in students rooted in faith and zeal
3. Provides a holistic, values-based education that integrates Catholic thought and tradition with various other traditions and cultures
4. Structures relationships in community, together and by association, with particular attention to the relationship between teacher and student
5. Measures its effectiveness by how it addresses the religious, social, political, and economic needs of those less fortunate, especially the young
6. Reflects the charism of John Baptist de La Salle and the Brothers of the Christian Schools
The committee then broke down these goals into more specific objectives. Finally, it furnished exemplars of assessment activities. For example, here is the first goal, five objectives, and several suggested exemplars.

**Responds to specific and changing educational needs, especially focused on individual students**

**Assessment:**

1. Identify student needs and responds to them
   
   a. For example: Faculty asks students to provide mid-term feedback on how students are doing in courses and what could help them be more successful before the end of the term.

   b. For example: The college responds to student needs as conveyed in a freshmen survey and makes decisions for improvement based on that data.

   c. For example: Programs contributed by the Academic Skills Center, the Writing Center, the Wellness Center, and Student Development work to identify and respond to specific needs in those areas.

   d. For example: Students in freshmen seminar self-report on their attitudes and behaviors with time management and other study skills, as well as alcohol and drug use and other social issues.

2. Assess individual progress
   
   a. For example: Faculty gathers prior knowledge data from students in class (via pretests or interest inventories) and measures student progress against that benchmark.

   b. For example: Faculty gathers common errors in writing (writing intensive class) and distributes these to students for further work. Individual consultations with needy students can be set up.

   c. For example: Advisors meet with students to discuss individual progress in both academic and social settings.

3. Create programs to insure individual student success
   
   a. For example: Tutoring sessions are provided for students by students in higher level courses.

   b. For example: Tegrity sessions, PowerPoint slide shows, or other documents are posted on Blackboard to help students review major content or concepts.

4. Implement pedagogies that include all abilities and learning styles
   
   a. For example: Faculty members include a variety of instructional strategies within a course unit recognizing that one mode of instruction does not work for all learners. This may include lecture, group work, and individual presentations as well as reading, writing, and graphic representations of learning.

   b. For example: Students are asked to offer feedback on learning styles that work for them and are sometimes given choices in modes of communication of learning.

5. Monitor motivation
a. For example: Ask each faculty member who teaches a course major to complete a dispositions rating (rubric) on each student in the class. The rubric would be a sort of “pass/fail” scale; and would help identify continuing issues with student attitudes.

b. For example: Faculty will respond to student communication about course work when appropriate. This may include survey responses, informal feedback, body language in class, and course attendance.

c. For example: Students will measure student engagement in class and try pedagogical strategies to increase active engagement.

The Lasallian Assessment Committee hopes to complete its work by early 2008. We would then offer the paradigm to all of the Lasallian universities in the United States, so that they could adapt it to their own culture and needs. It is our hope that this work responds to a need and that colleagues will find the paradigm useful. Together and by association we can initiate a dialogue and design a process that will make our universities truly Lasallian.