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## Our Students' Search for Meaning

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### Abstract

This article offers a reflection on the role of faith, reason, and meaning as part of students' educational experience. By intermixing elements of his personal journey with the development of course projects designed to infuse meaning within the classroom, the author examines the challenges that teachers often face when reconciling the idea of faith- and purpose-based learning as compared with a purely skills-based, vocational approach. The three course projects discussed highlight ways in which students apply course content and skills to higher-level outcomes that lead them to better understand their sense of connectedness, sense of community, and service. By overcoming complacency in course design and applying creative and innovative ideas, the author presents several examples that can be applied to teaching practice across disciplines within a meaning- and purpose-based curriculum.

### Introduction

*This storm it came up strong  
It shook the trees  
And blew away our fear*  
— “Half a World Away,” R.E.M.

When I was a young kid, I often prayed at night—for my family, for my Little League breaking ball to continue breaking, preferably at the knees and kissing the outside corner as it crossed the plate and not to be redirected over the left field fence by the local slugger, and particularly, for my parents to make it home safe from whatever event they might have been attending that night. When the lights of their car appeared in the driveway at 10:23 p.m., it was as if my prayers had been answered. By the time I turned 24, both my parents had died—my father, when I was 18, and then, in turn, my mother. Albert Camus, the existentialist author and philosopher, once remarked, “I do not know whether this world has a meaning that eludes me. But I do know that I do not know this meaning.”<sup>1</sup> Looking back, this is how I must have felt.

My mother's death in particular represented a body-blow to my belief and faith in whatever higher power I thought might have been looking over us. Yes, God, perhaps. It was as if he (or she) had driven me to a four-way

intersection in the middle of Nebraska, handed me a Red Bull, and politely asked me to get out of the car (a Subaru Forester, by the way, with all-wheel-drive and a 5-star safety rating). I felt abandoned. Another French existentialist and philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre states that when we speak of abandonment, we say that God does not exist.<sup>2</sup> For me, not only did God cease to exist, the concepts of faith and reason ceased to exist as well. It took many years to begin to reconcile the deaths of my parents with God's supposed purpose. I studied aerospace engineering in college, got a good job analyzing jet engine propulsion systems, got married, worked in marketing and sales, earned my Ph.D., became a parent, and began my career as a university professor. What I bumped into along the way, especially as I began both teaching and shepherding little ones around the house, was a rediscovery of faith in the notion that there was something out there—greater than any individual accomplishments—some “thing” that provided meaning and purpose.

For me, my newfound faith came from the joys of raising children and pursuing my newfound career as a professor. For teaching is in many ways similar to being a parent—one day you're responsible for no

McGrath & Reilly,  
*LMU President's  
Institute  
Collection:  
Introduction and  
Overview*

Snyder, *Necessary  
Companions:  
Faith and Reason*

McGrath & Reilly,  
*President's  
Institute on the  
Catholic  
Character of  
LMU: A Twenty-  
One-Year  
Tradition*

Bouvier-Brown,  
*Nurturing Student  
Scientists as  
People of Faith*

Jarvis, *Faith  
and Reason in  
the Pursuit of  
Understanding*

Rohm, *Our  
Students' Search  
for Meaning*

Scheibler, *What  
Can TV Teach Us  
About the  
Spiritually Healthy  
Institution?*

Reilly & McGrath,  
*Faith and Reason  
in Antiquity:  
A Photo Essay*

one but you (and perhaps your spouse if you're married), the next you arrive home with your newborn baby or you suddenly find yourself in a classroom responsible for the education of twenty or so twenty-something undergraduate students, all waiting for direction and guidance. These events—the birth of that first child, teaching that first Marketing 101 course—represented my reinvention as a faith-feeling person, brought on by something larger than myself, long after those nights waiting for my parent's car headlights to appear in the driveway.

### **Faith, Reason, and Meaning in the Classroom**

This all brings me to my experience as a faculty fellow in the President's Institute (henceforth "the Institute") titled "*Fides et Ratio: The Pursuit of Faith and Reason in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Catholic University*" that explored the interconnection of faith and reason at Loyola Marymount University (LMU). The broad range of perspectives discussed throughout the Institute got me thinking about the role of faith and reason, their relationship to teaching, and what our undergraduate students must feel as they get dropped off every fall semester, not in the middle of Nebraska, but in the parking turnarounds and unloading areas near their dorms. It is this exploration of my own transition from emptiness to meaning that inspires my current approach to teaching and developing curricula and course content in order to enable our students to continue their own unique explorations of faith, reason, and meaning as they learn and grow inside and outside the university classroom. Yet, what do we mean by "meaning"? For me, it involves a deep understanding of class concepts and how these concepts apply to their coursework and their subsequent careers. It also involves a more complete and selfless understanding of their role(s) as future parents, coaches, partners, and women and men of service.

Since joining the LMU faculty, I have worked with many talented people, particularly those involved in making LMU's M-School program such a transformative one for our

undergraduate marketing students.<sup>3</sup> The M-School initiative has helped our students learn about the fast-changing world of marketing as well as themselves as creators, collaborators, communicators, and critical thinkers. The objective of this reflection, which is based on my personal experiences within M-School, is to examine how our students' sense of faith and reason can lead to a better understanding of their life purpose and meaning and illustrate how we, as teachers, instructors, and professors, can seek and continue to construct and infuse faith, reason, and meaning in the classroom.

### **Rediscovering Faith**

My participation in the Institute encouraged me to reexamine the concept of faith, one that had lain dormant for so many years, and uncover its personal relevance in my role as a marketing professor. At the Institute, I talked Notre Dame football with one of the visiting guest speakers, Professor Mark Roche, during lunch. It was exciting for me to find a common ground with someone from so deep inside the world of Catholic education, a still unfamiliar area to me despite my role on the faculty at LMU. Perhaps related to his interest in Notre Dame football, Roche writes about the importance of finding a vocabulary and way of teaching that "articulates the distinct mission of a Catholic university on such a way as to be both true to the Catholic tradition and inviting to non-religious intellectuals."<sup>4</sup> In a very real sense, the Institute and conversations with participants such as Mark Roche opened previously closed and locked doors and, in doing so, invited me inside to be part of a deep discussion of faith and reason and its relationship to LMU's mission and Jesuit principles.

Let's start with LMU's mission, one based on the service of faith and the promotion of justice and the Jesuit ideal of educating the whole person. For a non-Catholic professor at a Jesuit university, it can appear difficult to reconcile my faith and belief system with that of the institution that pays my salary. Does a secular faith necessarily imply that I reject religion? Taking this one step further, what do

I, and can I, offer my students in relation to faith that will enrich their lives beyond simply preparing them for future careers within a strictly vocational context that, as Roche states is “divorced from the moral realm and independent of the concepts of character, citizenship, and vocation?”<sup>5</sup>

At LMU, in addition to my role as co-director with our M-School program, I teach and conduct research in the marketing field. In a practical sense, this means I conduct research and teach in areas related to search engine optimization (or how to get people to click on your online ad and drive website traffic), how to shift consumers' attitudes away from competitive offerings to the formation of positive attitudes about one's product or brand, how to segment audiences, and how to “target” those audiences through compelling advertising messages and content by way of a well-positioned brand narrative. I sometimes mention, perhaps with a degree of self-criticism, that what we do and teach in the marketing field often involves influencing and manipulating people and trying to find ways to separate them from their money, all in the spirit of selling more energy bars, toothbrushes, insurance, and detergent.

My experience in the Institute, however, helped to make clear the conflict that perhaps many of us face when attempting to reconcile the idea of faith- and purpose-based learning with a purely skills-based, vocational approach to learning that, in my case, may in the end simply help continue to fuel a consumption-heavy society. And that raises the question, particularly for someone who enters the Jesuit educational community from the outside: How would we recognize this idea of faith-based teaching if it walked into our classroom and took a seat, and given this, would we invite it to stay and participate?

Perhaps, as Professor Tracy Tiemeier argued as part of the Institute's speaker series, faith is built from the implicit and explicit commitments we make in life and within our professions. Perhaps it represents our moral compass as we move through life dealing with reality (mortgages, relationships, and, yes,

grading). Perhaps faith is the belief that something exists even in the absence of tangible proof or, according to another Institute speaker, Professor Chris Chappel, it is the recognition that there is something bigger than what we are. Perhaps faith's moral equivalent, in a secular sense, is the question “what would happen if everyone did what I am doing?”<sup>6</sup>

Whatever definition of faith we might adopt, the point is that without faith in some thing or idea, what else do we have in life? For our students, I would imagine their concept of faith must involve myriad flavors, mixing both religious and secular ingredients: faith in God or some higher power, faith in LMU as an institution, faith in their professors, faith in their friends and fellow students, faith that their hard work and hours of study will in some way pay off in the long run as they exit the safe confines of campus and take on the real world.

In describing the interplay between faith and reason, one of the Institute's speakers stated simply that it is the opportunity to love (faith) and to know (reason) God. For me, at a more applied and practical level as it relates to my work in developing and teaching marketing courses, this interconnection is significant. It implies that our students will arrive at our doorstep with varying levels of interest in, and passion for, a specific course's subject matter (the faith component) and will, we hope, seek to acquire a deeper level of understanding and comprehension for the subject matter as they progress through the course (the reason component). It implies that faith and reason are not mutually exclusive; rather, they can work beautifully together within the classroom to provide meaning beyond the subject and content being taught. This represents the single most important revelation for me resulting from the Institute.

### **Our Students' Search for Meaning**

Throughout my experience as part of the Institute, it struck me that our students may indeed enter the classroom searching for meaning in the same way they might in their

future roles as parent, employee, leader, close friend, and Little League coach. In other words, my experience brought clarity to my role as teacher and professor and to the importance of implicitly and explicitly applying the concepts of faith and reason inside and outside the classroom in order to help students construct identity and meaning throughout their university experience. In the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, Pope John Paul II writes that “the more human beings know reality and the world, the more they know themselves in their uniqueness, with the question of the meaning of things and of their very existence becoming ever more pressing.”<sup>7</sup> What an enlightening and liberating thought for any professor who struggles every single class session to instill meaning, as well as relevance, in our fast-changing world!

For if we treat meaning as a higher-level construct related to the development of faith and reason, then the way our students begin to construct and find meaning becomes central to their own unique experiences. In other words, the development of faith and the application of reason leads to the discovery of meaning. One can only imagine how our students, having left the familiar territory of home and high school, must feel arriving on campus fall semester as they join the university community. How they must ask themselves the question of “why” related to “Why am I here at LMU?” and “What does this mean to me and my life as I know it?”

Do our students find and discover meaning by accumulating course credits, taking their required core courses, and striving for A's and B's? Do they find it as they meet fellow students, forge new connections, and make new friends? And in this process, in what way do our students discover meaning as they discover new things about themselves and their life views? In what way do our students, reflecting on Aristotle's doctrine of hylomorphism, find their soul and their meaning in the process of being a student? Going further, what roles do we as teachers, professors, mentors, and advisors play in this sense of discovery and soul finding? Perhaps

these questions reflect my own struggle to continually find and construct meaning in my role as a professor as well as through my own personal life journey.

In this sense, it is striking that a study at UCLA examining meaning and university curricula revealed that less than one out of ten university professors discuss the meaning of life in the classroom.<sup>8</sup> It's important to note that our current students represent the first generation to have been born and raised in an environment defined by the Internet. These students are often referred to as “digital natives” because they were born learning to use an Internet browser and how to swipe right and left to access new content. They have been raised with a smartphone in their hands and they have grown up being socialized on Instagram and Snapchat in an environment where digital media is ubiquitous and occupies such a central part of their lives. Yet they will also grow older experiencing the threats of pollution, climate change, a lack of fresh drinking water, and the decline of biodiversity. If not in the classroom, where else and when else will our students be exposed to higher-level explorations of faith, reason, and meaning?

In a 2016 *New York Times* article, David Brooks describes four forces challenging us at the global as well as local and personal levels: economic globalization; demographic diversity resulting from increased global migration; the Internet and advances in technology; and a what's-in-it-for-me culture steeped in individual autonomy centered around individual choice.<sup>9</sup> Given that these forces are especially relevant to our students, what can we as educators do to help our students explore the concept of meaning during their time at university? Further, Pope Francis, in his second encyclical *Laudato Si'*, writes about the role of faith and reason as we recognize the immensity and urgency of these challenges: “When people become self-centered and self-enclosed, their greed increases. The emptier a person's heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume.”<sup>10</sup>

Referring to the Ignatian tradition of depth and imagination, the Jesuit Superior General Adolfo Nicolas encourages teachers to “find creative ways of promoting depth of thought and imagination, a depth that is transformative of the person.” He calls for a pedagogy based on “having, in some way during their [students] time with us, a depth of engagement...that transforms them at their deepest core.”<sup>11</sup> The meaning that our students will attach to their educational experience will in large part be formed by the sense of community they develop on campus and within the classroom and to what extent they learn to stay curious and continually learn in an ever-changing and increasingly interdependent world. It is where students' identities are developed through feelings of connection to and within a community, as well as to a broader set of universal values that meaning arises.

### **A Meaning-Based Curriculum**

Because of the rapid pace of technological advances taking place in the marketing field, each time I set foot in the classroom I experience sense of foreboding that I am becoming irrelevant at warp speed—or at least that's what I feel as I face the twenty-four students staring at me intently in expectation of some level of profound learning. Change seems to be the only constant in the marketing field, and for this we can thank (or blame) firms such as Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Snapchat for my ongoing struggle with relevancy. The question we should ask ourselves, then, is how do we, as teachers, instructors, and professors address this seemingly existential challenge to adapt to this change, to remain at the top of our game and continue to add value to our students and meaning within the classroom? Simply put, we all face this significant educational challenge, and that challenge is how can we continue to infuse meaning, based on the treatment of faith and reason, within higher-education curricula.

What the Institute helped me to recognize was how deeply certain portions of the M-School curriculum that we have developed

over the past four years reflect the concepts of faith, reason, and meaning, and how the development and teaching of this curriculum resembles an experiment in education, with the classroom serving as the lab. Rather than simply providing our students an expanded “tool kit” with which to become better marketers, the M-School curriculum seeks to connect students with their creative selves and encourages them to think critically about their future roles as business leaders and world citizens.

M-School courses provide a platform upon which students creatively put in practice the Jesuit principle of the *magis*, or the idea and act of doing more for others by broadening and deepening one's commitment to serve the common or universal good.<sup>12</sup> Through course modules such as a social justice project titled “Marketing for Good,” a video creation project that seeks to “Make the Mundane Magnificent” through the power of storytelling; and a semester-long “live” search engine optimization campaign where student teams apply a Google advertising platform called AdWords to expand awareness for various local, regional, and national non-profits, we attempt to infuse meaning within the M-School curriculum that transcends the subject matter as well as the technology employed in the classroom. Here, I highlight each of these initiatives in greater detail and how they relate to the role of faith, reason, and meaning within higher education.

### **1. Promoting Social Justice**

Throughout their first of five required M-School courses—in a course called the New World of Branding and Advertising—M-School students engage in a semester-long project whereby student teams create and bring to life a totally new product or service concept. For instance, during one semester, students reimagined the basic spaghetti colander to formulate and bring to market new and useful consumer products. During another, teams created a rebranding campaign to position the City of Los Angeles as an even more attractive place for small businesses and start-ups to thrive.

Although these experiential- and active-learning projects were instrumental in helping our students to hone their creative, communication, critical thinking, and collaborative skills, we felt that the project guidelines and objectives were missing something—a link to the uniqueness of LMU and our Jesuit and Ignatian roots. In response, my colleague and M-School co-director Matt Stefl created the Marketing for Good Project where now student teams create, develop, and bring to life initiatives centered on the theme of social justice and making their respective community a better place. The only overriding guideline, or *deliverable* as we like to say in marketing speak, was that teams were required to influence at least 100 people with their ideas and campaigns designed to make their community a better place.

Throughout the Marketing for Good Project, teams have created and brought to life several concepts designed to benefit their respective communities, including efforts to reduce water consumption in the midst of California's multi-year draught; reduce plastic water bottle consumption and disposal on campus; raise funding to produce a new line of rain jackets that were provided to homeless people in and around the greater Los Angeles area during a recent El Niño season; make LMU students aware of the negative, damaging effects of gossip on campus; make individuals more aware of how their constant connection to their mobile phones actually disconnects them from more meaningful personal connections; and create an initiative designed to reduce food waste.

Student reflections from the Marketing for Good Project highlight the extent to which the experience is meaningful one, providing them an outlet for pursuing both their entrepreneurial and creative passions directed toward making their world a better place. Some of the teams even create videos that document their experiences and that illustrate how deeply they become immersed in the project.<sup>13</sup> The Marketing for Good Project continues to reaffirm that beyond the skills learned, the meaning behind their work is

something we hope will remain with our students years after they graduate.

## 2. Making the Mundane Magnificent

In another course focused on content creation and the process of storytelling, students are assigned the task of making a seemingly *mundane* everyday activity, one that we often take for granted, *magnificent*. Research suggests that the act of communicating through the telling of stories dates back thousands of years, perhaps as a way to assuage fears and help individuals grapple with the unknown. The assignment was for teams of three to four students to produce a short video transforming the mundane to the magnificent through storytelling.

One of the Institute fellows described faith as a way of dealing with reality through a sense of community and belief. I would also argue that faith is a way that we not only deal with reality; it is a way that we hug and embrace reality as well, and this act was illustrated so well in the students' Making the Mundane Magnificent Project videos. Through the power of the narrative, students' videos portray the magnificence of faculty office hours, not as the once-a-semester visit that is often viewed as equivalent to visiting the dentist, but as an experience where students and professors actually connect and begin to understand each other at a deeper level. As well, they reveal the beauty inherent in mornings when one wakes up early (imagine how difficult a task this must be for our twenty year-old students!) and the significance of life events (learning to walk, learning to play, graduation, marriage, birth, growing old) told through the simple act of tying one's shoes.<sup>14</sup> My experience with the Institute further reinforced how this type of project—the act of making the mundane magnificent—can help our students, and all of us for that matter, to continue to recognize beauty and God in all things.

## 3. Technology for Good

In a simplistic sense, technology can be applied for the *good* or the *not so good*. One

example of the duality related to advances in technology relates to digital advertising and the use of sophisticated algorithms developed by data scientists to help companies target specific consumers based on their online behavior. For example, Google AdWords is the search platform operated by Google that enables companies and organizations to bid on key search terms (called keywords) as an important advertising strategy to generate website traffic.

Imagine you're searching for the keyword phrase "faith and reason." In addition to the organic (non-paid) search results that appear showing you the Wikipedia definition of faith and reason or Catholic videos on faith and reason presented by Franciscan University, what might also appear in your Google search results is a paid advertisement on "How to Build A Godly Faith" that directs you to a specific paid sponsor's website. To make all this happen, organizations would have bid on these keywords in order to have their advertisement appear during your Google search in the hope that, if the advertisement is indeed relevant and interesting, you will click on it to go to the organization's website. This is what we call search engine optimization, or SEO. This can be a *good* thing, because it helps you to search for things and receive relevant search results; yet it can also be perceived as *not so good* and annoying, as well as an invasion of our privacy, when we end up receiving unsolicited online ads and emails from organizations and businesses related to our online search.

In a course we developed for the M-School called Adaptive Media and Analytics, students apply their newfound skills related to SEO and data analysis when they partner with associated non-profit organizations dedicated to such causes as providing community support for families in transitions without a place to live, promoting involvement in sports among young girls, providing food for families without the means to properly feed their children, and raising awareness and support for disabled veterans. Because SEO and online advertising can be difficult to learn and execute effectively, many small non-profit

organizations are simply not staffed to support an online or digital marketing specialist. To address this challenge and to provide our students with real-life skills, we partner with six local, regional, and national non-profit organizations, supported with a \$30,000 Google AdWords grant dedicated to each of the six non-profits. In the course, student teams develop and execute AdWords SEO campaigns for their non-profit "client" designed to generate awareness and volunteer interest, promote fundraising events, and influence donations by way of increased website visits. In past semesters, student teams have collectively generated millions of impressions and thousands of website visits or "clicks" on behalf of their partner non-profit organizations. Moreover, the non-profit partners that happen to be local to LMU often attend students' final AdWords campaign presentations to offer feedback on the students' work and also to learn from the students' efforts so that they may continue to apply this learning in their ongoing awareness-building efforts.

This model, one that directly involves our M-School students in the work of our non-profit partners and leverages industry support in terms of course content and grants, effectively links skills development and practice to LMU's mission and the Jesuit principles of serving the universal good through education and the promotion of social justice. We like to think of this course as one that incorporates "the good" of technology while at the same time helping students maintain a sense of meaning in the midst of the myriad technology platforms to which they are exposed.

### **Conclusion: A Way Forward**

The objective of this reflection has been to offer my personal insights on the role of faith and reason and the relationship of faith and reason to the student experience, as well as present examples of how the consideration of faith and reason can help us infuse meaning in the classroom. Looking back, the "storm" I experienced when I was younger probably prepared me well for my self-proclaimed

mission today: to live without fear and to strive to infuse meaning within the courses I develop and teach at LMU. For, as Sartre argued, "Life itself is nothing until it is lived, and it is we who give it meaning."<sup>15</sup>

Although my personal journey is not yet complete (thank God for that) in the sense that those big existential questions that we struggle with—that keep us awake at night—may never be resolved, my rediscovery of faith through teaching and experiencing the "goodness" that our students bring, innately and unencumbered, to the classroom has made my journey "complete" in so many other ways. And even though my treatment of faith and reason is not based solely and directly on my relationship with the Catholic religion, or with Sartre for that matter, one personal and significant reflection from the Institute is that to possess a secular faith does not necessarily mean that we reject the idea of religion. Rather, in doing so, we accept and even embrace the idea of spirituality in and sanctity of education in a God-like way through *faith*, in that what our students learn and do will help others, and *reason*, in that they are, more than ever, able to apply logic and data to assess the impact of their faith-based efforts.

In essence, the discussion of the role of faith and reason within disciplines such as marketing becomes even more important if we are to be true to our university mission: the service of faith and the promotion of justice. Yet another French author and philosopher, Simone de Beauvoir, remarked that "Two separate beings, in different circumstances, face to face in freedom and seeking justification of their existence through one another, will always live an adventure full of risk and promise."<sup>16</sup> This is the kind of balance that we as educators should strive to achieve as we meld faith and reason as the spark to ignite classroom meaning in both an academic as well as spiritual sense.

Another discovery when we seek to infuse meaning within our respective curricula is that students begin to develop richer perspectives related to their personal identity and feelings

of interconnectedness—what some call a spirit of connectedness and community—particularly as our students learn and develop skills within an environment that promotes creativity, critical thinking and collaboration. We have discovered that this connectedness and sense of community is forged through projects such as the three highlighted here in addition to class sessions held off campus at neighboring partner companies that populate LMU's surrounding business community. Furthermore, this process helps to channel students' skill development to the making their community and world better places. After all, a feeling of connectedness and sense of community is inherently a good thing for students and faculty alike.

Now more than ever, our students are required to *learn how to continue to learn* in an ever-changing and interdependent world. We've discovered that student learning and the surfacing of meaning happens *less* when students jump to quickly come up with the answer or solution and *more* when they take a step back to first identify the problem, a challenge, or perhaps some higher-level mission attached to that challenge. In this spirit, it also becomes our responsibility—as we work to infuse meaning into our courses and our classrooms—to extend knowledge development and transfer across disciplines and fields of learning in order to follow through on the Jesuit tradition of the unity and community of knowledge.

The challenge to this, sadly, is that we often continue to work and teach alone within our own disciplines and knowledge-based silos. Perhaps this is because it is simply easier and less effortful to do so. Perhaps it results from administrative barriers. Yet imagine the powerful and meaningful learning that could take place in interdisciplinary courses that mix together students and perspectives from the sciences and engineering, and from business and the fine arts in a true *knowledge community*. Pope Francis asked, "What does serving mean? Do I bend down over someone in difficulty or am I afraid of getting my hands dirty?"<sup>17</sup> The question we might ask ourselves is: How innovative (and messy) do we dare to

be with respect to our teaching and commitment to the concept of unity of knowledge within a meaning-based curriculum?

For the many of us who have tried to be innovative in our teaching, interdisciplinary course development and teaching can be difficult. At the same time, the subjects that we teach often do not “exist in isolation from the rest of the world, and studying a subject in its wider context...can often be enlightening.”<sup>18</sup> To succeed, we must escape from the departmental or college silo in which we work, actively build and forge community with our colleagues and actually “talk to strangers,” those yet-to-be discovered interesting and interested colleagues that co-exist with us on campus. This community-building approach and openness has enabled us to collaborate with colleagues in departments such as Graphic Design by developing a study abroad course that examines the concept of community among refugees in Germany, and with colleagues in Computer Science and the School of Film and Television in a course exposing our students to the fast-evolving field of virtual and augmented reality. It is our hope that this collaborative course development process, one that seeks to bridge the divide between business and arts and science, will spark our students' embrace of faith in their role as learners and leaders, enrich their university experience and prepare them for life (which is inherently interdisciplinary, by the way) after graduation.

In closing, I'd like to think that we, as faculty, as teachers, as mentors, and within our own unique journeys, will continue to embrace the idea of getting our hands dirty as we seek to instill meaning within the courses that we develop and through the implicit and explicit consideration of faith and reason in the classroom. This is the type of deep and rich learning that will provide meaning to our students once they are dropped off on campus each and every fall. 

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 88.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>3</sup> “M-School Institute of Marketing at LMU,” Loyola Marymount University, last updated 2017, <http://m.school>

<sup>4</sup> Mark Roche, *The Intellectual Appeal of Catholicism and the Idea of A Catholic University* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>6</sup> Sartre, *Existentialism*, 25.

<sup>7</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio Encyclical Letter* (Vatican City, Italy: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), accessed June 2, 2017, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_14091998\\_fides-et-ratio.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html)

<sup>8</sup> UCLA, Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), *The Spiritual Life of College Students: A National Study of College Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose* (Los Angeles, CA: HERI, 2003), [http://spirituality.ucla.edu/docs/reports/Spiritual\\_Life\\_College\\_Students\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](http://spirituality.ucla.edu/docs/reports/Spiritual_Life_College_Students_Full_Report.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> David Brooks, “How Covenants Make Us,” *New York Times*, April 5, 2016, accessed November 27, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/05/opinion/how-covenants-make-us.html>

<sup>10</sup> Francis, *Laudato Si' Encyclical Letter* (Vatican City, Italy: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015), accessed June 2, 2017, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)

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<sup>12</sup> Barton T. Geger, S.J., “What *Magis* Really Means and Why It Matters,” *Jesuit Higher Education* 1, no. 2 (2012): 16-31.

<sup>13</sup> Emily Baker, Michelle Truong, Michael Velasquez, and Connor Wudrick, “Seco Jackets,” filmed Fall 2015, Los Angeles, CA, video, 2:12, <http://www.secojackets.com>

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<sup>16</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 248.

<sup>17</sup> Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2014), 106.

<sup>18</sup> Sarah Byrne, "Interdisciplinary Research: Why It's Seen as a Risky Route," *The Guardian*, February 19, 2014, accessed October 18, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/feb/19/interdisciplinary-research-universities-academic-careers>