

## **Lasallian Universities' Identities in the Twenty-First Century: An Analytical Research Paper**

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**Abstract:** As they respond to the needs of students in the 21st century, the sixteen Lasallian universities in Colombia, France, Mexico, Philippines, Spain, and the United States of America incarnate Saint John Baptist de La Salle's charism. They view the Lasallian charism as a living gift, a spiritual energy that is constantly adapting to times and places, to socio-cultural contexts and to students' needs everywhere. They construct their university identity with the Lasallian charism at its core. In as much as it springs from and builds on the Lasallian charism, this identity is also influenced by other factors. "Flattening" of the 21st century world, each country's governmental regulations, changing demands of higher education, Christian tradition, funding of the university operations, and changing professional leadership complicate the defining of Lasallian university identity. Complexity and dynamism characterize the ways Lasallian universities worldwide express their identity. To capture the complex and dynamic identity of Lasallian universities, this qualitative study employed a triangulation method that included document analysis, site observations, and face-to-face interviews using the Appreciative Inquiry method.

The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) method used in this research was particularly suited to understand and interpret how individuals and communities perceived the ways their university met the challenges of the new century. Specifically, this research discerned the patterns of common and essential themes across the sixteen Lasallian universities in Europe, Latin America, Asia, and North America. These common and essential themes constitute the structural components of Lasallian university identity in the 21st century. They are: community of practices strengthened by organizational coherence; educational ministry striving for educational excellence, engaging in social research, and working for social transformation; social networking for the betterment of society; and leadership leading by example, fostering creativity, and managing multiple identities effectively.

It is hoped that this research project will advance knowledge and understanding of the complexity and dynamism of Lasallian university identity and will benefit Lasallian universities as they endeavor to respond boldly and creatively to the educational needs of young and older students in the 21st century.

### Author's Preliminary Remarks

*This empirical study of Lasallian universities worldwide evolved from an idea expressed by the Director of the Lasallian Education Mission Secretariat during his first visit to Philadelphia. Two years later, he recommended this study to the Presidents of Lasallian universities worldwide meeting at Barcelona in January, 2004.*

*Entrusted with the task of developing and conducting this research project, I obtained a research leave grant from La Salle University, which relieved me from my teaching duties to do research in the fall of 2004 and in the summer of 2005. It was a special privilege to visit sixteen Lasallian universities worldwide. The diversity and creativity of these universities amazed me and resonated in my heart. Many Lasallian administrators, faculty and staff members, as well as students and alumni, surprised me with unanticipated expressions of energy and creativity as they endeavored to meet the educational needs of young and older students.*

*I felt very much at home at each of the sixteen institutions I visited. I, too, experienced the*

*research participants' sense of belonging to a community. The one-week, on-site observations at each institution gave me a glimpse of the social and cultural contexts in which these universities carried out their educational mission. The analysis of the face-to-face interviews using the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach revealed the complex and dynamic identity of these universities. These interviews yielded a mosaic of vision and memories recalling the struggles and aspirations of both Brothers and Lasallian colleagues to understand, interpret, and live the shared Lasallian charism in the changing social environment of higher education in the 21st century.*

*This research paper explores and analyses how each the sixteen universities understood and expressed its identity. It also analyzes the way the Lasallian charism was incarnated in their organizational structure.*

*This study could not be completed without the administrative support of La Salle University, which granted me a semester research leave to conduct this research, and the financial support from the Institute Secretariat for Lasallian Education Mission (MEL), La Salle University, the Baltimore District Office of Education, and the Connelly-Moore foundation.*

*All Presidents at the sixteen universities gave their unreserved support; they took care of my board and lodging and appointed a liaison person to assemble university documents, select site observations, and schedule face-to-face interviews with participants during my visits.*

*Three hundred members of these institutions participated in the interviews; all were friendly, forthcoming, and cooperative. The Brothers' communities on the campuses of these institutions extended gracious and friendly hospitality during these visits.*

*From the start to the completion of this research project, the Director of MEL, the Brother Visitor of the Baltimore District, the President of La Salle University, and the President of IALU were most encouraging.*

*To one and all, I express here my heartfelt THANK YOU.*

*Br. Francis Tri Nguyen, FSC La Salle University, Philadelphia November 6, 2006*

## Introduction

**Purpose of the research:** It is worthwhile to explore the many innovative ways Lasallian Brothers and colleagues live the Lasallian charism and carry out the Lasallian mission in the changing social landscape of higher education in the 21st century. This research aimed to capture the complexity and dynamism of Lasallian university identity worldwide. The knowledge obtained from this research may have many benefits: first, Lasallian universities might understand how the dynamism and complexity of their identity serve future possibilities; and, second, Brothers and their Lasallian colleagues, university internal and external stakeholders, could collaboratively construct a dynamic and flexible university identity for the benefit of the students they serve.

**The research question:** Lasallian universities worldwide face a multitude of challenges within and outside their institutions. At the same time, they strive to project a distinctive brand or institutional image. How do Lasallian universities express their identity in the 21st century? In

other words, how do they express the defining portrayal of their identity? They may assert, “This is who we are as an organization!” They may ask, “Is this who we really are as an organization?” or “Is this who we are becoming as an organization?” or even more provocatively, “Is this who we want to be?”

As it becomes increasingly more important to have a clear sense of each university’s identity, this question is significant and relevant to Lasallian educators in higher education for many reasons.

First, the study of Lasallian university identity gains greater attention as university leaders rediscover the importance of meaning and emotion in university life. Individuals act on behalf of the university to the extent there is a fit between their own and the university’s identity. Thus, explanations of Lasallian university identity are powerful lenses for explaining change, action, and inaction by individual staff, faculty, administrators or groups of internal and external stakeholders.

Second, in contemporary turbulent times, the realities of internal and external university stakeholders increasingly heterogeneous, of Brothers decreasing in number and Lasallian colleagues increasing in number, fuel greater interest in identity processes at Lasallian universities.

Third, Lasallian universities have to deal with the dynamic instability of their identity in a “flat world” (Friedman, 2005), a world that is globalized, interconnected, fast changing, and increasingly more complex.

To simplify the terminology, the term “university” in this research paper refers to an institution of higher learning, notwithstanding its status as College, University, “Institut,” “Ecole,” or “Escuela.” Similarly, the term “President” refers to the chief administrator of each institution even if the actual title is “Directeur General” in France or “Rector” in Latin America.

## 1. A Brief Review of the Literature: Organizational Identity and Lasallian Identity

**Organizational identity:** A Lasallian university is basically an organization. Organization scholars have explained and analyzed the nature and the characteristics of organizational identity.

Organizational identity, as an internalized cognitive structure of what the university stands for and where it intends to go, is a concept distinct from individual identity (Gioia, Schultz, and Corley, 2000b). It refers to those attributes that are considered central, distinctive, and enduring by members of the organization (Albert and Whetten, 1985).

It is important to distinguish between an identity that endures, which remains the same over time, and an identity that exhibits continuity over time, but which admits shifts in meaning and interpretation; the latter is more prevalent (Gioia, Schultz, and Corley 2000a). Organizational identity is, in fact, characterized by dynamism and “adaptive instability.” Because instability fosters adaptability, the strategic concern of management is no longer the preservation of a fixed identity but the ability to manage and balance a flexible identity in light of shifting external images. Maintenance of consistency becomes the maintenance of dynamic consistency. The

dynamism and complexity of organizational identity reflects the state of contextual instability and flux that arise from both the multiplicity of audiences to which organizations are accountable and the diversity inherent within organizations (Gioia, Schultz, and Corley, 2000a; Brown and Starkey, 2000; Hogg and Terry, 2000; and Scott and Lane, 2000a).

Organizational identity is not only a complex phenomenon but also one that can vary with the context for which it is expressed (Fiol, Hatch, & GoldenBiddle, 1998). Pratt and Foreman (2000) directly address the theme of diversity within organizations; effective management of diversity is considered desirable because diversity provides significant benefits to an organization in a complex and changing social environment.

Clarity and consensus about organizational identity are essential elements in setting successful long-term strategy and making structural choices in a nonprofit organization (Young, 2001).

Managers should, however, be aware of the organizational identity trap. They must anticipate identity obsolescence so as to enable their organizations to adapt to shifts in the competitive environment and to take a qualitative leap forward (Johnson, 2000).

Moreover, organizations are prone to ego defenses, such as denial (individuals and organizations disclaim knowledge and responsibility, reject claims on them, and disavow acts and their consequences), rationalization (an attempt to justify impulses, needs, and so on that one finds unacceptable so that they become both plausible and consciously tolerable), idealization (the process by which an object becomes emotionally overvalued and stripped of its negative features), fantasy (a kind of vivid daydream that affords unreal, substantive satisfactions), and symbolization (the process through which an external object becomes the disguised outward representation for another internal and hidden object, idea, person, or complex). These ego defenses maintain self-esteem and the continuity of existing identity. They are dysfunctional when they militate against necessary organizational change (Brown and Starkey, 2000).

Maladaptive identity defense mechanisms can be mitigated through processes of organizational learning in the form of critical self-reflexivity and an identity-focused dialogue, which promote attitudes of wisdom. To accommodate change, organizations need to reconstruct themselves as “learning organizations” or “wise organizations” that encourage emotional expression and exploration of alternative organizational forms. A “learning” or “wise” organization is one that has constructed a prototype of the organization that prescribes learning and change as core attributes of organizational identity (Brown and Starkey, 2000).

In sum, in our “flat world,” organizational identity is dynamic, socially constructed, complex and unstable. Its complexities stem from the multiplicity of stakeholders within and outside the organization. Its dynamic instability-fluidity, adaptive instability, springs from the changing environment. The maintenance of its dynamic consistency is thus the strategic concern of management. Learning and change are core attributes of organization identity in a “learning” or “wise” organization.

**Lasallian identity:** In recent years, some Brothers (Gil, 1998; Group of Lasallian Experts, 2006) have authored monographs and books on Lasallian identity at the personal level. Others, including Brothers Luke Salm (1990, 1993, 1998, 1999a, 1999b), John Johnston (1992, 1997,

1998, 1999a, 1999b), former Superior General, and Alvaro Rodriguez Echeverria (2004), current Superior General, have given presentations on the essential characters of Lasallian universities. Brother Alvaro, reinterpreting Lasallian charism for the 21st century, repeatedly urges Lasallian universities to be creative and bold in meeting the needs of young and older students through quality education, social research, and social transformation.

**This study's approach:** This study differs fundamentally from the aforementioned Lasallian writings and documents in that it focuses on the organizational identity of Lasallian universities, not on the personal identity of Lasallians. Moreover, it is exploratory and analytical, not prescriptive or normative.

Even though this study adopts a social science approach, it is critical that we understand the “lens” through which Saint John Baptist de La Salle and his disciples have perceived an educational institution. They tend to perceive the Lasallian school and, by extension, the Lasallian university as “a means of salvation,” whereas a social science perspective views Lasallian university as a social system. The former accept a belief system based on scriptures that are replete with paradoxes-dying in order to live, last will be first, giving in order to receive, and losing one's life, only to find it. To understand a Lasallian university as an institution, the social science perspective examines the paradox of a Lasallian university aspiring to be both evangelizing and educating. There is a tension between the tendency to exalt what is the best possible expression of “what ought to be” and “what a Lasallian university ought to be doing” and the necessity to understand and to adapt to the modern developments of the social world of higher education.

**Assumptions:** The brief literature review suggests the following assumptions:

- Having developed in different social, cultural, and historical contexts, the sixteen Lasallian universities worldwide express their Lasallian identity in diverse ways.
- Lasallian charism is at the core of Lasallian mission, which is the foundation of Lasallian university identity.
- Lasallian university identity consists of those attributes that are considered central, distinctive, and enduring by members of the university, yet it is adaptive, negotiated, socially constructed, flexible, dynamic, and complex.
- The sixteen Lasallian universities incarnate the Lasallian charism in their organizational structure.

**Definition of Concepts:**

### **Charism**

The convergence of Max Weber's and Saint Paul's definitions of the term charism is apparent. Sociologist Max Weber applies the term charism to “a certain quality of an individual personality, by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as they are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as

exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader [...]” In the writings of St. Paul, the term charism has a double meaning. *“There are many different gifts but it is always the same Spirit; there are many different ways of serving but it is always the same Lord. There are many different forms of activity but in everybody it is the same God who works in them all.”* (1 Cor. 12, 4-6). In the broad sense it designates the “gift” of Christian life in general received at baptism. In the strict sense it means a particular, specific “gift” received by individuals or groups for the service and building up of the Christian community. It is in this latter sense that we speak of the charism of the La Salle Christian Brothers, who have received from the Spirit through their founder a particular charism to realize an educational mission in the Church.

### **Lasallian Charism**

Brother Alvaro, Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, presents the Lasallian charism in terms that resonate with contemporary members of the Lasallian education community:

*“The Brothers are open to all, capable of renouncing self-interests for the common good, uniting forces, carrying out projects in union with Lasallian partners, incarnating the Lasallian charism in the world of the poor, being spiritual masters for youth who, today more than ever and in spite of some appearances, look for meaning for their lives and who have a thirst for God.*

*Lasallian charism is an original synthesis in which the founder’s ardent love of God and his ardent love for the children of artisans and the poor found concrete translation in our association for their service through education.*

*Those young people were the providential means that gave rise to our charisma. “Recognize Jesus Christ under the poor rags of the children that you instruct. Adore Him in them” (Med. 96, 3)*

*To be faithful to our charism today means that we respond with creativity to the new forms of dehumanization, to the new forms of poverty, to the calls that the world of the excluded make to us in the new scenarios that today present themselves to us.*

*It means that we be converted to the future, open to the educational needs of the poor, attentive to the signs of life...with creative imagination, with a courage capable of running risks, with boldness that is unafraid and which does not confuse fidelity with pure repetition of the past.*

*We are searchers for God and we offer the world pathways for its own search. Guides, humble and without pretensions, capable of accompanying the people of our times in their own journey of faith, assuming their weaknesses, their doubts and fragility. We offer to the world of youth hearts disposed to listen to them, understand them, set them off once more on the road, communities willing to receive them and guide them, centers of education that place more worth in their persons than on programs or prestige.”*

(Brother Alvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, Superior General, June 2, 2000)

In short, Brother Alvaro depicts the Lasallian charism as characterized by pro-active spirit, vision for the future, profound love of and interest in each student, attention to situations of injustice in the world, creative and bold responses to new forms of poverty and dehumanization. Four years later, he added that Lasallian universities will incarnate the Lasallian charism through quality education, social research, and social transformation (January, 2004).

### **Incarnating the Lasallian Charism in the University Organizational Structure**

The Lasallian charism gives the Lasallian university its reason for existing, its identity and proper mission. It is God's loving design for the Lasallian family in the history of salvation. It is a spiritual energy from the Spirit, a power of life to be communicated. It is a dynamic force that incorporates Brothers and Lasallian colleagues into a family gifted with a "charismatic mission." It is not a rigid structure or program.

The Lasallian charism is a living gift, a breath of the creator Spirit at the service of a dynamic history that is never simple repetition of the past. That is why Saint De La Salle's charism can never be solely identified with his "works" that are marked by the needs of the founding period. This life power, this spiritual energy should constantly be incarnated by Lasallian universities in their organizational structure and adapted to the times and places, the sociocultural contexts and the needs of students everywhere.

As the building axis of Lasallian university identity, the Lasallian charism guides the construction of an organizational structure that sustains and strengthens the university identity. Incarnating the Lasallian charism in the university organizational structure is all the more crucial because of the possible negative consequences of routinization.

### **Routinization**

*Routinization*, a term coined by Weber, refers to the way in which charism is incorporated into an institution. It is the process by which "charismatic authority" is succeeded by a bureaucracy controlled by a rationally established authority or by a combination of traditional and bureaucratic authority. Paradoxes are thus part of institutionalization.

Saint La Salle is a charismatic founder and his message inspires a wholehearted response from followers; but the structure of statuses and roles emerges from within the stable institutional environment and elicits various other motivations, some of which may be diametrically opposed to the charismatic ideals of the founder. The ideals of the institution and the leader's own ideals and self-interests may not reflect the charismatic ideals of the founder. The organizational structure that is functional in the earlier stages becomes in later situations a dysfunctional obstacle to forthright activity in response to contemporary problems.

In addition, while a bureaucratic organization can be efficient, it also has the tendency to become cumbersome and cause problems of dysfunctional consequences. This occurs when office holders elaborate their office to strengthen their position in the organization, resulting in an administrative structure that is alienated from contemporary problems, or when the office holders themselves become alienated from their group members. Finally, the tension that exists when the values of society and of a Lasallian university become so intertwined that conformity to one necessitates conformity to the other. The two systems become so closely linked that they have a

deleterious effect on each other.

## 2. Method

To capture the complex and dynamic nature of Lasallian university identity, this study employed a triangulation methodology (Figure 1). It involves:

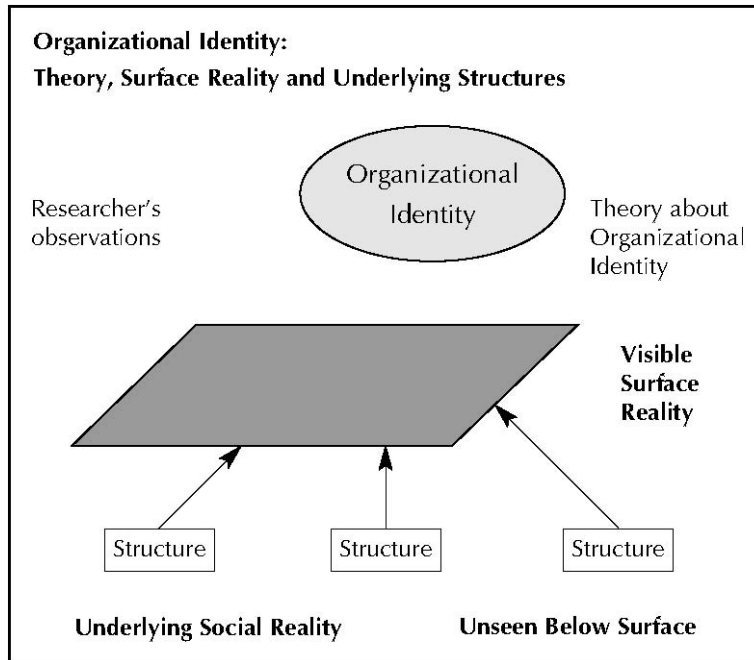
1 A one-week on-site observation at each university. I was invited to attend a President's Council meeting, a Faculty Senate Meeting, sport events, various Campus Ministry activities, a free legal consultation by law students at a Lasallian Legal Service Center for the Poor, faculty and staff birthday celebration, classes for adults taught by students who are recipients of university scholarships, and so forth.

2 Analysis of official documents provided by each university that amounted to over 500 pages. These documents included the 5 or 10 years Strategic Planning, President's Annual Report, University Mission Statements and Philosophies of Education, University Facts, and so on.

3 Sixty-minute, face-to-face interviews with 15 to 30 diverse members at each university using an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) method. Research participants included Chairs and members of the Board of Trustees, senior and mid-level administrators, provosts, vice-presidents, deans, chairs of departments, male and female faculty members, staff members, janitors, students, alumni, and parents of students. All were friendly, cooperative, and forthcoming in sharing their feelings, thoughts, and hopes about their respective universities. At the end of the interviews, they seemed appreciative for having participated in this research project. Many said this was the first opportunity they had in sharing their views and hopes about their respective universities. Others said they appreciated the opportunity to look at their university from a broader and more meaningful perspective.

The AI method is an ethnographic method that uses interviews with various members of the university community for investigating the life of the institution. As a thoughtful inquiry into the nature of institutional life and a process that draws out the factors that give vitality to the lives of the members of the institution, the AI method aims at a systematic inquiry into what is most enriching and life-giving about a university community. It attempts to identify and enhance what an institution does best to meet the challenges of the new century.





**Figure 1: Organizational Identity: Theory, Surface Reality, and Underlying Structures**

**Participating Institutions and Research Participants:** Sixteen of the fifty-five Lasallian universities worldwide agreed to participate in this research: one in Colombia [Universidad De La Salle, Bogota], two in France [ECAM, Lyon; and ISAB, Beauvais], three in Mexico [ULSA-Cancun; ULSA-Cuernavaca; and ULSA-Noroeste], three in the Philippines [De La Salle University, Manila; De La Salle University, Dasmariñas; and University of Saint La Salle, Bacolod City] one in Spain [Enginyeria i Arquitectura La Salle, Universitat Ramon Lull, Barcelona], and six in the U.S.A. [College of Santa Fe, Santa Fe; Christian Brothers University, Memphis; La Salle University, Philadelphia; Manhattan College, NYC; St. Mary's College of California, Moraga; and St. Mary's University of Minnesota, Winona]. Time and financial constraints limited my visits to these sixteen universities.

Except for one university, a representative at each university selected fifteen to thirty diverse participants (members of the board of trustees, president, vice president, deans, men and women, seasoned and neophyte faculty members, staff personnel, students, parents, and alumni) for the face-to-face interviews. About three hundred participants were interviewed; each participant signed a letter of consent that guaranteed privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality.

The purposive sampling of institutions and research participants at each university seemed adequate for the purpose of this research project, which is to uncover the essential and common patterns of the Lasallian university identity across Lasallian universities worldwide.

### 3. Major Research Findings

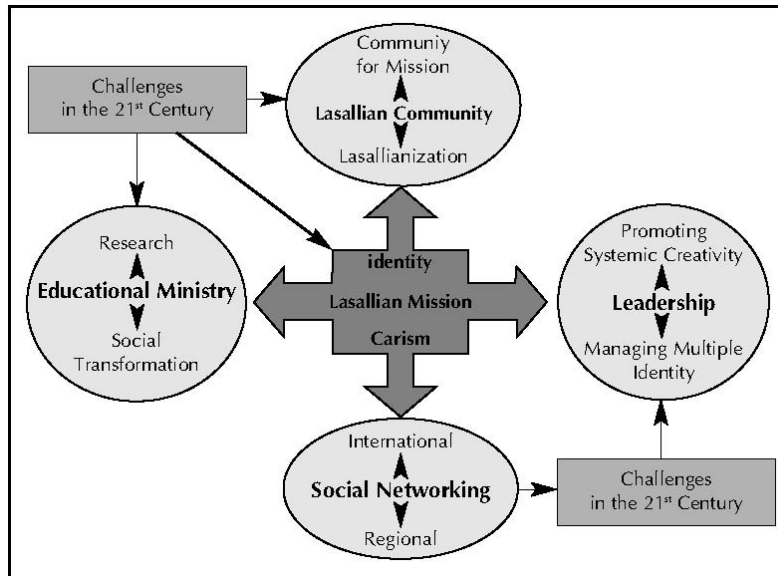
This research describes how Lasallian universities as a collectivity have expressed their Lasallian identity; more specifically, it reports the analysis of how Lasallian universities incorporate the Lasallian charism and the Lasallian mission in their organizational structures. The following

research findings pertain, not to individual institutions, but to the sixteen Lasallian universities viewed as a collectivity.

**Diversity of the sixteen Lasallian universities:** Of the sixteen universities, Brothers administer ten, Lasallian colleagues six. Their respective experiences in higher education vary: Three of the universities are barely ten years old while four others have celebrated their 40<sup>th</sup>, 143<sup>rd</sup>, 150<sup>th</sup>, and 153<sup>rd</sup> anniversaries. The sixteen universities are separated widely by geography and are influenced by different social, cultural, religious, and historical contexts. Individually, each university has adapted to its social, economic, cultural, religious, and historical environments and has faced different regional academic challenges besides the challenges of globalization, secularization, and university academic demands in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Consequently, the sixteen universities exhibit a great variety of external and objective symbols of their institutional identity: Some Lasallian universities display prominently various external symbols of Catholicity (such as crucifix in the classroom and daily masses) and/or Lasallian identity (such as statues of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, pictures of saintly Brothers, prayer before and after each class), whereas a few others shun the display of these external symbols.

Research has shown the ability of Lasallian university identity to move adaptively and fluidly across social, geographical, and cultural spaces. Openness to diversity at the international level might imply taking diversity into consideration at the local level. The paradox is that the more Lasallian universities define themselves exclusively in terms of openness to diversity, the more the differences that make them unique erode. Thus preserving diversity requires some form of closure, or, at least, maintaining a dynamic tension. This tension is at the heart of the impetus of Lasallian universities for the striving to be the best they can be academically in their respective countries and for redefining their university identity in terms of *Lasallianness*.

**The four deeper symbols of the Lasallian university identity:** Lasallian universities reflect unity in diversity through some deeper symbols of their Lasallian identity. External and objective symbols are readily visible, but deeper symbols are beneath the surface reality. The triangulation research method used in this investigation uncovered four major common and essential underlying themes: (1) a community with a common purpose guided by the Lasallian charismatic mission; (2) an educational ministry that strives for excellence and responsiveness; (3) networking and collaborating with other organizations and agencies to achieve a greater good for society; and (4) a leadership that fosters systemic creativity and manages multiple identities effectively. These interconnected deeper symbols of Lasallian identity, more than the external symbols, express meaningfully the Lasallian university identity (Figure 2).



**Figure 2: Interconnected Deep Symbols of Organizational Identity**

### **I. First Major Theme: A Community of Practices.**

Lasallian universities endeavor to construct a cohesive organizational culture and a coherent organizational structure founded on the shared Lasallian charismatic mission.

#### ***Cohesive Organizational Culture***

At fourteen Lasallian universities, the President has appointed a person responsible for promoting the Lasallian mission on campus; this person has the title of Director or Vice President for Mission, whereas the President of two institutions assume this role themselves. The Lasallian mission is prominent in the university mission statement, except for three universities. One wonders whether the Lasallian mission is important in those three institutions.

All participants were unanimous in expressing that they value being members of a community pursuing a common purpose and that the community founded on the Lasallian charismatic mission is the most valuable component of their respective universities. A large number of faculty members said that this sense of supportive community is typically Lasallian and not experienced at other universities they had worked. They perceive the activities initiated by members of the university to serve the needs of the less privileged as the most meaningful of university activities. One president promotes a sense of association by having all departments share with the entire university community their annual planning, their achievements, and their efforts to accomplish their goals. At another university, one time, when divided over the goals and mission of their university, faculty and staff members rallied around the Lasallian educational project proposed by the president and his young collaborators; from an aggregation of employees they turned into a community of educators committed to the Lasallian educational mission. At some universities, faculty and staff members at all levels engaged in the discussion and formulation of their university identity. At another university, administrators, staff, and faculty dialogue to identify a unifying theme that will serve as a guide to the students' entire educational experience during their four years at the university and as a reference point for their

Lasallian mission and values.

Many non-Christian students, faculty and staff members, and administrators at different Lasallian universities have indicated that they feel very much at home in a Lasallian environment. A few Lasallian colleagues, who were entrusted with important responsibilities in their respective universities, noted that Brothers never asked them to show their baptismal certificate. While they may not feel comfortable with the Catholic Church, especially its institutional hierarchy and its doctrinal teaching, they have found in the Lasallian mission common humanitarian values and could comfortably associate with the generous self-donation to help the less privileged grow beyond their social boundaries.

The Rule, article 146, *“The spiritual gifts which the Church has received in St. John Baptist de La Salle go far beyond the confines of the Institute which he founded...The Institute can associate with itself lay people who want to lead the life of perfection that the Gospel demands, by living according to the spirit of the Institute and by participating in its mission...At the same time it creates appropriate ties with them and evaluates the authenticity of their Lasallian characteristics”* seems to confine the shared Lasallian charism to Christians when, in lived realities, many non-Christians enthusiastically are engaged in the Lasallian mission. Bethlehem University is unique in Lasallian educational ministry among the Muslim population. A former missionary at this university spoke with amazement about the collaboration among Brothers, Christian and Muslim colleagues in this Lasallian educational mission.

### ***Coherent Organizational Structure***

Most of the sixteen Lasallian universities move from a “family” structure toward a formal structure. Informal interactions dominate in a “family” structure, whereas interactions among members are more formalized in a formal structure. At some institutions hierarchical structure is established, while in some others, there is a shift toward a flattened structure that promotes more effective communication and more flexibility, better horizontal and vertical communication, which in turn empowers systemic creativity within a Lasallian university.

Most Lasallian universities have strategic plans that not only ameliorate present situations but prepare them for rapidly changing environments. Their strategy is explicitly grounded in Lasallian mission, sensitive to student needs, committed to change, based on a vision that will attract and retain better students, and centered on students. Moreover, their strategy is collegial, coherent, and comprehensive. Their strategy is collegial when it is the result of a planning process that is transparent-that is, constantly communicated to all members of the institution and eliciting their feedback and response,-and interactive-that is, engaging everyone in creating and implementing the plan. It is coherent when it balances fidelity to the Lasallian mission with Lasallian charism, and feasibility with availability of resources. And it is comprehensive when it integrates education and experience, living and learning, academics and student development, liberal education and professional learning, undergraduate and graduate education, campus and community, and city and world.

Some Lasallian universities have figured out what they are really good at and why they exist. The reasons why they existed and thrived in the past most likely will not work anymore. Some still try to be all things to all people or to be like other universities without a distinctive the

Lasallian identity or without their mission being explicitly and primarily grounded on Lasallian mission. But consistency and coherence were fostered at many Lasallian universities. At a couple of institutions, the Lasallian heritage is mentioned as a historical note. At another university, even though the provost stated that his role is to be the guardian of the Lasallian heritage because it gives a distinctive character to the institution and thus a good means for recruiting students, the Lasallian mission is placed third in the university's mission statement. While the Lasallian heritage is salient at many Lasallian universities, one president has made it his number one priority in the five-year strategic plan and inspired other administrators to do the same in their respective sectors. As a result, the institutional organizational structure has become more coherent, reducing the gap between official documents and the actual operation of the institution.

### ***Employees: From Users to Supporters to Members***

To create and maintain a community of practices based on a common vision and supported by organizational coherence, presidents of Lasallian universities have organized Lasallian workshops and retreats for their collaborators. They have urged their collaborators to participate in various local, regional and international Lasallian formation workshops and conferences. Some of them returned admiring Saint De La Salle's charism, but were not transformed. They remained simply employees for various personal reasons. On the other hand, participants who endeavored to reflect on and to apply the Lasallian writings to their own situation in the 21st century have shown deep personal transformation. The formal and informal Lasallianization processes have transformed many employees into community members, from users of the university resources pursuing their own needs to supporters of activities sustaining the university Lasallian mission, from employees with a me-first ethos, who look out for themselves and their individual interests to members whose primary obligation is to the institution mission-especially to their students and colleagues. Most of these participants, however, have experienced transformative learning; they have been Lasallianized and have gradually reached higher levels in the Lasallian identity development. One of these Lasallian colleagues, an administrator at a large Lasallian university, has reflected on the meaning of the Lasallian charism in a paper titled "Reinterpreting Saint John Baptist de La Salle." In addition, she has taught others by example, with the founding and the continuing supervision of an educational project for the poor in the countryside.

## **II. Second Major Theme: The Lasallian Educational Ministry**

The second major theme relates to the university educational ministry. Our educators exercise an educational ministry when they carry out the Lasallian mission. The Lasallian charism and its ministry are the internal and the external aspects of the Lasallian university identity.

### ***Striving for Excellence in Education***

All sixteen Lasallian universities strive for excellence. While having to compete with state and private universities with greater resources, Lasallian mission-driven universities are able to hold their own and impress the public with the quality of their academic offerings. While the majority of the Lasallian universities rank among the better ones in their respective country, one particular Lasallian university manages to rank first among the private universities in the region. Another university offers the best architecture degree in the country. But it is more challenging for some

Lasallian universities to strive for excellence in teaching when they rely on part-time teachers to a large extent. While some of these part-time teachers are professional in their fields and thus could impart to their students their experiences in the fields of architecture, engineering, finance, and so forth, most of the part-time teachers in such fields are not available to students outside of class time.

The majority of students noted the student-teacher relationship as the most valuable experience of their education at a Lasallian university. They noted that Lasallian teachers were available outside of class and listened to them.

Unlike teachers at other private and state universities, Lasallian teachers distinguish themselves more by *how they live* than by *how they teach*. The majority of Lasallian teachers educate the students through their own renewal. They live Saint De La Salle's words: "*You are ambassadors and ministers of Christ in the profession you exercise; you must therefore conduct yourselves as representatives of Christ himself. It is He who wants young people to look to you as to Himself, to receive your teaching as if He Himself were teaching*" (Meditation for the Retreat 195, No. 2).

Students learn most when they are involved. Some Lasallian universities, instead of defining their excellence solely in terms of reputation and resources, percentage of PhD faculty members, and so on, have considered another definition of excellence in terms of talent development, such as civic talent, business talent, and self-knowledge. Lasallian universities with residence halls on campus provided their resident students with greater opportunities for social involvement. At some others, professional staff members in the Division of Student Affairs collaborate with student leaders in the planning, development, organization, and coordination of a wide range of activities in which students engaged. In comparison to non-resident students, students who resided on campus during the academic year were more engaged in various social activities; they learned both inside and outside the classroom, and thus developed their social and leadership skills to a greater degree. Both students and administrators have indicated that residential facilities enhanced a sense of community, provided opportunities for a greater involvement in the university life and mission, and maximized talent development among students.

### ***Social Research***

A few Lasallian universities included social research among their educational activities; at one such university, a student majoring in education indicated that, as a teacher, she would do research to understand and respond to the needs of her students more effectively. Few Lasallian universities engaged in social research to understand the social and economic conditions of their students in order to meet their needs. One Lasallian university's cultural center organized forums and international dialogue on peace and non-violence.

### ***Social Transformation***

Some Lasallian staff members at one university wished that their university refocus on the Lasallian mission to help the poor, specifically the deserving and gifted poor, who have the potential to excel in higher education; these students will more likely grow into professional who engage in social transformation to help other poor students grow beyond their social boundaries. Lasallian faculty members at another university wish that their leaders give greater consideration

to the Lasallian mission in helping less privileged students. Lasallian universities in one country give scholarships to 20% of their students who are poor but talented and thus enable them to grow beyond their social boundaries. At one university in another country, approximately 90% of the students receive some forms of financial aid. At some Lasallian universities student recipients of scholarships engage in tutoring and teaching less privileged younger and older students.

Many Lasallian universities take pride in the number of their students engaged in community service for the poor. Yet, students in public universities are also known to engage in activities in favor of the poor. One Lasallian university has switched from providing food and clothes to the poor to engaging in social transformation. It has organized regular forums wherein its representatives meet with regional government and corporate representatives to study the needs of the local people and to collaborate in programs that meet their needs. It also supports an outreach office in its endeavor to help small farmers and the poor manage their small businesses efficiently; as a result, small farmers and small town shop owners prospered and were able to send their children to get a college education. By putting greater emphasis on social transformation, Lasallian universities serve the poor more effectively.

Br. Alvaro has substituted “service to the poor” with the expression “social transformation” as one essential characteristic of Lasallian universities (*Encuentro VII*, 2004) for significant reasons. Unlike secondary schools, Lasallian universities have the prestige and the resources to work for social transformation in the 21st century and thus serve the poor more effectively, particularly when the various actions involved in social transformation create social, economic, and political environments that empower students to grow beyond their social boundaries.

### **III. Third Major Theme: Regional and International Networking**

A good number of Lasallian universities network and collaborate among themselves as well as with other organizations and agencies to achieve a greater good for society.

A billboard at an important crossroad of a city shows names of 13 Lasallian universities with their motto: “La Salle and you, building a new community.” This motto reflects well the Lasallian charisma gift of the Holy Spirit for the benefit of the community. The deans of schools and chairs of departments of these 13 universities meet regularly to share resources, exchange course syllabi, and help one another develop new courses to respond to the needs of the students. In another country, fifteen universities form a Lasallian university system in order to benefit from the system’s synergy and to respond more effectively to the diverse social and education needs of the students. One professor formed a network of Lasallian schools of engineering. Together, they provided quality and affordable online learning to young people living in developing countries. In one country, Lasallian universities together contributed financial and organizational resources to build and maintain a university for the poor. A great number of Lasallians feel proud to belong to the international Lasallian education networks. It was the international Lasallian network that was the determining factor in a private tertiary institution to merge with a Lasallian university in the region.

In 2005, UNESCO stated the premise that poverty is a violation of human rights. The eradication of poverty is, therefore, not any more a matter of condescendence or of compassion, but a matter

of conscience. To be faithful to the Lasallian charism in the 21st century, Lasallian universities would take on this new task with creativity and would collaborate with UNESCO and other international organizations to transgress the class boundaries that impede students' growth. This task is pressing. The latest statistics showed that 3 billion people get only 1.2 % of the world's income, while 1 billion people own 80 % of the world's income. The transfer of 1 % of the income of the rich to the rest of the world population would alleviate extreme poverty.

In the 21st century, Lasallian universities are challenged not by individual work with people but with facing the challenges of eradicating poverty at the global level and its legal, social, political, and economic structural causes.

#### **IV. Fourth Major Theme: Leaders Leading by Example, Fostering Systemic Creativity and Managing Multiple Identities Effectively**

Innovative and creative leadership played an important role in the life course of Lasallian universities. Many Lasallian leaders are aware of the tension inherent in the routinization of charismatic authority. As an antidote to the potential dysfunctional consequences of routinization, many Lasallian leaders continuously and unrelentingly foster community of practices, organizational coherence, and systemic creativity in their institutions. In addition, they manage multiple identities effectively.

##### ***Lasallian Leaders Lead by Example***

One president arrives early in the morning to greet not only each faculty and staff member but also each and every student by name. One leader, at a large Lasallian university, continues to donate time and organizational support many years after having founded a school for the poor in a remote village. Another high level administrator and his collaborators devised and manufactured an electric generator in their university lab; they themselves transported it to a poor village nested in the mountain. One president, besides providing opportunities for regular dialogue with groups of faculty, staff, or students, engaged in fund-raising to establish and maintain a center for street children. The chairman of the board of trustees at one university donated his part-time teaching salary to the scholarship fund for poor students. Two Lasallian colleagues, both high level administrators, said they are "Ambassadors of Christ" to their collaborators and prefer to teach by example. Both have initiated and maintained projects that benefit the poor in the mountains.

##### ***Lasallian Leaders Foster Systemic Creativity***

To meet the needs of a diverse student population, one president has multiplied his university into a system of eight universities, each one responding creatively to different students' needs and helping boldly different student populations grow beyond their social boundaries. Another president was a pioneer in establishing sequentially a number of universities in different cities.

Another president, to incarnate the Lasallian charism in the organizational structure, *fostered systemic creativity* by establishing a structure that empowered provost and deans to create new programs for students' changing needs.

Under creative presidents, systemic creativity became an integral part of everyday operations at



Lasallian universities. They asked and expected of all their collaborators creative responses to the needs of young and older students; they provided the climate in which these creative responses can flourish. This creativity was systematic when it became the responsibility of all members of the Lasallian educational community, not just of the senior leadership team. Systemic creativity was fostered by leaders who were formed to encourage creativity from their collaborators, by faculty and staff members who were trained to think and behave creatively, and by leaders making safe space for individual creativity.

### ***Lasallian Leaders Manage Multiple Identities Effectively***

Just like individuals have to manage their multiple social identities and role identities, which at time may conflict with one another and need to be managed within oneself, organizations have multiple identities. Lasallian leaders' primary function in the 21st century is, then, to *manage multiple and competing organizational identities* intrinsically embedded in today's Lasallian universities. They have to manage multiple conceptualizations of "who we are" or "who we want to be" as universities in the 21st century. Depending on how Lasallian university leaders manage multiple organizational identities, their respective universities would be able to deal with conflicting demands from external and/or internal stakeholders or constituencies.

The management of multiple organizational identities is especially relevant as the number of Brothers is decreasing while the number and diversity of Lasallian colleagues are increasing. At some universities, the Brothers Presidents integrated the Catholic identity and the Lasallian identity of their institutions. In some countries, the Brothers minimized the importance of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and emphasized the Lasallian identity of their universities. Some Lasallian Presidents embraced the Lasallian heritage for their institutions, but minimized the Catholic tradition, and were more sensitive to their Lasallian colleagues' views on organizational identities. The latter wanted to give priorities to the academic excellence and professional competence of their universities over the Lasallian charismatic educational mission.

The president of one Lasallian university closed the financial and social gaps between two of its departments; since then, the faculty members of the two departments have been collaborating in multidisciplinary educational endeavors and have shared financial and social resources in common educational projects.

A few presidents effectively managed these seemingly competing or exclusive multiple identities of their universities: Their universities exhibited Catholic and Lasallian identities and still ranked among the better universities in terms of professional competence of their faculty and excellence of the education offered. They succeeded in their critical decisions by maintaining an optimum institutional plurality. They maintained an optimum institutional plurality by increasing or decreasing the institutional identity synergy, and thereby met the demands of their diverse internal and external stakeholders.

Having multiple identities enabled Lasallian universities to respond or adapt to complex organizational environments. Those Lasallian universities that defined themselves in multiple ways were, in addition, more appealing to external stakeholders who have multiple needs and interests. Multiple institutional identities also allowed Lasallian universities to meet the expectations of multiple internal stakeholders. In particular, with the growing trend in diversity

among their faculty, staff and students on their campuses, Lasallian universities that can manage multiple identities effectively would have a significant competitive edge over those that cannot. Lasallian universities would then be more attractive and able to retain a wider range of people, and thereby enhance their capacity for learning and creativity.

On the other hand, Lasallian universities that were unable to manage competing “mental maps” of “who we are,” “where we are going,” and “what we want to become” are (1) more likely to engage in intrainstitutional conflicts and/or expend valuable resources in negotiating among groups holding different identities, (2) experience ambivalence, and (3) feel impeded in strategic decision-making and/or subsequent strategic implementation.

At one Lasallian university, the leader’s effective management of multiple identities empowered some Jewish faculty members to create new programs to meet the needs of students in a globalized world. Their inspiration originated explicitly from the Lasallian mission and their creativity sprung from the shared Lasallian charism. They could not identify, however, with the Gospel message or with the Catholic doctrine. In one country, faculty, staff, students and administrators embraced the Lasallian international character and educational excellence in preparation for a professional career, but shunned the Catholic identity as well as the Lasallian mission in favor of the less privileged. Some Lasallian universities struggled between an institutional identity of educating intelligent middle and upper-middle class students and that of educating the poor. Some Lasallian universities in some countries helped students pursue the path of professional careers, while others chose liberal arts education, and others attempted to combine both. A Lasallian leader who manages effectively multiple identities will attract more faculty and students from a diversity of backgrounds, and consequently enhance creative and learning in the globalized world of the 21st century.

While Lasallian universities come in all sizes and shapes and often accomplish a remarkable number of tasks, they do not exhaust the practical educational services needed in the dynamic and diverse contexts of postmodern living. Some Lasallian university leaders succeeded in mustering the services of talented educators from a multitude of backgrounds. Together, they responded creatively to the changing needs of the students and helped them transgress the many forms of boundaries that are in the way of their human and Christian growth. They empowered their students to achieve human dignity and salvation. However, some of our institutions of higher education, with their deeply rooted traditions and institutional interests, seemed less responsive to the challenges of the Lasallian mission in the 21st century.

Whether Brothers or Lasallian colleagues, leaders at Lasallian universities succeeded to the extent that they held a vision of Lasallian identity that is neither an attempt at retrieving something from the past nor a vague affirmation of virtuousness and good intentions from which anything Lasallian has been drained. They viewed Lasallian university identity as a work in progress.

These four dimensions of Lasallian university identity are interconnected and animated by shared Lasallian charism. In other words, Lasallian charism is life giving; it animates the four structural dimensions of the Lasallian university identity; and it guides university goals and activities. Lasallian charism serves as a light that guides Lasallian universities. In turn, the four interconnected structural dimensions make up the deep expressions of the Lasallian university

identity, founded on the Lasallian charism and the Lasallian mission (Figure 2).

### Discussion of the Findings: From Being Sparkles to Becoming Beacons

These deeper symbols of the Lasallian university identity among the sixteen Lasallian universities viewed as a collectivity are unevenly present across the universities. The research findings shed lights on the diverse ways and on the different stages of the Lasallian identity development among the sixteen Lasallian universities. Some shine with regard to some structural themes, some others spark with regard to some other themes. The sixteen institutions are at various stages of Lasallian identity development; they are uneven in their expression of their Lasallian identity as an organization. They range from being sparkles to becoming beacons of hope for internal and external stakeholders. The sixteen Lasallian universities radiate the light of Lasallian charism with a variety of intensities and brightness. Across time and space, this light may be blurred, dim, diffuse, or bright depending on the degree to which each structural component incarnates the Lasallian charism and the extent to which the four structural components form a coherent organizational structure.

Some Lasallian universities are beacons of hope: the Lasallian charism animates all the four structural components of their Lasallian university identity; they respond creatively and boldly to the needs of their students in the 21st century. At these universities, the Lasallian charism is life giving; it is the building axis of their Lasallian university identity; it animates the four structural dimensions of the Lasallian university identity.

**Some Relevant Issues:** The sixteen Lasallian universities collectively and individually face some significant issues that need consideration and action-how to:

- Balance corporatization of higher education and Lasallian systemic creativity.
- Move our universities from cells and silos to organizational communities-within each university and among Lasallian universities.
- Insure excellence in educational ministry while providing educational service to the less privileged students.
- Shift from service to the poor to social transformation, which empowers our young and older students to grow beyond their social boundaries. Lasallian universities become center of reflection and research on the roots of poverty and on the social transformation necessary to enable students to grow beyond their boundaries.
- Promote social research on the needs of the young and older students as well as on the more effective ways to meet their needs.
- Reflect on the generous self-donation inherent in shared Lasallian charism and its appeal to non-Christian lay colleagues.
- Devise instruments for assessing the different phases of Lasallian identity development at both the individual and organizational levels.

- Form leaders who will encourage creativity among their collaborators and faculty and staff who will be creative in their educational ministry.
- Reconcile a mission-driven versus a tuition-driven university.
- Insure the financial stability of Lasallian universities and the financial security for Lasallian associates so that they can devote their time and energy to the Lasallian mission.

### Limitations of This Study

This study focused on the common and essential structural components of Lasallian university identities at sixteen out of the fifty-five Lasallian universities worldwide. Many other Lasallian universities could share their experiences in the ways they express their Lasallian identity. The one-week on-site observation at each university did not allow for deeper and wider observations of some significant events and activities happening at each university.

### Future Research

To capture the dynamic and complex nature of Lasallian universities identity, future research could compare Lasallian universities conducted by Lasallian colleagues and by La Salle Brothers as well as compare Lasallian universities with, for example, Jesuit, Benedictine, or Franciscan universities.

### Summary and Conclusion

This study has yielded some understanding of the organizational dimensions of Lasallian university identity:

The “flattening” of the world along with globalization and secularization, the diverse clientele of Lasallian universities, the changed character of their professional leadership, the diverse and conflicting external and internal stakeholders, and the funding of university operations complicate the problem of defining and maintaining the Lasallian identity.

While dealing with these challenges, Lasallian universities make a serious effort to establish their identity in the Lasallian mission, with the Lasallian charism at its core. Lasallian university identity is socially constructed by its multiple internal and external stakeholders. It is adaptive and creative in responding to the needs of the young and older students. It animates a community of practices that is supported by a cohesive organizational culture and a gradual Lasallianization of its members. It gives vitality to an educational ministry. Lasallian universities offer a quality education, engage in social research, and work for social transformation to enable the students to grow beyond their boundaries. Regional and international networks vitalize the Lasallian university identity. Lasallian leaders lead by example, promote organizational coherence, build a community of systemic creativity, and manage multiple identities effectively.

The research participants in this study wished to see their universities strive to be alternatives to public and private universities, instead of just to be their mirror images. They wished that their leaders and colleagues were steadfast in building institutions of higher learning not just to last,

but worthy of lasting. However, because of the many different historical, religious, cultural, social, political, and economic contexts in which they operated, some universities diffused a brighter light; others projected a dimmer light.

The research participants in this study envisioned the day when all Lasallian universities will no longer be forced to join the corporatization of higher institutions, but will be beacons of hope in the 21st century. Lasallian universities will then show a kind of refined virtuousness and academic excellence made more luminous by the Lasallian charisma that lay beneath.

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## Appendix A

### *Consent for Participation in the Research Study*

TITLE OF STUDY: Lasallian Identity of Lasallian Universities

Principal Investigator: Francis Tri Nguyen, FSC, Ph.D.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in this study that was approved by La Salle University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) on 2/3/03 and by Manhattan College IRB on 9/20/04.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study is to discern the patterns of common and essential themes across the Lasallian universities that would constitute their Lasallian identity in the 21st century. I will be asked to describe what it was like for me to teach, to work, to study at this Lasallian institution of higher learning. I will also be asked to describe this institution at its best in regards to teaching, working, studying at this institution. I am being asked to do this because few studies have looked at this experience from the perspective of the participants in the Lasallian educational mission and also because the participants might benefit from reflecting on their lived experience.

**PLAN:** The researcher will interview me either one-to-one or together with others in a group and write notes about the interview after he leaves. The interview will be tape-recorded and transcribed word-by-word. The investigator will read the transcriptions and analyze what the experience was like for me and other participants.

**PROCEDURES:** I understand that the procedure involves being interviewed on a one-to-one basis or within a group of participants and will take forty-five to sixty minutes to complete. I will also be asked to identify some biographical information such as age, gender, and college/university status. The investigator will contact me by mail or e-mail at a later time to confirm the accuracy of the results of the study.

I understand that I was invited to participate in the study because I have taught, worked, studied at this institution or because I am affiliated to this institution.

**BENEFITS AND RISKS:** I understand that there are no known benefits for my participation except the possibility of letting Lasallian educators know what the experience was like for me and discover the factors that contribute to enhance this institution when it is at its best. The risks may involve anxiety or embarrassment as a result of discussing my personal experience and sharing my personal observations.

The investigator will do everything possible to prevent or reduce discomfort and risk, but is not possible for him to predict everything that might occur. If I have unexpected discomfort or think something unusual is occurring, I should contact: Francis Tri Nguyen, FSC, Ph.D., at 215-951-1106.



CONFIDENTIALITY: I am aware that my participation in the study and the information provided will remain confidential. No parts of my interview will be connected to me. My name will not appear on any documents. A confidential number will appear on the transcribed interviews and the audiotapes. The tapes of the study will be destroyed at its completion. If the study is published, I will not be identified.

I understand that I can ask questions at any time and am free to withdraw from the study at any time. Also, if it appears that the study is harmful to me, the investigator will stop the interview. Based upon the assurances from my employing institution, my participation in this research will not impact my employability. If new information becomes available during the study that will influence participant safety, I will be notified as well as La Salle University's Institutional Review Board.

If I have any questions regarding the research study or my involvement I can contact the researcher: Francis Tri Nguyen, FSC, Ph.D., La Salle University, at 215-951-1106, William Van Buskirk, Ph.D., La Salle University IRB Chair, at 215-951-1885, or Walter Matystik, J.D., Manhattan College IRB Chair, at 718-862-7268.

I have read the description of the project. Francis Tri Nguyen, FSC, explained to me anything I did not understand and I had all of my questions answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research.

(Signature of Participant) (Date)

(Signature of Investigator) (Date)

## **Appendix B**

### Interview Questions

The first set of interview questions consists of phenomenological questions such as,

“What is it like to be a teacher, an educator, an administrator, a staff member, a student, a trustee at this institution of higher learning?”

“What does it mean to teach, to work, to study at this college or university?”

Constantly mindful of the original question, the researcher asks, “What is it about teaching, working, studying at this institution that renders those experiences their andragogic, administrative, learning significance?”

The second set of interview questions consists of AI interview protocol pertaining to the first three phases of Cooperrider's “4-D” cycle: Discovery, Dreaming, and Design (Zenke, 1999).

- The Discovery phase, which is also known as the “appreciating” phase or the “What gives life?” inquiry, is when the people of an institution gather and enumerate the strengths of their institution as well as pertinent information for improving.” The Discovery phase includes grand tour questions such as,

- “What comes to your mind when your university is at its best?”

- “Specifically, what individuals-administrators, teachers, students, classes, activities, or events surface most vividly in your mind as representing those times when your university is at its best?”

- “What is your university doing now when it is at its best?”

- “What is it about this university that makes these experiences possible?”

- The information gathered in the Discovery phase is used in the Dreaming phase, or the “envisioning results” phase or the “What might be?” inquiry, as a foundation for speculating on possible futures for the institution. The Dreaming phase includes the following grand tour questions:

- “What do you envision when your university is at its best 3, 5, 10 years from now?”

- “What empowers your university to deal with the challenges it faces in the years ahead?”

In the Design phase, or the “co-constructing” phase or “What should be the ideal?” inquiry, the people of the institution would use these possible futures to determine how their organization would look like and agree upon the driving “concepts” and “principles.” The Design phase includes grand tour questions such as,

- “What should characterize your university when it is at its best 3, 5, 10 years from now?”

For group discussion

- 1 What is your reaction after reading this work? Have your expectations been satisfied? Which aspects would you consider of greatest importance? Are there certain parts in your opinion which need further investigation?

- 2 How would you evaluate the closeness or novelty of this research compared with earlier similar investigations? How can one avoid the dangerous effects of routine in the university or institution where you work?

- 3 From among the anonymous commentaries mentioned, which do you find the most

convincing? Which are the main obstacles to putting into practice a coherent and well-thought-out organizational structure, allowing full and open expression of one's own ideas on the historical roots of the Lasallian mission?

4 The movement towards helping workers in universities to become Lasallianised has progressed slowly but surely. Do you agree with that statement? Is it apparent in your own institution? What measures should be strengthened or taken more into account?

5 Looking towards the future and taking into account the results of this research, which aspects in your opinion are indispensable; which aspects must be cultivated, preserved or evolved in the light of the present work?