
Has the School "Run Well" since the Pandemic Began?

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Prologue

The paper aims to assess how De La Salle University-Dasmariñas (DLSU-D) in the Philippines has been managed since the pandemic began. It shall focus on the teaching-learning process. The *Identity Criteria for the Vitality of Lasallian Educational Ministries* document² shall be used as the framework for analysis. Documents released during this period and results of survey questionnaires from the student, parent, faculty, and administration sectors shall be analyzed for this purpose.

To contextualize, the paper starts with a description of the situation of DLSU-D when the pandemic was just starting. Afterwards, it narrates the measures taken during the suspension of onsite or face-to-face classes. These measures are then evaluated based on the *vitality criteria* set for the international network La Salle schools. The paper concludes with some reflections and recommended courses of action based on the results of the evaluation.

The information that will be shared covers the period from March 2020 to September 2020 and takes its bias from the point of view of Academics and Research. As a result, it may have inadvertently failed to properly account for initiatives coming from other units like mission, external affairs, advancement, finance and administrative services, all of which may have, one way or the other, affected the teaching and learning process.³

What Was DLSU-D Doing When the Pandemic Was Just Starting?

The paper starts with a description of the context. *Table 1* provides a timeline of events to show the activities of DLSU-D in relation to the activities of its national government and the global community during the pandemic. It draws from the relevant emails released by the university, social media posts of the different national government agencies,⁴ and a timeline of events released by the World Health Organization (WHO)⁵ in relation to the pandemic.

It was more than two weeks after the first recorded case of COVID-19 outside China, that DLSU-D released its advisory about COVID-19. Known as the Corona Virus at that time, the academic and research administrators were asked to refer to previously released adjustment measures that anticipated the disruption of classes because of the Taal Volcano eruption early in January 2020.⁶

- The measures highlighted the need for the faculty to orient students on all options and possibilities in light of the anticipated suspension of classes. It suggested that major exams become output based to allow for more flexibility in scheduling. This was the same with laboratory activities. Further, if the laboratory equipment was accessible and portable, they could be borrowed and brought home.

- The measures also outlined specific steps for the use of the online mode in case classes were to be suspended. A mechanism had been set up to assure that assistance to teachers was provided in all academic departments.
- For student activities, the number of institutional and collegiate activities were reduced. Remote access to leaning resources was also reiterated.

At this time, DLSU-D would still be coming back from a school break. Its classes were set to begin on the last week of January 2020.

By the time classes opened, strict health protocols were implemented on campus. One particular measure was to deny students and faculty entry should they register a temperature of 37.5 degrees Celsius. Those that spent their school breaks outside the country were also asked to self-isolate and observe a quarantine period of 14 days. As a result, the university released, on February 10, 2020, its first learning continuity plan made originally in response to the effects of the COVID-19. It continued to adapt the adjustment measures released earlier. Known as “Learning Continuity Plan,” it outlined specific actions to be taken, in case the teacher or the student arrived late in class because of the heavy traffic that the new health protocol might create, or in case the teacher or student failed to attend a class because his or her body temperature was higher than what was allowed upon entry. No one expected that the Learning Continuity Plan foreshadowed the beginning of the suspension of onsite or face-to-face classes, which until now has yet to be lifted.

Table 1: Timeline of Events

Date	WHO	National and Local Government	DLSU-Dasmariñas
January 13, 2020	The first recorded case of coronavirus outside China was reported. This came from Thailand.	The Taal Volcano erupted and suspension of classes and government work was declared in all affected areas due to the ash fall which affected the air quality.	The key heads of the Academics and Research unit were advised to come up with a systematic plan of action to help the university adjust once suspension of classes has been lifted. The plan of action was composed of several components: curriculum and instruction, faculty, student services, facilities and laboratories, research, and other academic services like use of library, learning management system, etc.

January 14-16, 2020	Japan reported the second case of coronavirus in a person who travelled from Wuhan.	Alert level is still high as hazardous explosive eruption is still possible in the coming days. Many families were evacuated from their homes because of the ash fall.	The administration advised everyone to wear face masks upon entering the campus and cleaning of the entire school premises due to the ashfall was undertaken.
January 20-30, 2020	<p>The WHO Regional Director for South East Asia released a statement urging countries in the Region to be prepared for rapid detection and for prevention to avoid further spread.</p> <p>By this time, cases in Europe and the Americas have been reported.</p> <p>The WHO Director General declared novel coronavirus outbreak as a public health emergency of international concern.</p>	Regular classes resumed as announced by the local government.	<p>Adjustment measures were released in response to the effects of the Taal Volcano eruption.</p> <p>An advisory was released at the end of the month encouraging the academic community to wear masks as a form of preventive measure “in light of recent developments.” The virus was not mentioned.</p>
February 4 and 5, 2020	WHO started conducting daily briefings on the novel corona virus.	A response briefing on the 2019 novel corona virus was held in Cagayan. The briefing showed a government response timeline starting December 31, 2019, when the Department of Health started to closely monitor the novel corona virus.	<p>All academic and research administrators were advised to refer to the adjustment measures released January 24 and apply them in the context of the corona virus. This is the first time that “corona virus” was mentioned</p> <p>Reduced student activities and flexible classroom learning were underscored.</p>
February 10-12, 2020	WHO announced that the disease caused by the	The Commission on Higher Education	The first Learning Continuity Plan was

	<p>novel coronavirus shall be called COVID-19. A Global Research and Innovation Forum brought together 300 experts onsite and 150 online to speed up efforts in fully assessing COVID-19.</p>	<p>released its first of seven advisories regarding the virus. The seventh advisory was sent May 24, 2020</p>	<p>released. Still in the context of onsite learning, the plan provided flexible alternatives for students and teachers who would not be allowed entry on campus because of symptoms associated with the virus. Teachers were asked to resort to the university’s learning management system to catch up on missed lessons.</p>
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What Did DLSU-D Do When Face-to-Face or Onsite Classes Were Suspended because of the Pandemic?

It was March 10, 2020 that suspension of onsite classes began in the place where DLSU-D is located. From several days, the suspension progressed to a month, which was extended one month after the other. Until now, classes are still on online mode. The Learning Continuity Plan needed to evolve each time suspension was extended or pertinent internal or external information was updated, whichever came first. Different versions were released for that purpose until a teaching-learning model was released in time for the coming school year. *Table 2* shows the timeline of measures related to the teaching and learning process that the university had been undertaking since the pandemic began.

The first version of the plan that was released after the suspension had three major components when it announced that the university would resort to distance learning mode: (1) management of classes, (2) management of student activities, and (3) management of faculty services and activities.

- It emphasized the need to streamline lessons, observe a flexible deadline, and increase the number of attempts. For laboratory lessons, academic departments were asked to push these lessons at the latter part of the term, if no alternative ways were to be found.
- For exams, it reiterated the need to resort to output based exams and added the need to hold digital or electronic submissions instead of submission by hardcopies.
- Graduating students (i.e., those who were working on their thesis) resorted to virtual data gathering techniques. Those who were on their practicum or on-the-job training program needed to resort to project-based or work-from-home arrangements.

- As far as students were concerned, student activities and grievance procedures were also suspended. They were also advised to secure an account to remotely access the online sources and databases of the library.
- For faculty, their attention was led to the pertinent points for online learning found in the previous measures released. Modules would serve as alternatives if teachers had yet to learn the operations of the learning management system. These were to be emailed to students for them to accomplish during the period of suspension.

Titled “Further Liberalizing Education in the Midst of a National Emergency,” the second version of the plan presented the results of the survey conducted among students and faculty and adjusted measures found in the earlier version.

Based on the survey which aimed to find out how the respondents were coping with online classes, more than 35 percent had limited internet connection or no internet connection at all; more than 50 percent could only access the lessons through their mobile phones; and more than 70 percent were overwhelmed by the number of assessments.

The survey also suggested that 2,470 students successfully connected to the online survey, either by themselves or through the help of their classmates or friends. Given the total college population of 6,899, such sampling registered a 99 percent confidence level with only a margin of error of 1.58 percent, with each college proportionally represented.

The adjustments focused on these results.

- The deadline of submission of requirements was extended until the next term. During this time, suspension of onsite or face-to-face classes was expected to be lifted soon.
- Teachers without Internet connection would have to be assisted by their respective departments in uploading their lessons.
- All previous assessments that were closed were reopened with increased number of attempts.
- Lesson presentations were advised to be succinct to easily register on mobile phones.
- A turn-around time of 24 hours would have to be observed in answering student concerns.
- Policy on pre-requisite subjects were relaxed in some subjects to allow a student to take these plus the subjects that would come after them in the same semester. During this time, the assumption was face-to-face classes would be allowed to resume in the following term.
- Parents were also asked to closely monitor their children in accomplishing their online tasks.

Version three of the plan emphasized the transition from distance-learning mode to self-paced mode. This meant more leeway in the deadlines that were set until onsite or face-to face classes resumed, with unlimited attempts for assessment in the meantime.

No failing grade would be given, nor would students be automatically passed, nor would mass promotion be implemented. If a student failed, despite all flexibility extended, the subject would not be credited and would receive an NC for non-credit instead of a failing mark of 0.0. This meant that the student would need to take the subject again.

This third version was also accompanied by a separate memo proposing to students a feedback mechanism that responded to their concerns. The mechanism gave a direct line of communication between student leaders and the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academics and Research for immediate resolution. At this time, petitions for suspension of online classes were being received from students.

Released in the following month, version four of the plan announced that a special term would be offered via distance learning mode, whether suspension of onsite or face-to-face classes was lifted or not. The special term was the last term for the academic year. It was usually shorter than the two regular terms that preceded it and was normally allotted for students who would like to enroll to either lighten up their load during the two regular terms or to catch up or retake subjects. This time however, only subjects for the graduate school, subjects that are really intended to be offered during that term based on the program of studies, and subjects for those scheduled for graduation were offered.

All four versions of the plan were released and implemented during the second term. As the term was about to end and in preparation for the coming school year, another survey was conducted among students on May 17, 2020 to assess their first fully online learning experience in DLSU-D. Called “End-of-Class Evaluation: Survey of Student Capability for Distance Learning, COVID-19 Awareness during Quarantine Period, and Plans for the Coming School Year,” a total of 3,000 students participated in the survey, much more than the number of student respondents in the survey that was conducted during the early part of the term.

According to the survey results,

... students echoed their dissatisfaction with the learning they gained from distance education. Several factors interdependently caused this. Foremost, the faculty have not been oriented toward the kind of lessons and assessments that work well with the equipment/ gadget and connectivity that students currently are utilizing. This mismatch burdened the students and has further resulted to resentments regarding unrealistic outputs and deadlines, despite released memos of self-paced learning, extended submissions, and assurances of no grade failures. In addition, worries and fears about the pandemic, especially getting infected with COVID-19, were strongly felt by the students. Due to this burden, students appealed for early suspension of online classes but were not heard, concomitantly ensuing accusations of the administration being inconsiderate to their voices. Overall, students do not think they are prepared for distance learning. More

importantly, more than half are undecided about continuing their studies should the same mode of learning prevail in the next semester.

Care-Centered Model for Online Learning

The results of the survey and other multisectoral consultations paved the way for the development of the Care-Centered Model for online learning.⁷ It was explained as a teaching-learning model designed to provide a more inclusive and humanized learning experience. It focused on four key areas where care needed to be strongly manifested. These areas included pacing, instructor presence, assessment, and technical, academic, and non-academic support.

- *Pacing* referred to providing a schedule to assure students the time needed to attend to their lessons. It aimed to make sure that students have the time to attend to their lessons, enjoy support services, and spend time with family and friends. A fixed schedule for synchronous, asynchronous, assessment, and self-care/ me-time was made.
- *Instructor presence* referred to the active role of the teacher in responding to feedback promptly and clearly, under a tone of encouragement and respect.
- *Assessment* was seen in terms of opportunities for learners to improve on areas where they lacked understanding and to apply their knowledge and skills to real life situations. Provisions for lifelines and deadlines were provide to offer flexibility.
- *Technical, academic and non-academic support* covered provisions for academic clinics, technical support, a team of dedicated technicians for step-by-step instruction and troubleshooting, and gadget load assistance.

Faithful to the Lasallian education ministry, the model was envisioned to create a teaching-learning experience that was flexible, reflective and collaborative and to allow students to understand the world around them and authentically respond to its needs. As the name of the model suggests, it draws from the value of empathy, believing that the teaching and learning situation will be better if the participants (teacher and student) feel compassion toward one another's situation.

Various multisectoral groups coming from parents, teachers, and students participated for more than a month, in the drafting of the guidelines. On July 15, the guidelines were released. To make sure that monitoring and feedback were valued during their pilot implementation in the first semester of the coming school year, the following channels were opened.

- A hotline email account where stakeholders could share directly their concerns [IRRcarehotline@dlsud.edu.ph].
- Regular consultation from stakeholder representatives convened either by the OVCAR or its assigned team to monitor what was happening on the grounds.
- A research project was commissioned to determine the effectiveness of the implementation.

A schedule of weekly faculty training was also announced to run until the opening of classes. These trainings included the development of online and offline modules, different kinds of assessment, use of the learning management system, and teaching strategies for both lecture and laboratory classes.

The following month, and in the spirit of care, a survey was conducted to find out the status of the wellbeing of the faculty. As described in the survey write up, it was stated that “the teachers affirm that in the coming school year, effective delivery of instruction through different modes is assured, at least at the faculty’s level.” On a personal level however, there seems to be competing findings.

On one hand, teachers seem to be on top of things as few expressed losing appetite (9.6%), and difficulty in sleeping at night (22.1%). On the other hand, though, a considerable number are worried that they have no means of control over the COVID-19 pandemic (51%), feel mentally exhausted with all the preparations they need to do (41.3%) and find it hard to concentrate on teaching-related preparations (31%). In addition, family matters figure in the teachers’ concerns as almost 4 in 10 (39.4%) find it difficult to manage and balance the demands of online learning and household tasks; and 34.9% are bothered by their family’s situation on matters like food needs, medicine, money, etc. Overall, however, the biggest concern is job security. Only 26.2% were not apprehensive at all, while 50.1 are worried, and 23.1% are neutral about it.

Toward the end of month and gearing up for the re-opening of campus in September, the student academic support program was released to the academic administrators. The program essentially highlighted relaxed retention policies and provisions for tutorial and clinics, in response to the challenges that the students, would be facing given the new set up.

On September 14, 2020, face-to-face classes officially started. Since then, the care-centered guidelines have been revised. The revisions came from clarifications related to assessment, synchronous sessions, and offline mode for those with problems in Internet connection. By the time of the writing of this paper, gadget assistance has been extended to all incoming first year students and selected scholars of the university. A shift to offline mode by the student can be accommodated, if despite all assistance, connection remains to be a challenge for learning.

As of the writing of this paper, current efforts include the following:

- The multisectoral consultation has been maintained to know and to respond to the situations on the ground. Among the actions taken as a result of the consultation, a self-care week in the university level was declared over and above the self-care time that a student can use in his or her subject.
- A regular survey has been being maintained to know, from the students, how the key areas of the care-centered model are being implemented. As of its last results, except for assessment, all key areas have more than 85 percent satisfaction rate in all colleges.
- The monitoring and coaching systems have been implemented to focus on assessment and synchronous sessions. Until now, they remain to be the primary concerns of

students and teachers. Another survey has shown that more than forty percent of students want more synchronous sessions to take place.

- A follow up wellness survey of faculty showed a higher confidence level in handling online classes but lower confidence level in the direction that the university is providing, including in the area of teaching and learning.
- A multisectoral group has been convened to further simplify concerns regarding the care-centered model guidelines and make them more responsive to both students and faculty.
- Planning in coordination with other units outside Academics and Research has also begun to take place, in case onsite or face-to-face learning is allowed in the future.
- The research commissioned to determine if learning was effective has already completed its data-gathering phase.
- Faculty members have continued to be coached on a one-on-one level through the different e-learning coordinators assigned in each department.
- The five-year development plan (School Year 2020-2021 to School Year 2024-2025) for Academics and Research is already ready and on standby for the new organizational structure of the university.

It is worth noting also, that despite the results of the survey in May 2020, which registered more than half of the students not convinced of enrolling in the following semester, the enrollment for the semester of the current school year have exceeded the number of enrollees of the same semester of the previous school year.

Table 2: Timeline of Measures for Teaching and Learning during the Pandemic

Date	DLSU-D Learning Continuity Plan
March 8, 2020	In anticipation of an announcement of class suspension, academic administrators were asked to review the “Learning Continuity Plan” and the “adjustment measures.” Added to this, a module for monitoring of teachers was developed for the guidance of the administrators. An assessment of the skill sets of teachers in terms of online learning was asked to be made as well. Services that could be accessed online were reiterated. These included library services, records, and technical support.
March 11, 2020	Version one of the Learning Continuity Plan was released in anticipation of a prolonged suspension of classes. It announced that the university would resort to a distance-learning mode.
March 16, 2020	Adjustment in the admission process was made. The interview and the skill test, which are usual requirements, were suspended. Instead, admitted students were put on probationary status.

	Coordination with the food concessionaire was done to assure regular meals for the athlete-scholars who planned to stay in the campus dormitory.
March 17, 2020	An advisory was released to clarify points raised in version one. It also tackled needs that are technically non-academic. They include the need to sustain connection with students, to be compassionate with one another, and to adjust expectations of one another given the extraordinary times.
March 18, 2020	Online counseling service for students was activated in response to the growing number of mental health concerns that students were experiencing because of the adjustments.
March 24, 2020	Version two of the Learning Continuity Plan was released in response to the survey conducted among students and faculty. The new version claimed to liberalize ways of connecting and to eliminate factors that prevented students from learning.
March 27, 2020	Infographic versions of version two were released for both faculty and students. Also released was an enhanced technical support service from which the students and faculty would benefit. A faculty wellness hotline was also posted, and a webinar series (optional training for faculty) was activated daily from 10-12.
April 7, 2020	Version three of the Learning Continuity Plan was released to prepare the academic community in the eventuality of onsite or face-to-face classes being resumed or remaining suspended. The plan was also accompanied by a separate memo addressed to the student leaders asking for a suspension of online classes. The memo proposed a feedback mechanism to address student concerns.
April 23, 2020	The faculty sector was met via online platform to address questions that were academic and non-academic in nature. Retooling of faculty was a primary concern expressed during the town-hall meeting.
April 30, 2020	The pastoral letter of the Brother President was released. Among other things it pointed to version three of the Learning Continuity Plan. Further clarifications were also released regarding version three of the plan.
May 8, 2020	Version four discussed submission of grades and announced that the set up for the special term would be by distance-learning mode.
May 30, 2020	The results of the end of the semester survey were released. This was the first survey conducted after all learning continuity measures were released. The results expressed the dissatisfaction of the students with the learning mode that was conducted during the semester.
June 1, 2020	A second pastoral letter was released by the Brother President announcing the opening of the next school year in September. A new model for online learning was also launched in response to the results of the recent survey: "The Care-Centered Model for Online Learning."

June 8, 2020	<p>Multisectoral groups were formed to come up with implementation guidelines related to the model. Representatives from the faculty, student, and parent sectors were convened to contribute to the drafting of the guidelines.</p> <p>The academic community at large was also invited to share their views via an email hotline provided for such purpose [IRRCarehotline@dlsud.edu.ph].</p>
July 15, 2020	<p>The care-centered model guidelines were released.</p> <p>A schedule of weekly faculty training, which would run until the opening of classes, was also announced as a required activity for faculty.</p>
August 17, 2020	<p>The results of faculty wellness survey conducted on August 5, 2020 was released to administrators as reference in their planning for the coming school year.</p>
August 30, 2020	<p>Student academic support program was released to the academic administrators.</p>
September 2020 and forward	<p>Face-to-face classes started on September 14, 2020.</p> <p>A revised version of the care-centered guidelines was released.</p> <p>Consultations, adjustments, and planning in anticipation of what lies ahead continued.</p>

With All These Measures, Can We Say That the School Has Been “Run Well” since the Pandemic Began?

The term “the school runs well” is explained in the document *Identity Criteria for the Vitality of Lasallian Educational Ministries*⁸ (*vitality criteria*, hereon). Released in April 2020, the document aimed to provide principles that distinctly characterized Lasallian education. These principles or criteria act as signposts that are meant to direct every Lasallian educational institution to its mission of effectively announcing the Gospel to the poor and the margins of society, with a united mind and heart, and through human and Christian education.

The criteria were developed based on the documents from the Lasallian Districts and Brothers, feedback from the Regions of the Institute, and research. They were meant to be universal, at the same time flexible and open to being localized, depending on the institution’s specific circumstances. The criteria are meant to tell us if “the school runs well.” They are divided into six sections: (1) response to needs; (2) the educational community; (3) accompaniment; (4) historical, foundational support; (5) a culture of quality; and (6) strategic management. Each section has sub-sections which act as descriptors.

- *Response to needs* highlights “children, young, peoples, and adults, especially the most vulnerable” as the target sector of the ministry. It describes the ministry as providing holistic education, localized evangelization, and promotion of pluralism, rights of children, justice, human dignity, and solidarity.

- *The educational community* is described as fraternal, where teachers and students know each other and one another. It is a community where the members work and responsibilities are enriched with a life of prayer and service.
- *Accompaniment* highlights the relationship of students and teachers and how the latter can serve as instruments in promoting activities that make the students more involved and invested in activities that promote a life of service and opportunities for vocation and discernment. It also means the teachers are responding to the individual and specific needs of each student.
- *Historical, foundational support* refers to how the spirituality of the Founder acts as the foundation of the institution, where a strong link to the Lasallian Brothers is cultivated, and symbols are prominently found to remind the members of the community of the Lasallian ideals. It also highlights the culture of service to the poor, foresight, relationship with the local church, and research and collaboration meant to innovate and provide good living conditions to the most vulnerable and marginalized members of society.
- *A culture of quality* promotes the development and application of skills, knowledge, and attitudes for self-development in daily life. It underscores the importance of teachers that are not only knowledgeable but also have the ability to effectively transfer this knowledge to students. To achieve this, updated training and development programs meant to respond to the specific experiences of the students are needed.
- *Strategic management* means the presence of a development plan, in which finances are sufficient to provide for effective educational service. Leadership by example is seen as important in providing confidence to teachers and students. It also means collaboration with other Lasallian ministries and civil society.

The measures undertaken by DLSU-D since the pandemic began shall be assessed based on these criteria.⁹

The different points of view coming from the parents, students, faculty, and administrators resulted in insights that merit further investigation. Five highlights of the results are here presented for further consideration. For other possible insights that were left unnoticed by this paper, please refer to *Table 3* (at the end of the paper) that presents the descriptors of how respondents consider DLSU-D to be strongest (dark gray). It also shows the areas in which the university is considered to be not as strong (light gray) and, therefore, needing improvement.

1. *Across sectors, most of the descriptors were considered to be strengths that the university exhibits. There were only a handful of descriptors whose respondents did not outnumber the respondents who considered these descriptors as either in the consolidating, in the developing, or in the “no work done” level.*

The strongest descriptors were to be found in the following *vitality criteria*: for parents, it was *strategic management*; for the students, it was *historical, foundational support*; and for the faculty, it was *the educational community*. This means

- That the parents found that the “policies and regulations of the Lasallian educational ministry guarantee the good organization of the ministry, justice, and respect for the rights of children in addition to fostering a safe and friendly environment.”
- That students considered that the “Lasallian educational establishment shares the life, work, and spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. It maintains strong links with the Brothers, especially in those works in which there are no Brothers. In addition, it uses symbols that recall Lasallian ideals and the means to achieve them.”
- That faculty believed that “Lasallian teachers carry out their work to the best of their ability, and they know that they are cooperating in the proclamation of the Gospel. They know their students, and they let themselves be known.”

Descriptors that were not considered as strengths by the majority were found in *accompaniment* for parents; *response to needs, the educational community, accompaniment, and strategic management* for students; and *strategic management* for faculty. These all need to be improved because

- Parents did not completely see that the “educational establishment has efficient means to promote the vocation of the De La Salle Brothers in addition to helping young people interested in their own vocational promotion.”
 - Students were not convinced that: “a comprehensive education promotes the development of all dimensions of the person, relationships between persons, and possibilities for growth”; the “Lasallian educational community strives to live those values that ennoble people, such as prudence, justice, strength and temperance. Similarly, each member tries to develop assertive communication”; a “Lasallian education serves all its students, especially those who have more difficulty in developing their skills, either by the use of programs or with particular strategies”; and “development plans are carried out in a participatory way, showing the direction of the educational establishment as well as the way to achieve the desired goals.”
 - Teachers did not feel that the “financial resources of the educational ministry are sufficient to provide adequate educational service. Resources are obtained by financing or by other means.”
2. *There were only a few instances in which all three sectors considered a descriptor as the best evidence of the strength of the university. Most of the time, they were appreciated differently by the sectors (i.e., if ever ranked, it does not follow that if a descriptor is ranked first by one sector, that it will also be ranked first by other sectors).*

Parents, students, and faculty agreed that in terms of *a culture of quality*, the university was strongest in showing that the “Lasallian educational ministry promotes the development of

skills, knowledge, and attitudes for self-development, a productive life (employment), healthy co-existence and the application of knowledge in daily life.”

It is also worth noting that all three sectors believed that the university needs to improve in the area of *response to needs*. They could not clearly see that “comprehensive education promotes the development of all dimensions of the person, relationships between persons, and possibilities for growth” exists in DLSU-D.

3. *In some instances that faculty and students considered the descriptor as the best evidence of strengths, the parent sector would consider this as the least among the descriptors. There were also instances in which both the faculty and students considered areas in which DLSU-D was least strong.*

The *vitality criteria* along which the faculty and students aligned included *response to needs*, *the educational community*, and *historical, foundational support*. In all these criteria, both faculty and students saw these as strengths of the university because they saw that

- “The Lasallian educational ministry accepts religious pluralism with respect and hope, promoting and witnessing everyday dialogue and unity among the members of their educational community.”
- “Lasallian teachers carry out their work to the best of their ability, and they know that they are cooperating in the proclamation of the Gospel. They know their students and they let themselves be known.”
- “The Lasallian educational establishment shares the life, work, and spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. It maintains strong links with the Brothers, especially in those works in which there are no Brothers. In addition, it uses symbols that recall Lasallian ideals and the means to achieve them.”

Interestingly the first two manifestations of strength, which are descriptors of *response to needs* and *the educational community*, respectively, are considered by the parent sector as areas in which the university was least strong.

It is also worth noting that the following areas in which both students and teachers agreed that the university was least strong were also found in *the educational community* and *historical, foundational support*. They saw these are requiring improvement because they did not completely see

- That “a Lasallian educational community strives to live those values that ennoble people, such as prudence, justice, strength and temperance. Similarly, each member tries to develop assertive communication.”
- An “efficient means to promote the vocation of the De La Salle Brothers in addition to helping young people interested in their own vocational promotion.”

Another area that was considered by both students and parents as least strong was found in *accompaniment*. Both sectors were not completely convinced that a “Lasallian education

serves all its students, especially those who have more difficulty in developing their skills, either by the use of programs or with particular strategies.”

4. *There were only two areas in which parent and student appreciation were of the same level. They were found in the vitality criteria concerning strategic management.*

They recognized that the university was strong in terms of how the “policies and regulations of the Lasallian educational ministry guarantee the good organization of the ministry, justice, and respect for the rights of children in addition to fostering a safe and friendly environment.” They did not feel, however, as strongly that the “financial resources of the educational ministry are sufficient to provide adequate educational service. Resources are obtained by financing or by other means.”

5. *In some instances that the administrator sector considers the descriptor as the best evidence of strength, the parent or the student sectors, or both, considered it as the least among the descriptors.*

From the respondents coming from the administrator sector, it was very telling how some descriptors which it considered as strengths of DLSU-D were considered as areas in which the university was least strong from the point of view of the parents, students and faculty. They were found in the following *vitality criteria – a culture of quality, accompaniment, and response to needs*:

- The parent and student sectors did not feel as strongly that a “competent Lasallian teacher dominates his or her area of knowledge and knows how to transmit that knowledge to the students with proper respect and accompaniment, in addition to attending to administrative requirements.”
- Coming from the parent sector alone, they did not fully see: that “Lasallian teachers are true mediators for their students. They strive to promote the interiority, competence for personal work and social life of their students through activities according to the age and their particular context”; or that “Lasallian teachers carry out their work to the best of their ability, and they know that they are cooperating in the proclamation of the Gospel. They know their students, and they let themselves be known.”

Epilogue

A reminder is needed at this point. The insights presented here must be interpreted in the context of teaching and learning and not the whole of the system in which DLSU-D operates. When asked if the school’s teaching and learning process has been run well since the pandemic began, the insights seemed to suggest that it did, given how across sectors, most of the descriptors were considered as strengths.¹⁰ The respondents recognized that even during the pandemic:

- Policies and regulations in relation to teaching and learning were responsive.
- The spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle continues to be present.
- Teachers continue to carry out their work to the best of their abilities.

Despite these however, the school can definitely run better as suggested by the results of the study. This can be achieved by asserting that the following elements are important in the teaching and learning process:

- Vocation promotion.
- Sectoral participation and open communication.
- Personalized instruction.
- Instructional facilities and services.
- Teacher skills.
- Holistic and expansive education.

Focusing on the last two of these six elements, it must be underscored that while the respondents recognized that teachers had been carrying out their work to the best of their abilities, the results also suggest that the situation that the pandemic created in the teaching and learning process required reexamination of their teaching and learning strategies and how these have impact on their own mental health and the mental health of their students.

Lastly and most importantly, the results, in particular the second of these six elements, underscores that for education to be effective nowadays, students must be provided with a wide variety of contexts in which in each context, all dimensions of education are present. It is not enough nowadays that holistic education is provided. Students must have the opportunity to discover and experience their complete selves in the widest and most varied ways possible.

Initially seen as a roadblock, the pandemic now seems to have given birth to various opportunities that might actually make all of these suggestions achievable and allow the school to run, not just well, but better.

Table 3: Vitality Criteria Descriptors (Strengths and Areas for Improvement)

VITALITY CRITERIA	PARENT SECTOR	STUDENT SECTOR	FACULTY SECTOR	ADMINISTRATION SECTOR
Responds to needs	A comprehensive education promotes the development of all dimensions of the person, relationships between persons, and possibilities for growth.	The Lasallian educational ministry accepts religious pluralism with respect and hope, promoting and witnessing everyday dialogue and unity among the members of their	The Lasallian educational ministry accepts religious pluralism with respect and hope, promoting and witnessing everyday dialogue and unity among the members of their	Lasallians strive to promote an encounter with Jesus of Nazareth, in addition to living and sharing Gospel values. Their methods and strategies are in accordance with the socio-cultural context and the profile of those to

		educational community.	educational community.	whom their work is directed.
	Lasallians strive to promote an encounter with Jesus of Nazareth, in addition to living and sharing Gospel values. Their methods and strategies are in accordance with the socio-cultural context and the profile of those to whom their work is directed.	Lasallian education responds creatively to the financial, familial, affective, social, intellectual, and spiritual needs of those served and, starting from these, it provides opportunities in accordance with the Lasallian style.	A comprehensive education promotes the development of all dimensions of the person, relationships between persons, and possibilities for growth.	The Lasallian educational ministry accepts religious pluralism with respect and hope, promoting and witnessing everyday dialogue and unity among the members of their educational community.
	A comprehensive education promotes the development of all dimensions of the person, relationships between persons, and possibilities for growth.	A comprehensive education promotes the development of all dimensions of the person, relationships between persons, and possibilities for growth.	The educational community encourages awareness of the roots of poverty and social injustice in order to combat them by education and to promote the rights of children, social justice, human dignity, and solidarity.	
	The Lasallian educational ministry accepts religious pluralism with respect and hope, promoting and witnessing everyday	The educational community encourages awareness of the roots of poverty and social injustice in order to combat them by		

	dialogue and unity among the members of their educational community.	education and to promote the rights of children, social justice, human dignity, and solidarity.		
	The educational community encourages awareness of the roots of poverty and social injustice in order to combat them by education and to promote the rights of children, social justice, human dignity, and solidarity.			
The Educational Community	A Lasallian educational community strives to live those values that ennoble people, such as prudence, justice, strength and temperance. Similarly, each member tries to develop assertive communication.	Lasallian teachers carry out their work to the best of their ability, and they know that they are cooperating in the proclamation of the Gospel. They know their students and they let themselves be known.	Lasallian teachers carry out their work to the best of their ability, and they know that they are cooperating in the proclamation of the Gospel. They know their students and they let themselves be known.	Lasallian teachers carry out their work to the best of their ability, and they know that they are cooperating in the proclamation of the Gospel. They know their students and they let themselves be known.
	Lasallian education encourages the formation of groups (of students, teachers, or	A Lasallian educational community strives to live those values that ennoble people, such as	A Lasallian educational community strives to live those values that ennoble people, such as	A Lasallian educational community strives to live those values that ennoble people, such as prudence, justice, strength and

	parents), to deepen faith and the life of prayer and service. Their spiritual formation and experience allow them to develop into communities open to new members.	prudence, justice, strength and temperance. Similarly, each member tries to develop assertive communication.	prudence, justice, strength and temperance. Similarly, each member tries to develop assertive communication.	temperance. Similarly, each member tries to develop assertive communication.
	Lasallian teachers carry out their work to the best of their ability, and they know that they are cooperating in the proclamation of the Gospel. They know their students and they let themselves be known.			Lasallian education encourages the formation of groups (of students, teachers, or parents), to deepen faith and the life of prayer and service. Their spiritual formation and experience allow them to develop into communities open to new members.
Accompaniment	The Lasallian school promotes the active participation of its students in the formative process. All activities are educational and are in accordance with the age of the students and with the local context.	The educational establishment favors an environment for each student to discover his or her role and vocation in building up the Kingdom of God and in building a better world, according to their age and their social and	Lasallian teachers are true mediators for their students. They strive to promote the interiority, competence for personal work and social life of their students through activities according to the age and their	The Lasallian school promotes the active participation of its students in the formative process. All activities are educational and are in accordance with the age of the students and with the local context.

		religious context.	particular context.	
	The Lasallian school promotes the active participation of its students in the formative process. All activities are educational and are in accordance with the age of the students and with the local context.	The educational establishment has efficient means to promote the vocation of the De La Salle Brothers in addition to helping young people interested in their own vocational promotion.	The Lasallian school promotes the active participation of its students in the formative process. All activities are educational and are in accordance with the age of the students and with the local context.	Lasallian teachers are true mediators for their students. They strive to promote the interiority, competence for personal work and social life of their students through activities according to the age and their particular context.
	Lasallian teachers are true mediators for their students. They strive to promote the interiority, competence for personal work and social life of their students through activities according to the age and their particular context.	Lasallian education serves all its students, especially those who have more difficulty in developing their skills, either by the use of programs or with particular strategies.	Lasallian formation gives priority to formation in service, revealing to students the richness of solidarity that helps to discover the transcendent meaning of life.	The educational establishment has efficient means to promote the vocation of the De La Salle Brothers in addition to helping young people interested in their own vocational promotion.
	Lasallian education serves all its students, especially those who have more difficulty in developing their skills, either by the use of programs or		Lasallian education serves all its students, especially those who have more difficulty in developing their skills, either by the use of programs or	

	with particular strategies.		with particular strategies (e.g. peer to peer tutorial sessions, remedial programs and clinics).	
	The educational establishment favours an environment for each student to discover his or her role and vocation in building up the Kingdom of God and in building a better world, according to their age and their social and religious context.		The educational establishment favours an environment for each student to discover his or her role and vocation in building up the Kingdom of God and in building a better world, according to their age and their social and religious context.	
	The educational establishment has efficient means to promote the vocation of the De La Salle Brothers in addition to helping young people interested in their own vocational promotion.		The educational establishment has efficient means to promote the vocation of the De La Salle Brothers in addition to helping young people interested in their own vocational promotion.	
Historical, Foundational Support	The educational community designs policies, programs and/or strategies to	The Lasallian educational establishment shares the life, work, and	The Lasallian educational establishment shares the life, work, and	The Lasallian educational establishment shares the life, work, and spirituality of

	<p>make its educational service accessible. In particular, it is concerned with serving the most vulnerable and marginalized in society.</p>	<p>spirituality of SJBDLS. It maintains strong links with the Brothers, especially in those works in which there are no Brothers. In addition, it uses symbols that recall Lasallian ideals and the means to achieve them.</p>	<p>spirituality of SJBDLS. It maintains strong links with the Brothers, especially in those works in which there are no Brothers. In addition, it uses symbols that recall Lasallian ideals and the means to achieve them.</p>	<p>SJBDLS. It maintains strong links with the Brothers, especially in those works in which there are no Brothers. In addition, it uses symbols that recall Lasallian ideals and the means to achieve them.</p>
	<p>A culture of innovation uncovers educational and social needs in order to transform them into decent living conditions thanks to creativity and participation. The use of research and cooperation with other organizations are of great value in this work.</p>	<p>The educational establishment has efficient means to promote the vocation of the De La Salle Brothers in addition to helping young people interested in their own vocational promotion.</p>	<p>The Lasallian establishment maintains a healthy relationship and communication with their parish and with the local Ordinary, through established channels.</p>	<p>The educational establishment has efficient means to promote the vocation of the De La Salle Brothers in addition to helping young people interested in their own vocational promotion.</p>
			<p>The educational establishment has efficient means to promote the vocation of the De La Salle Brothers in addition to</p>	

			helping young people interested in their own vocational promotion.	
A Culture of Quality	The Lasallian educational ministry promotes the development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes for self-development, a productive life (employment), healthy co-existence and the application of knowledge in daily life.	The Lasallian educational ministry promotes the development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes for self-development, a productive life (employment), healthy co-existence and the application of knowledge in daily life.	The Lasallian educational ministry promotes the development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes for self-development, a productive life (employment), healthy co-existence and the application of knowledge in daily life.	A competent Lasallian teacher dominates his or her area of knowledge and knows how to transmit that knowledge to the students with proper respect and accompaniment, in addition to attending to administrative requirements.
	Lasallian education promotes the training and development of teachers, especially in the pedagogical and Lasallian areas. For this to happen, a systematised program, organized efficiently is provided.	A competent Lasallian teacher dominates his or her area of knowledge and knows how to transmit that knowledge to the students with proper respect and accompaniment, in addition to attending to administrative requirements.	The Lasallian educational ministry promotes the development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes for self-development, a productive life (employment), healthy co-existence and the application of knowledge in daily life.	The Lasallian educational ministry promotes the development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes for self-development, a productive life (employment), healthy co-existence and the application of knowledge in daily life.
	A competent Lasallian teacher dominates his or her area of knowledge and	Updated and relevant teaching strategies focus on the learning experience of		A competent Lasallian teacher dominates his or her area of knowledge and knows how to transmit that

	knows how to transmit that knowledge to the students with proper respect and accompaniment, in addition to attending to administrative requirements.	students, facilitating the achievement of educational goals and enabling participation in and the acquisition of significant knowledge.		knowledge to the students with proper respect and accompaniment, in addition to attending to administrative requirements.
		Lasallian education promotes the training and development of teachers, especially in the pedagogical and Lasallian areas. For this to happen, a systematized program organized efficiently is provided.		Updated and relevant teaching strategies focus on the learning experience of students, facilitating the achievement of educational goals and enabling participation in and the acquisition of significant knowledge.
Strategic Management	The policies and regulations of the Lasallian educational ministry guarantee the good organization of the ministry, justice, and respect for the rights of children in addition to fostering a safe and friendly environment.	The policies and regulations of the Lasallian educational ministry guarantee the good organization of the ministry, justice, and respect for the rights of children in addition to fostering a safe and friendly environment.	Lasallian leadership gives confidence to students and teachers who recognize in their leaders examples to be followed.	Lasallian leadership gives confidence to students and teachers who recognize in their leaders examples to be followed.

	The financial resources of the educational ministry are sufficient to provide adequate educational service. Resources are obtained by financing or by other means.	The financial resources of the educational ministry are sufficient to provide adequate educational service. Resources are obtained by financing or by other means.	Development plans are carried out in a participatory way, showing the direction of the educational establishment as well as the way to achieve the desired goals.	The financial resources of the educational ministry are sufficient to provide adequate educational service. Resources are obtained by financing or by other means.
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Endnotes

1. Marco S. Saez, at the time of writing of this paper in 2020, serves as the Vice Chancellor for Academics and Research of DLSU-D in Cavite (Philippines) where he is a member of the languages and literature department.

2. *2 Identity Criteria for the Vitality of Lasallian Educational Ministries* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2020).

3. The Organizational Structure of DLSU-D is divided into three divisions, each manned by a Vice Chancellor (VC): VC for Academics and Research; VC for Finance and Administrative Services; and VC for Mission, External Affairs and Advancement. All three report directly to the President, who also acts as the Chancellor.

4. The posts came from the official Facebook pages of the Provincial Government of Cavite, City Government of Dasmariñas City, and Presidential Communications (Government of the Philippines).

5. <https://www.who.int/news/item/29-06-2020-covidtimeline>

6. The posts came from the official Facebook pages of the Provincial Government of Cavite, City Government of Dasmariñas City, and Presidential Communications (Government of the Philippines).

7. <https://www.dlsud.edu.ph/news/2020/care-centered-online-learning.htm>

8. *Identity Criteria for the Vitality of Lasallian Educational Ministries* (Rome: Generalate, 2020).

9. A tool for assessment is found at the end of the document. It presents the different criteria broken down into specific descriptors. Each descriptor shall be rated based on the available

evidence and perception about the ministry. There are four levels of rating: 1 = no work being done on this; 2 = in the development stage; 3 = in the process of consolidation; and, 4 = A strength. An online version has been developed for easy access and retrieval. Some changes have been made in the process:

- “Educational ministries” or “institutions” or any word that refers to it has been changed to “DLSU-Dasmariñas” to clarify to the respondents that they are only evaluating DLSU-D, not other Lasallian institutions.
- Respondents are not required to provide evidence, although an item in the questionnaire is provided if they prefer to. Instead, available evidence follows each descriptor as examples to help them better understand the descriptor. These pieces of evidence are mostly measures that were presented in the previous section of this paper.
- At the end of the tool, the respondents were also asked to come up with an overall rating of the teaching-learning process based on how educational, corrective, and purposeful it is. This is how the *Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission* document (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2020) describes what we mean when we say that “the school runs well.”

10. For the parents and students, their respective leadership teams were asked to participate. Close to 50 percent responded (21 Parents participated; 34 student participated). For the faculty, close to 25 percent participated (124 faculty participated). The strengths received as high as 85 percent for the parents, 75 percent for the students, and 70 percent for the faculty.