The Salesian Center for Faith & Culture inaugurated its operations this year. Its goals were modest: to establish an identity, make its presence known, and begin to get people involved. By all accounts, these goals were not only realized but surpassed! The following summaries offer a glimpse of the achievements of the Salesian Center (with further details available on the website) and suggest directions for the future.

MISSION

The mission of the Salesian Center has been given graphic and print identity! The graphic identity above reflects the work of a professional marketing company, and the interpretation of this circular logo was penned by the Center’s director. The graphic identity now appears on all publications.

To further publicize the mission of the Salesian Center, a set of more than 100 web pages has been created. Using a layout designed by Fr. Robert Rutledge, OSFS, the Center’s website (www4.desales.edu/SCFC) provides up-to-date information on all aspects of the Center’s operation.

The mission of the Salesian Center also appears on new brochures created with the help of Mr. Tom McNamara, the director of publications at DSU. Some 1200 brochures have already been distributed, several of which have yielded financial gifts!

BACKGROUND

The Salesian spirituality which undergirds the work of the Center has been the subject of several presentations by the director of the Center, among which are:

- an advent retreat on “Healthcare and Holiness” delivered to the Parish Nursing program at St. Mary’s Hospital Center in Langhorne (PA)
• a renewal of vows retreat on “The Jubilee of Religious Life” delivered to the Sisters of the Visitation of Holy Mary in Tyringham (MA)

• a professional development workshop on “Catholic & Salesian Identity at DeSales University” for adjunct instructors in the ACCESS program

PERSONNEL

Presently, the staff consists only of the director, who is released half-time from his faculty position to administer to the needs of the Salesian Center. This year, the director was assisted by one work-study student and one student intern in computer science.

One key to the Center’s success this year was the aid provided by the newly formed “Community Council” of advisors. Formed as a committee of the President’s Council of the University, this group has provided public relations for the Center and has been the impetus behind two of the Center’s main activities this year (the “Surgeons & the Spirit” research project and the IMPACT breakfast series).

ACTIVITIES

The programs and activities of the Salesian Center are conceived along three inter-related lines of thought: research – to advance the understanding of Salesian spirituality and contemporary cultural issues; dialogue – about how Salesian spirituality can be incorporated in the modern world so as to renew contemporary culture; and partnership – as a means of engaging the university and the broader community in forging a link between faith and culture.

Research Activities

The Salesian Studies On-Line program was piloted in the Fall 2000 semester. An introductory level course on “The Salesian Spirit” was taught entirely on-line to a select group of ten (10) students throughout the country. Assessment of this educational modality was quite positive. A proposal to develop a full curriculum of courses is presently being considered for funding.

An interdisciplinary research project – “Surgeons & the Spirit” – has been initiated. Directed by a team of faculty at DSU, this project seeks to ascertain a connection between a surgeon’s own religiosity and his/her clinical work. Participants were drawn from 172 surgeons in the Eastern Pennsylvania Health Network. Data from the survey is presently being analyzed, a public presentation of the results is planned, and a national study will be considered.

Dialogue Activities

The “Center Valley Forum” discussion series was inaugurated this year. Five campus-wide events were held on various topic associated with Pope John Paul II’s apostolic constitution “On Catholic Universities” (Ex Corde Ecclesiae) and the U.S. Bishops’ “Application” to Catholic colleges and universities in our country. Audiences ranged in number from eight to forty, and the series highlight was a discussion with Bishop Edward Cullen and Fr. Bernard O’Connor. Sparse attendance can be attributed to the timing of the events and to the relative inexperience of our campus culture with these kinds of discussions. The series will continue next year with a theme yet to be determined.
The I.M.P.A.C.T. breakfast series was also inaugurated this year. Bringing together corporate and professional leaders in the community, these meetings include a guest speaker whose brief presentation addresses a topic related to the integration of faith and culture in our contemporary society. Four meetings have been held and one remains (June 5th), with an average attendance of approximately thirty (30) people. The series will continue next year on the first Tuesday of October, December, February, April, and June.

Partnership Activities

The Salesian Center sponsored or otherwise supported a variety of events reflecting the interaction of faith and culture, including:

- a visit by Bishop Macram Max Gassis from the Sudan, who met with students, offered a public presentation, and premiered a documentary film on the Sudan Relief & Rescue mission.
- a live performance of G.K. Chesterton, portrayed by Mr. John C. Chalberg, an historian and actor who has dramatized this role nationally on stage and television.
- a national conference on “Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Evangelization of Culture” that drew professors and students from throughout the country.

Library

In preparation for the day when the Salesian Center occupies a distinctive space, subscriptions to relevant journals and purchase of related books has begun. The inauguration of the Salesian Center was reported in the winter 2000 issue of Cultures et Foi, the Vatican journal of the Pontifical Council for Culture.

Fiscal Development

University funds drawn from existing endowments have been used to create materials, purchase supplies, and support the programs of the Center. Presently, no budget lines have been exceeded.

Thanks to the efforts of the staff in the university’s Development Office, successful fund-raising for the Salesian Center has already begun.

Funds received for the Salesian Center include grants, gifts, and pledges totaling over $55,000. These include:

- a grant for the Salesian Studies On-Line pilot course in the amount of $2,500
- general gifts and pledges in the amount of $2,700
- a gift/pledge to a foundation that will contribute $25,000 to the Center’s endowment

Additional grants in excess of $2.2 million have been written and are currently under consideration. These include:

- the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales – for development of Salesian Studies On-Line ($13,100)
- the Frank Lewis Foundation – for the “Catholicism Alive!” series in stage and television ($18,800)
- the Sage Foundation – for general endowment ($50,000)
- a U.S. government grant – for construction of the Center’s new space ($1.6 million)
Two appeals have met with especially noteworthy success:
• receiving a major gift of $25,000 to endow the “Breakfast Club” program;
• selection as a finalist for a $600,000 grant to fund a “Faith & Reason” initiative through the Center.

OBJECTIVES for 2001-2002

In terms of MISSION, there is need of continued promotional efforts.
• In conjunction with the Development Office, the director will create a formal plan for public relations.
• In conjunction with the Director of Facilities Management, the director will create a plan for the renovation of the structure/space for the Salesian Center.

In terms of BACKGROUND, there is need for further exploration and presentation of Salesian spirituality.
• In collaboration with Saint Mary’s Press, the director will produce a brief and popularized biography of St. Francis de Sales for distribution to persons involved in the work of the Center.
• In conjunction with the Sisters of the Visitation of Holy Mary, the director will develop a plan by which DeSales University can “adopt a monastery.”

In terms of PERSONNEL, there is need to increase the number of people involved in the work of the Center.
• The director will initiate contacts toward the development of a Review Committee and an Advisory Board for the Center.
• In conjunction with the President, the director will finalize plans for the funding of an endowed chair in Salesian Studies and of a support staff position.

In terms of ACTIVITIES, there is need to initiate new programs.
• In conjunction with the faculty research team, the director will investigate the expansion of the “Surgeons & the Spirit” research project to a national level.
• In conjunction with the Philosophy-Theology Department, the director will write a grant for a research and teaching program for “Ethics and Institutional Review Boards.”
• In conjunction with the Community Council of advisors, the director will administer a new series of IMPACT breakfast meetings, including the publication of a “bulletin” on related topics.
• In conjunction with the Student Affairs Office, the director will administer a new version of the “Center Valley Forum” discussion series.
• The director will inaugurate the annual “Breakfast Club” series and direct its meetings and publications.

• Dependent upon funding received from a grant, the director will administer the various programs and activities associated with the proposed “Faith & Reason” initiative.

In terms of LIBRARY, there is a need for further acquisitions.

• In conjunction with the President of the International Commission on Salesian Studies, the director will undertake a re-publication of Pioneers of the American Province of the OSFS.

In terms of FISCAL DEVELOPMENT, there is a need for money!

• In conjunction with the President, the director will work to identify sources to create an endowed chair in Salesian Studies.

• In conjunction with the Vice-President for Development, the director will work to identify sources to increase the endowment for the Salesian Center.

Rev. Thomas F. Dailey, O.S.F.S., S.T.D.
Director
May 7, 2001