



# ST. VINCENT DE PAUL REGIONAL SEMINARY

*OFFICE OF THE RECTOR*

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## **RECTOR'S CONFERENCE**

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### “QEP”

Every ten years, we are asked to develop what is called a “Quality Enhancement Plan” (QEP) per the process of reaffirmation by our accrediting agencies. The QEP serves to assist us as an institution of higher learning to enhance “our overall institutional quality and effectiveness by focusing on an issue the institution considers important to improving student learning outcomes and/or student success.”

Our last QEP (Quality Enhancement Plan) was “Improving Student Preaching.” We accomplished this QEP by our philosophy of “preaching across the curriculum,” the creation and implementation of the preaching rubrics used both in class and from the pews, revamping our four courses on preaching, recording equipment (when it works!), and investing in our two professors of homiletics, Msgr. Bosso and Fr. Caggianelli, by sponsoring their DMin programs at Aquinas Institute in St. Louis. I am very proud of what we have been able to accomplish and develop at SVDP. And the results are you – you are doing a great job preaching and presenting the faith.

The experience of the last QEP teaches us that even though we started the process because we had to, in order to meet the requirements of one of our two principal accrediting agencies, our seminarians and – we are sure – the people of God have benefited and are benefiting from these efforts. Thus, as now prepare to begin a new Quality Enhancement Plan, it is important to enter the process convinced that it’s really important to consider seriously what we most need to improve in our program, for the good of our students and our mission. It’s going to take work and investment, but, having done it already, we know it’s going to be worth it.

Thus, with the success of the last QEP sustaining us, now it’s time to prepare for a new one. In the spring of 2020 we are to go through our 10-year cycle of reaffirmation with SACSCOC and ATS. Our initial reports will be submitted in the fall of 2019 before which many of our constituencies must weigh in, including our faculty and board of trustees. But you dear seminarians are the primary stakeholders and I want your input! What do we want to do better – what do you want to feel more equipped to do by the time you leave the seminary?

- a) A Quality Enhancement Plan, as enumerated by the SACSCOC, possesses the following:
  - (a.) has a topic identified through its ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluations processes;
  - (b.) has a broad-based support of institutional constituencies;

- (c.) focuses on improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success;
- (d.) commits resources to initiate, implement and complete the QEP; and
- (e.) includes a plan to assess achievement.

As the faculty assessed the data at our end of the year meetings, two possible topics arose, namely:

1. Excellence in our Pastoral Language – how can we better prepare you for ministry in the Church where we will be a majority minority church in the coming decades? In some ways, this follows the last QEP in proclaiming the word and ministering in our pastoral language. It would consist in language, accent reduction, and cultural awareness.
2. Following our theme of the year and the new *Ratio* of “Missionary Discipleship for the New Evangelization” – how do we produce priests with fire, passion, and zeal for pastoral ministry? Training in motivational skills, leadership skills, communication skills, and an ability to cast a vision; i.e., integrating the four dimensions of formation with missionary discipleship. To reiterate what I said in September in the rector’s conference about “falling more and more in love every year with Christ and His Church, [or you] could become dim lights just going through the motions of seminary life. I desire so deeply for you to leave the seminary like a bullet leaving a rifle, on fire at 2000 miles per hour, as opposed to simply falling out of the end of the barrel making no impact on the intended target – the holy people of God.”

So I want to open up our conversation tonight and get your feedback on these two ideas? Are these areas you could feel passion about? If they were to be our QEP, how could we know that we have succeeded, which is what we talk about when we speak of outcomes? Are there other areas you can think of where you would like to see SVDP focus our energies so that we can better fulfill our mission and help you feel more equipped for priesthood by the time you leave the seminary?

Before we start, maybe it would be good to review together prayerfully our mission statement.

*15 minutes of brainstorming on each topic:*

**Pastoral Language:**

1. Seminarians should give reflections in their pastoral language.
2. Program is not comprehensive: offer all classes in English and Spanish.
3. Dr. Martinez could benefit from an additional professor.
4. Structure pastoral language classes so that they offer repetition; spread out the classes through the week.
5. More opportunities for summer immersion.
6. Opportunities for immersion in the countries where the Spanish speakers in our diocese come from.
7. Study theology abroad in a foreign Spanish-speaking seminary.
8. Repetition - language classes to be more practical.
9. Participate in a second immersion as a follow-up towards the end of theology.
10. Focus on language used in sacraments, confession, and preaching.
11. Offer programs for Ongoing Formation.
12. Offer Spanish during permanent diaconate formation.
13. Liturgical language days should be more encompassing: i.e. classes, discussions, meals.
14. Increased language lab.

15. Offer English immersion programs.
16. Testing (e.g., T.O.F.E.L.) minimums need to be applied. Similarly for those learning Spanish.
17. Writing classes and grammar in both languages.
18. Cultural awareness.
19. Native Spanish speakers challenged to improve their Spanish as well.
20. Evaluate Spanish language skill during *Cura Animarum*.
21. Accent reduction!
22. Create an atmosphere of confidence when speaking/practicing pastoral language.
23. Encourage dioceses to be more involved and engaged when making assignments.
24. Moving away from translators.
25. Increase Second-language classes.
26. Language classes should be personalized and challenging.
27. Pastoral assignments in pastoral language, i.e. migrant ministry.
28. Summer immersion - Extend time from six weeks to ten weeks. Reconsider changing from Guatemala due to their high number of English-speaking tourists.
29. Discourage seminarians rooming together since it does not encourage speaking in Spanish.
30. Consider third language learning.

### **Zeal:**

1. Require the course on the Holy Spirit.
2. Measure the student's zeal by speaking with his Spiritual Director.
3. Assess the disposition of the heart.
4. Additional (optional) evangelization opportunities.
5. Foster missionary spirituality to be assessed by external forum.
6. Form a committee for the purpose of generating opportunities for evangelization.
7. Base on model of entrepreneurship; how to form teams, marketing, etc.
8. Mission trips in curriculum.
9. Share success stories, i.e. what is working in the parishes.
10. Help seminarian discover their charisms and teach how to discover other's (parishioners) charisms.
11. Book recommendation: [\*Fruitful Discipleship\*](#)
12. Do local mission trips: e.g. helping the migrants. This would also allow student to discover resources to aid the needy.
13. Teach use of video and graphic design to reach the youth.
14. How to approach different generations.
15. Discipling in the seminary: e.g. Big brother-little brother model: 4th year mentoring a pre-theologian
16. Learn how everything that is learned in class applies practically.
17. Learn praise and worship to increase comfort level for parish ministry. Use more at Mass.
18. Distinction between missionary discipleship and pastoral formation.

### *At the conclusion:*

If as you bring this discussion to prayer, new ideas come up that you didn't hear expressed, please send me an email. Sometimes it takes a while for the Holy Spirit to stir up ideas in us or for us to be able to articulate them. In the meantime, let's all pray for the success of this effort. Whatever we choose, may it help us to form missionary disciples for the New Evangelization who will be able to fulfill the Church's constant mission, to announce to all of our brothers and sisters the words of St. Andrew (today's feast): "We have found the Messiah" (Jn. 1:41).