

FAITH, FORMATION, and a Shared Mission

How Lay Educators Help Prepare Missionaries at DWC

As a Catholic seminary, Divine Word College's primary mission is to prepare students for a life of missionary service to the Church. While many of the teaching and formation roles are filled by religious priests, brothers, and sisters, the college also relies on the dedication and expertise of lay professionals who serve in collaboration with the Society of the Divine Word.

These lay educators do more than hold jobs — they offer their time, talent, and faith to help shape students for the challenges of religious life and ministry. They bring a diverse range of experiences that enrich the college community and model how formation is a shared responsibility among all members of the Church.

Dr. Joshua Young, Vice President for Academic Affairs and a communication instructor, says teaching at a Catholic college has long been a personal goal. During his five years, he's found the experience fulfilling and inspiring.

A classroom moment during his early years at DWC shaped his approach to equitable education: a student challenged a grade for eye contact in a speech, highlighting how cultural norms influence public speaking. That experience deepened his commitment to inclusive communication education and assessment.



Dr. Joshua Young shares a proud moment with his student, Hung Cong Nguyen, at the 2024 graduation ceremony.

As a layperson, Dr. Joshua says his vocation to serve the Church takes a different form than religious life — but it is no less essential.

“Students often say I should have been a priest, and I did consider it,” he said. “I found that God was calling me to teaching as a layperson. To be an authentic Church and community, we must recognize that formation is an ongoing process for both religious and laypeople. We help to form each other, just in different ways.”

Teaching is an integral part of the mission of the Church. At DWC, this is especially unique because students are learning academics while simultaneously participating in the formation program. While academics and formation have different methods and goals, Dr. Joshua says instructors and formators collaboratively create ways to assess each program's learning outcomes and identify ways to support each program's needs.

“I think of my work at DWC as training the future leaders of the Church,” he said. “Jesus reminds us that He is sending us as sheep amongst wolves. My job is preparing missionaries to go into that world and change it. Teaching reminds me to constantly love as Christ did; I'm trying to help feed the sheep.”

Like Dr. Joshua, other lay educators at DWC find deep purpose in walking alongside students as they grow in faith and formation.

Assistant Professor Emeritus of Philosophy Dr. Ron Condon retired in May after 26 years at the college. Reflecting on his time at DWC, he says supporting the formation of young missionaries was deeply meaningful — and that lay educators can offer a unique perspective.



Dr. Ron Condon

“Not being so involved in the formal formation process can give one a bit more perspective at times,” he said.

Dr. Evelyn Dias, Assistant Professor of Music and Liturgical Music Coordinator, is closely involved with students through class instruction, individual lessons, and preparing music for liturgical celebrations.

She sees her work as a deeply personal contribution to students’ spiritual and ministerial growth.

“It has been a privilege to support the formation of students who will enter religious life or are already in vows,” she said. “Music is such a significant part of church services. I believe that many religious students receive my instruction in a deeply personal way. When we work to express sentiments through music, it is especially prayerful and moving.”

Like her students, Dr. Evelyn remembers professors who

shaped her not just academically but personally. She hopes to do the same, teaching them patience, preparedness, and professionalism as they grow in confidence with their music education.

“I could never have imagined that I would have this opportunity to spread the love of music and the understanding of how hard one must work to achieve excellence,” she said. “I hope that my students take these lessons with them and share them with others in service of the Church’s mission.”

In his commencement speech, Dr. Ron said teaching at DWC was unlike any other experience in his career.

“I often reflected in my early years at Divine Word College how my students at another college I worked for had been given everything, but were grateful for nothing; while my students here had been given nothing, but were grateful for everything,” he said. “Divine Word College students were committed to a life of service to others, and not just to themselves. They fervently hoped, and prayed, to make the world a better place for all of us.”

Through their commitment and example, the lay professionals at Divine Word College contribute powerfully to the formation of the next generation of missionary leaders — helping students grow not only in knowledge and skill, but also in spirit, humility, and hope. Their partnership with the Society of the Divine Word embodies the unity of lay and religious vocations — each distinct, yet deeply connected in service to the Church’s mission.



Dr. Evelyn Dias accompanies students on piano as they sing during the Family Feast liturgy.