

DISCOVERY:

Helping Students Discover their Life Purpose through Experiential Learning

Loyola College in Maryland

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&

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Students in Transition Conference 2007

Loyola College in Maryland

- **Located in Baltimore, Maryland**
- **Jesuit Catholic University**
- **3,500 Undergraduate students**
- **2,400 Graduate students**
- **81% Students reside on-campus**
- **Approximately 900 sophomores**

Office of Sophomore Initiatives

- **CrossRoads Sophomore Initiative 2003**
- **Office of Sophomore Initiatives 2005**
- **Staff includes**
 - **Director**
 - **Administrative Assistant (shared)**
 - **Graduate Assistant**
 - **Undergraduate Office Assistant**
- **Department mission incorporates institutional values and beliefs**

Sophomore Initiatives Mission

The sophomore year is often a time when students find themselves struggling to answer many questions. Who am I? Who do I want to become? Who are my friends? What Should major in? Should I go abroad? The sophomore year is replete with weighty decisions and is an appropriate platform for introducing the concept of Ignatian discernment -- a process of making choices involving prayer, reflection, and consultation with others*. Through a broad range of programs, CrossRoads challenges, mentors, and guides students in their developmental tasks and academic endeavors as they define their purpose, develop new relationships, and broaden their minds.

***Adapted from *Do you Speak Ignatian*, George Traub, S.J. (2002).**

Office of Sophomore Initiatives

- **Initiative program based**
 - Residential living-learning community
 - Programs focused on discernment and reflection
 - Informational programs
 - Social programs to explore Baltimore
 - See brochure for details

Recreational Sports

The Department of Recreational Sports is committed to cultivating the whole person by providing an array of recreation opportunities in an educational, social and supportive environment. To this end, we offer quality programs and service oriented facility operations which foster healthy lifestyles for the Loyola College community.

- Director
- Associate Director, Membership/Marketing
- Associate Director, Facilities/Risk Management
- Assistant Director, Outdoor Adventures
- Assistant Director, Intramurals/Club Sports
- Assistant Director, Aquatics
- Assistant Director, Informal Recreation/Special Events
- Facilities Coordinator
- Fitness Coordinator

Outdoor Adventures

- **Three program areas**
 - **Outdoor Adventure Center (Basecamp)**
 - Rentals, trip planning, and trip registration
 - **Rock Wall**
 - Informal recreation, classes, special programs
 - **Outdoor Adventure Experience (OAE)**
 - Experiential programming for Loyola community.
 - Teambuilding workshops, weekend/day trip
 - Expeditions
 - Pre-Orientation
 - Evolution
 - Discovery
 - Wilderness Leader training and staff development
 - Over 800 training hours per academic year

Three Key Questions

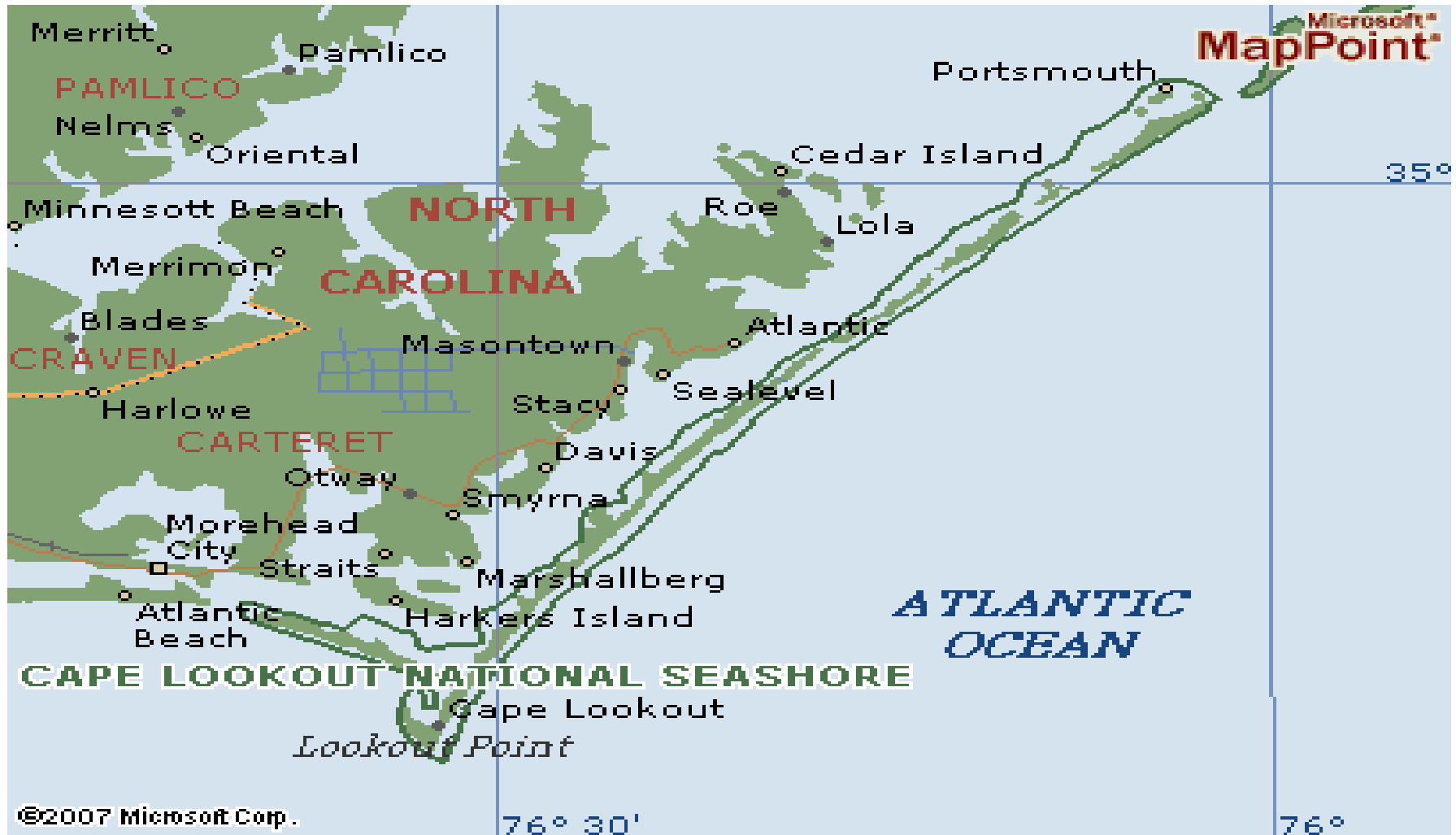
Borrowed from Boston College, Halftime Program

- **What brings you joy?**
 - What makes your light shine?
- **What are you good at?**
 - When does your light shine the brightest?
- **Does anybody need you to do these things?**
 - Where is your light needed?

Three Key Questions

- **What was it like to reflect on these three questions?**
- **Why is it important for sophomores to reflect on these three questions?**
 - ***Establishing Identity* (Chickering & Reisser, 1993)**
 - ***Developing Purpose* (Chickering & Reisser, 1993)**
 - **Loyola College sophomore focus groups**
 - » **Lots of decisions to make & finding niche - major, study abroad, internships, careers, social life, relationships**

How do we use the Three Key Questions?



Why Wilderness Programming?

- Through a group expedition, students are forced to live and work with peers in a backcountry community.
- The wilderness also provides a unique atmosphere which challenges students both mentally and physically. In pushing each student's "comfort zone" students are forced to dig deep and see what they are made of.
- It provides a beautiful and inspirational backdrop for group reflections and discussions.
- Natural Consequences- Students are forced to make all the major group decisions and the wilderness allows in many instances for very tangible cause and effect relationships with decisions and actions on the trip.

"If you don't put your tent up, you get wet."

"If we do not leave camp by 8 am we will not make our tide."

Discovery Learning Outcomes



- **Students can define the word vocation.**
- **Students can distinguish the difference between joy and happiness.**
- **Students can explain the process used to identify their gifts and talents.**
- **Students can communicate a process of determining the needs of a community.**
- **Students can recognize how they can best use their passions, gifts, and talents to serve the community.**
- **Students can articulate what it means to be attentive.**
- **Students can articulate what it means to be reflective.**
- **Students can articulate what it means to be loving.**
- **Students can describe steps in a personal decision making process.**

Discovery Learning Outcomes

- **Students will develop relationships with other students.**
- **Students will develop relationships with faculty and administrators.**
- **Students will demonstrate proficiency in basic kayaking skills.**
- **Students will demonstrate Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethic.**
- **Students will demonstrate expedition behavior characteristics (teamwork, respect, flexibility, tolerance of others, courtesy, politeness, sharing, self-awareness, and selflessness).**
- **Students will demonstrate proper back country skills.**
- **Students will know how to use a nautical chart.**



Rise and shine!



Chow time.



Pack up camp.



Get boats ready!

Morning Reading

When does your light shine the brightest? (What are you good at?)

Do you have the talents to pursue the things that you are passionate about or the things that make your light shine? Maybe it's clear to you that you do. But maybe you don't even recognize the talents that you have. Or maybe you do know some of the things you are good at but you don't think they're important. You don't see them as real strengths.

Unlike the question about what makes your light shine or what gives you joy, this question can't be answered by you alone. Your talents and skills have been nourished by significant people in your life and by communities you have belonged to, both before you came to Loyola and since. These relationships constitute a dialogue, a conversation about yourself with people who value you enough to challenge and support you. We seem to need these people and these communities to point out our talents to us, to give us a chance to try out our skills, and to confirm them as strengths when we succeed and even to tell us that we don't have certain talents when we fail.

So one way of answering this question is to ask yourself: Who have been the key people in your life—the relatives, teachers, coaches and mentors who have helped you know who you are and what you can do? Who have been your models? For whom are you grateful when you look at your life? What have you learned from them about yourself and about the talents that are special to you? If someone asked them to describe your strengths and weaknesses, what specific ones do you think they would mention? When are those times in your life when your light shines the brightest?

Borrowed and adapted from *Three Key Questions* video
Presented by Michael Himes ~ Halftime, Boston College



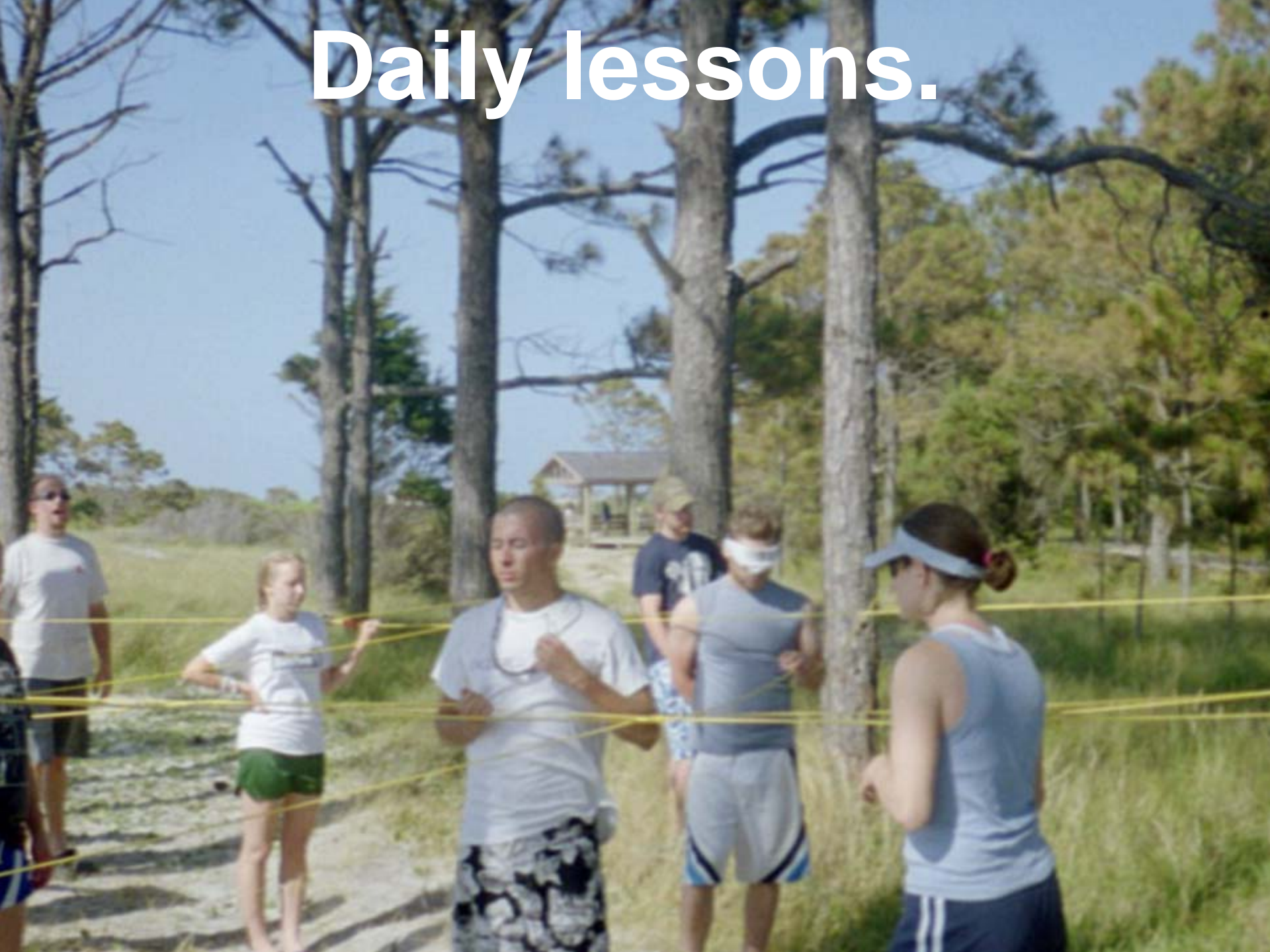
Time to paddle and reflect.



Set up camp.



Daily lessons.



Time to share.





Chow time!





Evening group reflection.

Key Components

- **Reflection**
 - Daily readings
 - Quiet time (paddling, journaling, etc.)
 - Discussion (group, pairs, 1-on-1)
 - Solo
 - Evening group reflection/daily debrief
- **Experiential Education**
 - Wilderness expedition
 - Group initiatives
 - Transference
- **Relationships**
 - Student to student
 - Student to administrator

Assessment

- **Observations during Discovery**
 - **Kayaking skills, expedition behavior, back country skills, content in small group discussions**
- **Assessment at end of experience**
- **Dinner/focus group fall semester**
- **Follow-up reflection questions**

Participant Comments

“Discovery has taught me a little more about the process of making an important decision. Through our reflection time I’ve learned that it’s important to reflect on the decision before the decision is made. I should look at the situation as a whole, while the decision is being made. I should reflect and evaluate the situation to see if it’s something that I’m happy with. After the decision is made I should reflect back upon it in retrospect. Also, I’ve realized the difference between joy and happiness and I try to think about whether or not the decision I am making will bring me either of those and in which way.”

Student Quote Follow-up Reflection, May 2007

Participant Comments

“The challenges faced on Discovery can be used very well as metaphors for life. Each person contributed something unique in order to overcome them. The same works in society. I have my own gifts to contribute to the world and Discovery helped remind me of that. Joe was always there helping people and showing them the way. Others made people laugh to keep us going when things were tough. I was the happy one, even when things got tough. I think it is easy for me to smile and look on the bright side. I can use the skills of cheerfulness and accepting nature that helped us on our trip across the stormy islands to help people in life around me. When the storms of life pass, I won’t be afraid.”

Student Quote Follow-up Reflection, May 2006

“Discovery comes at a great time in your college career, because as a sophomore you are still not too sure of what you want to do. But you are forced to declare a major and start getting serious about things. It is hard to really know what you want when you have no time to actually think about it. If you are constantly occupied by school, friends, and everything that comes into play in the seemingly never stopping life of a college kid, you can lose sight of the future and what you want for it. Discovery provides you with that time to really reflect on where you are, where you want to be, and how you might go about getting there. It gives you time to think about what matters most and it calms your mind in preparation for going out there and actualizing those goals and values. Although I don't know exactly where I will be in ten years, after Discovery I was more sure of the things I love and care about, and sure that they would be priorities in my world, no matter what path I end up on. Just like nature, life is unpredictable and I don't know what will happen, but I am sure that I will keep pushing through until I cross the channel safely.”

Student Quote Follow-up Reflection, May 2006

THE END!

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