



Preconference Session Descriptions

Thursday, Nov. 20

Keynote Address: 9:15 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

Communicating the Lasallian Mission in the 21st Century

Kurt Schackmuth, Ph.D., vice president for student life and chief mission officer, Lewis University, Romeoville, IL

Kathrynne Skonicki, executive director for public relations and communications, Lewis University, Romeoville, IL

What does it mean to be a Lasallian communicator in the 21st century? This discussion will delve into that question, showing how to translate our core values into a language that speaks to modern realities. It will explore practical ways to foster inclusive and justice-driven education, engage students in the Gospel, and honor the legacy of our founders. Learn to use contemporary tools and language to inspire hope and action, strengthening our shared vocation and building sacred bridges for the future.

Breakout Session – Option 1: 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Crises Large and Small: Communicating Effectively Through the Challenging Moments

Steve Mamanella, Owl Creek Communications

Sometimes schools need to engage with their communities during difficult situations. Strategic, mission-centered communications are critical in these moments. During this session, veteran Catholic communicator Steve Mamanella will discuss the Church's teaching on the importance of engagement, as well as ways to effectively work with the news media. You will learn who should be part of your school's crisis communications team and what questions the team should ask in a crisis event. Steve will share real-life examples to help you learn some do's and don'ts of responding under pressure.

Breakout Session – Option 2: 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Marketing With Fresh Eyes: Love Your Neighbor

Katie Pesha, KP Consulting Group: Catholic Marketing Solutions

How can we each create the space to give and receive quality attention? This session will help you rediscover the Lasallian charism by emphasizing your school's brand and articulating your common purpose. You will discuss how to prioritize intentional communications planning to share the Lasallian charism and awaken the hunger for Christ in our world. By understanding the Church's unique communications ecology, you will explore how to amplify your school's brand, while proclaiming the kerygma and innovating in unique and compelling ways.

General Session: 12:45 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

The Rise of the AI Revolution and Implications for Your School

Molly Judd and Patrick Powers, KP Consulting Group: Catholic Marketing Solutions

What do Catholics say about artificial intelligence? In Pope Leo XIV's first speech to members of the news media, he acknowledged that AI has "immense potential," yet we need to "ensure that it can be used for the good of all." While this emerging technology poses plenty of challenges, it also has the potential to reshape modern life. During this session, we will discuss practical ways your school can use AI for the common good while upholding human dignity.