Technology and Formation
At St. Louis University High School

I. Foundational Values and Principles

The use of technology at SLUH will be grounded in values that spring from our Catholic, Christian and Jesuit faith and founded on educational principles rooted in these traditions. We recognize that technology presents the human race with extraordinary new opportunities that we invite our students to embrace. It also presents daunting new challenges. Our fundamental mission of spiritual, intellectual, physical, moral and social formation for young men will direct our approaches to using and limiting the use of technology at SLUH.

Choices we make about using technology, from the institutional to the individual level, will be informed by our Catholic and Ignatian traditions and values. *The Spiritual Exercises* speak of the need for *intentional practice* in seeking to encounter God's grace. The long-standing practice of *The Examen* in Jesuit communities and schools calls us to the daily practice of making space in our busy lives for *silence and reflection*. Accordingly, the way we implement technology will not be determined primarily by ease, convenience or prevailing cultural trends, but rather by the patient and deliberate process of asking: What is the *formational goal* of using or not using technology in a particular context?

The inestimable value and dignity of every *human person* and the priority of authentic *relationships* over mere transactions are fundamental to our faith and values. Accordingly, we will use technology in ways that serve not only to educate our students, but also to make them more aware of the dignity of persons and to encourage them to nurture authentic, mutual relationships. New technologies open unprecedented opportunities in this regard, radically expanding not only our access to information, but to people and communities that can enrich us socially and spiritually. However, we also realize that the power of technology   the ease and efficiency with which it allows us to accomplish tasks and gather and exchange information   can lead to educational experiences that become primarily utilitarian: more aimed at consumption and production than at formation, even at times reducing other people to objects to be used. In our use of technology we will resist the temptation to allow education to become a matter of manufacturing and consuming a product, and will offer instead a model of education as a creative exchange, taking place within a community built on authentic relationships between human persons.

The Spiritual Exercises and our Ignatian traditions also call us to make a *free and authentic response* to God's grace. The model of Jesus and the living presence of Christ sustain us in this effort. Cultivating this "inner freedom" is one of the most important goals of Jesuit education. Guiding our students toward freedom requires us to make students aware of the need for *discipline* and to teach them the skills and processes for healthy *discernment.* Again, while technology may be a useful tool in this work, the ubiquity of technology and its powerfully attractive   even addictive   properties

means that our work in this area will crucially involve setting limits and boundaries on its use and establishing habits and rituals for "unplugging." This will be especially important in activities that require reflection and silence. Practically speaking, adolescents will not come to an appreciation for the formative value of awareness in the present moment   much less the value of solitude   unless we provide time and space without the constant stimulation and distraction of technology. Forming students to be authentically free in the way they use their personal devices on their own time will be important and even more challenging work.

II. Guidelines for Practical Approaches and Policies

SLUH teachers, counselors, coaches, moderators and staff members in our many roles are *formators* for our students. Accordingly, we share responsibility for the work of helping students use technology in effective, creative, healthy and responsible ways. Furthermore, since we cannot hope to be successful in this work if we do not lead by example, our own adult behavior with technology must be guided by **reflective, intentional and value-driven practice**.

Specific, academic and co-curricular rules and policies for the use of technology are to be put into practice by all teachers, coaches and moderators of activities as a part of their professional responsibility. Specific rules and guidelines that apply to the formational use and limiting of technology in a particular class or activity should be shared with students so that they become a habitual part of the culture of their classroom, team, community or group. As much as possible the aim should be for good habits to become "automatic." Students must be directed toward formational uses of technology and clearly warned against negative sources and practices. These directives should include concrete structures to support good habits and specific consequences that follow poor choices.

The following points of emphasis and recommendations on policy offer practical guidance for supporting technology and formation at SLUH.

General Practical Guidelines: Using and Limiting Technology to Serve Our Mission

- The SLUH community makes best-practice use of technology in support of the academic formation of our students: to enhance individual and group engagement and participation in the learning process, to foster individual and group creativity, to support the mastery of skills and content, to facilitate the communication and exchange of information, to administer academic classes and programs, and to guide decision making about school operations.

- We reflectively and intentionally use technology to support the personal and spiritual formation of our students: to build their moral character, to nurture their capacity to love, respect and serve others and to encourage their openness to God.

- We reflectively and intentionally limit, control and occasionally eliminate the use of particular technologies to support the academic, spiritual and personal formation of our students.

- We model and explicitly teach attitudes, ideas, and behavior related to technology that encourage an appreciation for its potential as a tool to accomplish vital tasks, support human growth and spread God's grace, but which at the same time reflect a keen awareness of how technology can undermine formation, alienate people from themselves and one another and create obstacles to God's grace.

-Emerging data and professional literature on learning and the brain guides teacher practice and policy regarding students who use or have access to the Internet in academic settings. Basically, the research directs us to draw bright lines between time for connection and disconnection and to create clear directives and strategies for how to help students maintain a focus on a single task while online. When students use or have access to the Internet, they are explicitly warned against the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of multi-tasking and teachers use best-practice technology monitoring tools and techniques for effective supervision. In earlier grades, teachers place more emphasis on firm policy, monitoring and enforcement. In later grades, more emphasis is placed on self-discipline and individual responsibility.

- Although we hope all members of our community will be *reflective* and *intentional* about using or not using technology in pursuit of our formational goals, practically speaking we know that personal and institutional habits   the "muscle memory" by which we live   are more effective than conscious and deliberate decisions when it comes to following through on best practices.

Therefore, whether we are connecting to or disconnecting from technology, our speech and behavior about technology should make use of familiar rituals and forceful, simple mottos to support the educational, personal or spiritual formation goals of a particular activity. The rituals may be as simple as regular moments of silence, breathing exercises or standing to stretch. Repeating phrases like: "Eyes up, screens down!" can help focus become more habitual. Classroom mottos like: "We're pearl-divers not skiers!" might work to encourage students to avoid superficial Google searches and embrace greater depth in research or to reflect more deliberately to share more insightful oral responses. Aphorisms like: "Every avatar is someone's best friend!" serve to remind students that a real human being, deserving of dignity and respect, is behind every online persona. "When I weave, I weave!" might be a way to colorfully capture the truth that we can actually attend to only one task at a time and that single-minded focus not only produces better results but greater psychological and spiritual rewards when working on a project.

III. New School Policies and Practices

Student use of phones and smart watches is limited to before or after school only. Phones may never be used in the library. Phone calls during the school day may only be made in Dr. Kesterson's office. Parents who need to make emergency contact with their sons during school hours are to call the Main Office. If a student uses a phone to make a call or send a text or receives a call or text with an audible tone or buzz at any time or in any place during the school day, faculty and staff members will immediately send the student to Dr. Kesterson and confirm later that the student reported to his office. If a student chooses to carry a phone, all banners, notifications and alarms must be turned off during the school day. Since we have this no-use policy, to avoid temptation and penalties we recommend that students not carry phones on their person during the school day.

Since seniors are not required to have a device, the policies and rules for devices will apply to seniors' use of phones for the '16-'17 school year. When faculty and staff encounter a student using a phone but are not sure whether that student is a senior, they will ask for the student's school ID. Underclassmen who lie about their class year in order to use a phone are to be immediately sent to Dr. Kesterson's office.

Areas where no devices of any kind may ever be used include bathrooms, locker rooms and the chapel.

Areas where devices may not be used during the regular school day include the hallways, and the Commons during lunch.

Areas where other devices other than phones may be used during the school day include homeroom for the first three minutes, the Rec Room, the Commons the library, classrooms   with the permission of the teacher   and outdoors. A student may use a device, excluding a phone, while at his specific locker.

Homeroom will begin at the usual time with the tone, but prayer and announcement will be delayed for three minutes to give students in homerooms the chance to use technology to check schedules and prepare for classes, etc. Teachers will take attendance during this time. At the three- minute mark, prayer over the PA will begin, followed by technology-free time for homeroom business and conversation. This is homeroom community-building time. No devices are to be used by students or teachers.

Computer Gaming will not be allowed on the SLUH campus during the school day. Exceptions to this rule include classes where games might be used for teaching, classes dedicated to game development and club meetings focused specifically on gaming. Gaming will not be allowed in the library at any time, including before and after school. Otherwise, gaming is allowed before and after school and in the Game Lounge during Activity Period.

A Gaming Lounge will be designated during Activity Period in the south end of the Computer Lab, room M25. Maximum room capacity and rules for this space will be posted and enforced by proctors.

Signage to support Technology and Formation and these new rules, policies and practices will be featured at various strategic locations throughout the facilities. Each sign will feature a graphic image to capture the core message of "intention, habit and formation." Signs at some entrances will announce our philosophy with messaging and graphics, "Tech Free Zone" signs will be displayed in the hallways and other areas where devices are not to be used, "Tech Use Zone" signs will be displayed in areas where devices can be used including the proposed new small lounge areas and "Game On" signs will be displayed in the proposed Game Lounge.

Recommended faculty and staff best practices for the formational use of technology in classrooms, offices and at meetings will be shared and collected on an ongoing basis through the Faculty and Staff Newsletter. When faculty and students interact for a particular co-curricular activity like a retreat, the adult leader of the activity will guide his or her colleagues on the way phones and technology should be used or limited. All members of the community are encouraged to cultivate good habits in the way they use technology and to model formational use of technology for students.

Meetings of adults at SLUH will begin, however briefly, with technology closed or off and a moment of prayer or silent meditation. We will hold one another accountable to avoid multi-tasking and using a device when it is not a part of the actual business at hand. If someone is in a situation where they must multi-task during a meeting, we ask that person to notify the group of their need to handle other work simultaneously as a sign of respect to the meeting leader and their colleagues. Of course, this should be handled with a sense of respect, good humor and mutual support.