

# CONVERSATIONS

ON JESUIT HIGHER EDUCATION

Not too  
long ago  
in a university  
pretty far away...

## CORE WARS

**FALL 2010 - NUMBER 38**

***On Revising the Core***  
***Learning from Core Revision***  
***Challenges of Core Assessment***  
***Survey on Current Core Curricula***  
***Confessions of a Core-War Bystander***  
***Ignatian Values in the Core Curriculum***

FALL 2010  
NUMBER 38

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# CONVERSATIONS

ON JESUIT HIGHER EDUCATION

## Core Wars

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# Core Wars Worth Fighting

Yes, there are certain things that everybody should know. Usually they are the skills and principles that any society views as essential to its survival — first to hunt and fish, make clothes, and build a fire. Then to read and write and, the more sophisticated we become, to read the best books — the ones that explain the larger world and tell us about ourselves and the meaning of our lives with others.

E. D. Hirsch, Jr., in his review of Diane Ravitch's *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining American Education* (Basic Books) in the *New York Review of Books* (May 13) reminds us that American leaders in the nineteenth century realized that "Loyalty to the Republic had to be developed, as well as adherence to Enlightenment ideals of liberty and toleration. For without universal indoctrination by the schools in such civic virtues, the United States might dissolve, as had all prior large republics of history, through internal dissension." So the inspiring ideal of the common school was "not just to Americanize the immigrants, but also Americanize the Americans."

So the function of any school system — from the American public school, the diocesan parochial schools most of us grew up in, the elite universities, and the Jesuit educational system of high schools and colleges in which we work — is to pass along ideals. Historically the Jesuit "colleges" — which in America until the turn of the twentieth century were seven-years of courses sometimes capped with an MA in philosophy in an extra year — presented their ideals through the Greek and Roman Classics. They passed along the Catholic faith more through pious exercises, retreats, devotions, and strict surveillance of the dormitories than through academic theology. By the 1950s the "heart" had shifted to philosophy, seniors wore philosophy robes and took the equivalent of a second major in Thomism.

In the radical transformation of American higher education that followed World War II and accelerated in the cultural revolution of the 1960s, the rise of the social sciences and the expansion, even dominance, of professional training, with Holy Cross now the one remaining purely liberal arts college, the core curriculum has become the protective bastion of the ideals, with philosophy and theology (usually two courses each) at the embattled heart of the core. Small wonder that popular images of the core revision process are cinematic:

English and history professors pour boiling oil and shoot arrows from the castle walls as the Huns and Vandals from marketing and hotel management pour out of the forests with their battering rams; or, as in *Beau Geste*, a sole surviving Greek scholar props up the corpses on the fortress battlements as Berber tribesmen from management, communications, and criminal justice swarm over the desert dunes.

No matter how fanciful or paranoid the images, the costs of core wars are real. To replace a required literature course with something "practical," that might assure anxious students and helicopter parents that Saint Ignatius College will "get you a job," means that the computer science graduate may go to the job without having read Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Chekhov, or Hemingway. And a newly hired English professor, following the law of supply and demand, may lose his job and enroll in the evening school to become a computer scientist.

As the core shrinks, so does the imagination. And the diluted humanities soup has social consequences. Mark Slouka, in "Dehumanized: When math and science rule the school," in *Harper's* (September 2009), argues that the humanities are the last bulwark against totalitarianism; they are in the business of asking hard questions, upsetting people as we ask about "truth" and what is "good" — questions that unsettle repressive regimes. What is the utility of the classics? "Every aspect of life — every marriage, every job, every parent-teacher meeting — hinges in some way on the ability to understand and empathize with others, to challenge one's beliefs, to strive for reason and clarity."

This issue of *Conversations* invited 36 writers — six Jesuits, three former Jesuits, and 30 lay persons — to contribute some reason and clarity, with the hope that the dialogue will bring some peace and harmony to the battlefield. *Conversations* was founded to anticipate that time when Jesuit presence would shrink and — we hoped — lay persons would pick up the Ignatian ideals and make them their own. So in this collection of testimony, shared experience, last-word advice to the young, advice from the young, and in-depth analysis of the relevance of Ignatian ideals, mostly by lay faculty, we hope that the new cores will retain the heart of the old ones and both sustain the hopes and confront the fears of the world outside the castle walls. ■

**RASSj**

# Beyond the

# CORE WARS

## Intellectual charity and knowledge as ecstasy

By Brian D. Robinette

**W**ith all the uncertainty and impassioned disagreement generated by the current discussion over the core curriculum in our Jesuit colleges and universities – our so-called “core wars” – it may seem the height of naïveté (or worse, sentimentality) to invoke the theological virtue of *love* as an essential element for its enrichment and advance-

ment. How does love have anything to do with our common academic enterprise as reflected in the core curriculum, and what role could it possibly serve in our continuing struggle to shape it?

Much risk attends the very suggestion, I realize. One can almost see the bewildered looks at the mere thought of its mention in a faculty assembly or core curriculum committee meeting. And one can well imagine how abstract (and perhaps paternalistic) the notion might sound

to students, not least because students are generally given few opportunities to participate in the discussions rumbling from seemingly remote regions of the university. Puzzled reactions are especially likely given the strongly romantic associations to which the word “love” is prone, at least in our contemporary culture. Yet, for all that, there is a critical and theologically articulate understanding of love that bears upon how we might envision the role of the core curriculum in our colleges and universities, one that is just as attentive to diversity as it is to unity.

My own thinking on the matter was recently stimulated by Pope Benedict XVI’s message to Catholic educators in the United States in April 2008. As those paying attention at the time will recall, much speculation preceded the papal visit. Many wondered whether the current pope (and former Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) would focus on matters of doctrinal compliance in his address. Benedict did indeed speak critically of positions contrary to the faith of the Catholic Church that “obstruct or even betray the university’s identity and mission.” He also affirmed that, because of its connection to the mission of the Church, the Catholic university is “a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth.” But such a mission, he declared in the same breath, is not at odds with the “great value of academic freedom,” which in fact it underwrites. Actually, the address did not linger over abstract (and highly neuralgic) considerations of authority and freedom, but instead outlined a vision of what Benedict called “intellectual charity.” It is a vision far more challenging and embracing than might first appear.

Harkening to previous works and addresses, as well as other papal encyclicals, most notably Pope John Paul II’s *Fides et Ratio*, Benedict observes that the search for truth – the deepest and most personal yearning for human beings – has been significantly hampered by the fragmentation and instrumentalization of knowledge in the modern age. Although nowhere mourning a golden era of education to which we must return, the pope paints a picture in which the search for truth has lost much of its sapiential and life-changing character.

As our intellectual traditions have undergone a process of dramatic secularization, the search for truth – to the extent such a search even gets discussed – has lost much of its transcendent orientation and holistic scope. We increasingly tend to asso-

ciate “truth” with the aggregation of “information.” We have become marvelously proficient at expanding areas of specialization, but fare poorly at integrating these areas into mutually enriching wholes. Inquiry may spread out horizontally to cover more and more surface, but so little of it seeps underground to find common roots and depth.

Benedict appears particularly concerned with a view of knowledge based upon function. The subjection of knowledge to “cold pragmatic calculations of utility” threatens to extract the most important considerations from the educational enterprise, namely, the dignity

*the “cold pragmatic calculations of utility”*

of the human person and the pursuit of the common good. It would be wrong, if convenient, for us to imagine that such calculative thinking is primarily an issue for fields outside of the humanities. It has become a dominant style of learning in *all* fields – the disengagement of the knower from the content of learning. When Benedict declares that “truth speaks to the individual in his or her entirety, inviting us to respond with our whole being,” he is naming and challenging the cool objectivity which may pass as academic professionalism, but which frequently inhibits the kind of self-involvement both teachers and learners must risk in entertaining ultimate questions in the classroom.

In a striking way, Benedict urges educators to take up the challenge of fostering intellectual charity. There are several facets to this challenge, as I see it. The first is that, as a good Augustinian, Benedict espouses a view of knowing as a way of loving. The reason we pursue knowledge at all is because of a desire that draws us *beyond* ourselves. Every particular act of knowing, no matter how local and concrete, is in fact a kind of ecstasy: an expression of an inner dynamism that impels us onward toward richer and more comprehensive dimensions of meaning and connectivity. We seek to know as a way of enacting our very being; and this enactment is motivated by love, even if we are reticent to name it as such. Benedict’s characterization of knowing as “passion,” “awakening,” “relishing,” and “adventure” is telling. There is a particular *eros* entailed in this view of learning: it is that the human person is drawn by something other than the self in a movement of transcendence, one that makes learning as much about being “in love” as being “in the know.”



Creighton University theology professor the Rev. Dick Hauser, S.J., chats with students in the Jesuit Gardens on campus.

The anthropology this vision assumes is hardly exclusive to a particular creed or discipline. It is generous and instinctively cross-disciplinary.

It contends that the often inarticulate sense of aspiration that drives the molecular biologist to understand the various systems of a cell is akin to the delight experienced by the linguist who comes to grasp the inner structure of a complex utterance. It wagers that the physicist's impassioned search for new clues about the initial conditions of the big bang is related to the historian's hunt for a long-forgotten document that might

shed new light on a critical turning point in history. It presumes that what most deeply motivates the student who chooses to major in urban studies shares an inner affiliation

with the student of religious studies who also wishes to understand something about the worlds, whether geographical or symbolic, we inhabit. This vision in no way collapses these diverse disciplines, but

discerns the inner dynamism they share: the desire to understand something about the truth of our lives and the worlds in which they are formed, and to do so precisely as an expression of a love for this life and what it might become.

There is an unmistakable confidence to this view of learning, too: a trust that the search for truth is animated by something real, by something that elicits from us the fullest scope of our capacities and passions. Although we cannot predetermine what shape any person's search for truth will take, so long as it is allowed to take place, and so long as it is nourished through appropriate instruction, encouragement, and, above all, modeling, the risks undertaken to arrive at it will be richly rewarded.

If this is true, then it is also true that educators ought to be motivated by love for their students. This means something more than the love of our respective fields. No doubt many educators exhibit enthusiasm for their areas of study, which can be infectious. But an educa-

### *We must love our students*

tor's love can hardly be equated with displays of excitement. The real measure of an educator's love is found in the willingness to impart the desire for the truth to students, and to assist in the conditions that make it possible to flourish. Benedict appropriately calls this an "act of love." Those of us who are educators may not be accustomed to thinking of our relationship with students in this way, but we should. We should appreciate how our role in awakening and cultivating a love of learning among students is love *for* our students. "The dignity of education," remarks the pope, "lies in fostering the true perfection and happiness of those to be educated." It is a view that all of us, no matter our area of expertise, and no matter our personal affiliation with the mission of the Catholic Church, can own and cultivate. But let us observe what else it entails.

Practicing intellectual charity means working to bring forth unity where there is diffusion, consilience where there is fragmentation. The fundamental intuition with which Benedict operates is that truth forms a unity. Now, such a unity does not mean uniformity. Love, in fact, presupposes difference. Love does not seek to dominate or manipulate, but seeks the integrity of what is and remains *other*. And yet, the integrity of the other is only more fully realized to the extent that it continually discovers and enacts its deepest impulse for filiation. Intellectual charity operates with the basic presupposition that knowledge in one region of human inquiry is fundamentally related to knowledge in all others, and that therefore among the most important tasks a learner (especially a learning community) can work towards is to make these relationships explicit.

**W**hich brings us to the core. Although the above considerations cannot produce specific prescriptions concerning what subjects must be included in the core, or how many credit hours the core should require, it does underwrite a very strong commitment to the liberal arts vision of the core because of its focus on the formation of the *whole* human person. Such a charge has long been the explicit goal of our Jesuit institutions, of course, but there is presently a great danger that its basic elements are being chipped away by the pressures to make the college experience more and more about the utility of landing the job or getting placed in professional schools. Certainly we have obligations for preparing our students for these outcomes. It would be unconscionable not to, considering the enormous investment (and debt) that going to college now demands. But precisely because of this investment – not despite it – we should work hard to remind ourselves constantly of the core's inestimable value, which is found in its ability to expose students to the

## *Which brings us to...*

extraordinary *diversity* of subjects while giving them the opportunity to discover their *unity*. A strong core implies the *communion of knowing*: it invites those who undertake its itinerary a profounder sense of very dynamism of knowing that may be sustained and widened the rest of their lives.

If such a life-long process is to be a remote possibility, it will mean much more than settling on a fair and sensible proportioning of requirements in science, language, literature, history, philosophy, and theology. As important as that conversation is, the deeper conversation requires working from *within* each discipline to cross its own boundaries in order to make explicit connections with others.

In my numerous conversations with students about their college experience, I have grown disconcertingly aware of just how much the burden for bringing about any formal integration in their studies depends almost entirely upon them. Students are simply without many models for seeing *how* such integration might be achieved. What this suggests to me is that as much energy we pour into debates about the core in terms of its constitutive elements, we should be just as prepared to help students bring those elements into new and creative relationships. A host of pedagogical practices come to mind that seem indispensable to this task, including efforts in team-teaching, the expansion of learning communities, resources and time devoted to service-learning, capstone projects that make inter-disciplinary work a priority, symposia that create space for sharing excellence across all fields, and, perhaps most importantly, explicit attempts within each core course to directly engage a different dimension of the core. This latter practice simply asks those of us who teach our core courses to be drawn outside of our expertise to integrate, however experimentally and tentatively, the richness of another.

While practices of intellectual charity like these may not put an end to our "core wars," they can certainly help us look beyond them by entering into them more deliberately and fully. And with a robust commitment to the liberal arts foundation of the core, our Jesuit colleges and universities can continue performing a prophetic work in an age of growing fragmentation. This is a work of love. ■

*Brian D. Robinette is in the department of theological studies at Saint Louis University.*

## THE CORE AND HISTORY

# The Core: A Musty Relic or a Gift to 21st-Century Students?

By **Thomas W. Worcester, S.J.**

**H**ow I think about core requirements for my students is inevitably—and I hope happily—colored by my own scholarly pursuits: sixteen years teaching European and church history, including Jesuit, history. And though my specialties may make me seem to be an “insider,” in some ways it is as an outsider that I approach this question of a core for Jesuit schools.

I myself did not go to any Jesuit college. I chose the Ivy League and I enjoyed my years as an undergraduate at Columbia University in the City of New York, as the full, formal name of what was originally King’s College reads. In my time at Columbia, and indeed for nearly a century, Columbia College has continued to require a core that focuses in part on great literary and philosophical texts, from ancient Greece to the present, and in part on a

distribution of courses in areas such as art, music, science, an intensive writing course, and foreign language.

Though the list of great books has been updated over the years to be more world and gender inclusive, the basic structure of the core has been little changed, even through periods of great upheaval on campus such as 1968. The amount of reading we were required to do was heavy by most standards, and some of the core courses met not three but four times each week. If some sections of core courses were taught by doctoral students with the status of instructor, many other sections were taught by the university’s most accomplished pro-

*Thomas W. Worcester, S.J., teaches in the history department at The College of the Holy Cross.*



## *Years ago the core was designed to prepare young men for the priesthood.*

fessors. And the number of students in a section rarely surpassed 20 or 25; discussion was almost always an integral part of the classroom experience. In fact, the only really large class I ever took was an astronomy course with some hundred students.

Yet even with the example of a well-established core at a university as prestigious as Columbia, the whole idea of a core for Jesuit undergraduate colleges may still seem very dated and old fashioned, especially if we tie it to traditions going back to the 16th century and the foundation of the Society of Jesus. It may well be that while the 1599 document known as the *ratio studiorum* spelled out principles and practices of Jesuit education that were appropriate in centuries past, we should now ask, with some insistence, what does it have to do with the 21st century? An antiquarian wallowing in a past imagined as a golden age is probably not a good idea for education of Americans poised today between late adolescence and adulthood.

It is also true that the kind of core that was required of undergraduates in some Jesuit schools in the U.S., as recently as the 1960s, was heavily influenced by the kind of education Jesuits themselves received on their way to ordination as priests. I dare say that the core that existed at many Jesuit universities some fifty years ago was particularly well suited for Catholic young men thinking of priesthood or religious life. It was a kind of preparation for the course of studies they would follow if they became Jesuits, with a very heavy dose of classical languages and literature, and a very large number of courses in neo-Thomistic philosophy. In most Jesuit schools today the majority of undergraduates are women. A small number may go into careers as chaplains or as other kinds of lay ministers. But even they—not to mention the rest of the increasingly diverse student body in religion and in many other ways—very likely do not need or want a course of studies originally designed for male priests, and in what seems like a distant past..

The history of Jesuit colleges and universities in the United States has been ably studied by a number of historians, Robert Emmett Curran, Kathleen Mahoney, Gerald McKeivitt, S.J., and Anthony Kuzniewski, S.J., among them. Recurring themes they explore include the tension between fidelity to European and in particular Roman traditions, on the one hand, and adaptation to the particulars of an American context, on the other hand. Geographic and cultural difference within the US also played a role: from the Midwest to the west coast, departures from a core focused on classics and philoso-

phy happened sooner, and went together with adoption of professional programs in fields such as business or nursing. On the east coast, there tended to be retention of a more traditional core, and more reluctance to embrace career-oriented, practical courses of study.

I identify five emphases in core requirements over the history of Jesuit undergraduate education in the U.S. One is **the classics**: Latin and Greek language, prose, poetry; history of ancient Greece and Rome. Though some schools have retained strong classics departments, many Jesuit institutions no longer offer much of anything in the classics. What was for centuries considered the indispensable foundation of Jesuit education has become but an option, and an option often not even available.

The second emphasis is **philosophy**. In the 19th century, and in the 20th century up to Vatican II, “Catholic philosophy” was some version of scholastic philosophy, most likely some textbook version of Thomas Aquinas. And undergraduates were often required to take more than a few course hours of this, with what effect it may be difficult to say. But with no consensus anymore on what would be a Catholic philosophy, course requirements tend to be quite minimal, one or perhaps two courses. **Theology**, a third emphasis, interestingly enough, was in most Jesuit schools less a part of the undergraduate program than were the classics and philosophy. But the size and quality of theology departments have grown a great deal in recent decades, and some Jesuit schools require two or more courses in this area.

But there is little consensus on what their focus should be, and in some cases it is a religious studies rather

### *Five points of emphasis*

than a theology requirement. There is a positive and a negative side to this development. Undergraduate knowledge of world religions is making some progress, and that is certainly a very good thing. But even the most basic understanding of Catholic theology, not to mention the history of Catholicism, remains minimal for the vast majority of students.

The fourth emphasis is on **liberal arts** (or “arts and sciences”). Holy Cross is exclusively a liberal arts college, but this is exceptional for Jesuit institutions of higher education in the US. Recently I spent a year as a visiting professor at Marquette University. Though the terms of the chair I held meant that I taught only a seminar each semester, I also had a good opportunity to



A student conducts research in the Donnelly Science Center at Loyola College in Maryland.

observe up close how a Jesuit university functions when it includes a great array of schools and programs, including undergraduate courses of study in fields such as business. Though Marquette has a college of arts and sciences, the university's professional schools taken together form a far larger portion of the institution. Still, not only undergraduates in arts and sciences, but also those in the professional schools, are required to complete a substantial core of liberal arts courses.

Finally, the fifth emphasis is the **faith that does justice**. At least since the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1974-75), Jesuit schools have worked to integrate in the curriculum Catholic social teaching, and a commitment to justice for the oppressed, the poor, the marginalized. This has not been without resistance in various quarters, from faculty proponents of laissez-faire capitalism to those who think that matters of social justice should be the domain of campus ministry but not of the academic side of a college. At Holy Cross, a recent effort to add a course in ethical reflection to the required core of courses met with opposition. Details do matter, and some of the thoughtful objections raised to such a course had more than a little merit. But other sources of opposition revealed a knee-jerk hostility to any requirement of a course that considers moral values.

Whether students recognize it or not, a required core serves their best interests. At Holy Cross, I have found that such a core protects students from parents overly eager to place their son or daughter in a lucrative career as soon as possible. In times of economic crisis or at least uncertainty, parental pressure may be particularly strong, and students are especially well-armed in responding to their parents when they can point out that the College's requirements for graduation include a wide array of courses in fields such as language, literature, history, philosophy, religion, natural and social sciences, and in the arts. While some faculty will say that students should be allowed to take whatever courses they want, beyond the ten or so courses

required for a major, such appeals to choice are extraordinarily naïve in that they ignore the manifold and enormous pressures on students to take only those subjects that will help them gain ready access to a high-paying position after college.

In this era of so-called helicopter parenting and of omnipresent cell phones, it is not uncommon for students to talk with a parent several times a day. Every year, as an academic advisor, I try to help students who have attempted a pre-medical program but find that their heart is not in it, not because they are not intellectually capable of doing well in the necessary courses, but because they do not have a vocation to medicine. To succeed and to be happy, one must be able to make a living by doing something one loves. I know this from my own life and from what I see in the lives of my students. By requiring a substantial core of liberal arts courses, we create a space of freedom for our students that allows them to test and explore what interests them, what gives them life, and who they are.

As a Columbia undergraduate I read Augustine, Aquinas, Dante...and I read Nietzsche, Freud, and Sartre. And much, much more. The core for undergraduates at Jesuit colleges and universities ought to be at least as broad and as deep and as demanding. ■

# From Enlightenment to Sparknotes

By Justin Roberts

**E**ducation is dangerous. It patiently explains how everything you know is a lie. Success here requires that you suspend your beliefs and submit to this legacy of dead men. The surrender of individual sovereignty to the intellectual heritage is the cost of admission.

We spent millennia in the dance of hand to mouth. When we traded fire-lit musings for formal schooling, we made a bond to forfeit our primitive identities to the authority of Reason. In the liberal arts, men abandoned lean subsistence thinking for the pursuit of insight and conscience. The first universities devoted the entire bachelor's degree, six years of study in the major academic disciplines, to cultivate the person by domesticating the species. The animal with a brain became the man with a mind.

Today, the Scholastic's bachelor's degree has been reduced to the modern core curriculum. At Saint Peter's, undergraduates take 60 credits, half of all their classes, in introductory courses of the major fields of study. But this introduction operates without context or mission. The liberal arts promise enlightenment and deliver Sparknotes for the Academic tradition.

The core is the victim of an academic identity crisis. Saint Peter's advertises a core curriculum that will immerse students in the liberal arts tradition, educate them in all of the culturally influential academic fields, strengthen their bond with Christ and afford them all the exciting experiences of an extended adolescence. All that in only twenty classes.

The resultant mosaic of intro classes

leaves a lot of people unsatisfied. Many professors I spoke with agreed that the core is ineffectual. Student responses included "a waste of time" and "a talking point for a slick marketing campaign." The students wanted the core reduced and were confused when I said it should be better developed. "I like Saint Peter's," one student told me. "It's an easy way to get a degree."

Many students and professors have offered proposals for improving the core, each emphasizing the kind of character development they thought Saint Peter's should promote. Whether their solutions were more classes on the history and values of the Jesuits or higher grading standards and a great books curriculum, they all agreed that the changes they wanted would require sacrificing other people's priorities.

This is the danger of established societies. The road out of the wild is simple and hard, a flight from danger rather than a rush toward civility. The competition to build the first societies favored the groups who won more often and by wider margins than their foes. These groups defined themselves by victory. Once established, however, few outlived their clearly defined enemies. The willpower needed to form a strong identity proves difficult to muster without the convenience of adversity.

Education is the search for meaning in the absence of battle. Students set out to examine the knowledge and methods of great men, studying the still shots of their dance with a mind to learn the rhythm. Without focus, though, the core becomes a clumsy distraction.



Students flip through photosynthesis, police states, Nietzsche, and coordinating conjunctions as if they were channel surfing. Good living, like good writing, requires clarity.

Currently, students and professors alike consider the core an irritating formality. It leaves students ill equipped to understand the quotes they parrot and robs teachers of their sense of purpose.

Man's essence will always be greater than all of the facts and figures on the planet. With material civilization firmly established, we find ourselves with enough knowledge to pursue more endeavors than our ancestors could conceive of. The principle of charity inspires us to respect diversity and vouchsafe the multiple interpretations our affluence allows. Yet this restraint is impossible without the well defined convictions that build strong character.

So long as Saint Peter's refrains from accepting its limits and devising a core curriculum with a single, coherent focus, it will fail to instill in its students the capacity and the character to preserve the values that the Jesuit Order holds sacred. ■

*Justin Roberts, who graduated from Saint Peter's College in 2010, was news editor and columnist for the Pauw Wow.*

## A HISTORICAL NOTE

# *Once Upon a Time, there was a Jesuit College*

*W*hen I arrived at Holy Cross in 1976, new Ph.D. in hand, I was five years out from Emmanuel College, a Catholic college whose core requirements had been minimal, centered mostly on philosophy and theology. By the time I was a teaching assistant at Yale, that Ivy institution had followed Brown University in abandoning all core or “general” requirements. In other words, I came of age both as student and teacher during the heady days of curricular freedom.

Academia was then reflecting, even influencing, demands that the U. S. extend civil rights at home and stop war abroad. Students who marched for those causes and took over campus buildings in turn demanded the right to study what interested them most and to do so with faculty who preferred interested students. Freedom is contagious, and it did not take long for the most prestigious colleges and universities in

the North East to follow Brown. But for Holy Cross to make that same radical adjustment in 1970 was quite astounding.

Holy Cross, I soon learned, had entered Academia’s most rapid waters with breathtaking courage and speed. The College demanded Ph.D.s of all new professors, cut its semester course requirements from 5 to 4, admitted women, and dropped core requirements all within the course of a brief few years. By 1975, when I interviewed for my job with Dean Joseph Fahey, S.J., the College president, John Brooks, S.J., had accelerated the work begun by his Jesuit predecessor, Raymond Swords. The “pursuit of excellence” which Fahey and Brooks both emphasized to job candidates was alluring. I accepted the job offer eager to teach and to write. The challenges I immediately faced as an untrained academic advisor, however, were quite another matter.

Eighteen may now be the new sixteen, but even in 1976, eighteen

year olds knew little about what might constitute a liberal arts education. The new freedom cried out for an informed and committed advising system. Holy Cross worked assiduously to invent one; a dedicated faculty tried hard to advise balanced programs of study. But the ratio of advisors to students somehow never seemed to be the same as the more feasible ratio of faculty to students. When student majors were used to identify advisors, some faculty were swamped. When students were randomly assigned advisors, highly specialized faculty were frustrated. Inevitably, advising became a matter of making sure students had enough credits to graduate (32 semester courses), had completed 10 upper level courses in most majors, had not taken more than 14 courses in any one major, and

*Helen M. Whall is a professor of English at the College of the Holy Cross.*

had completed at least 18 courses outside the major. Meaningful conversations about life, learning, and the future ahead became rare in an advising context.

But the real threat to a coreless curriculum probably came, as had the cry for a coreless curriculum, in response to the culture at large. By the early 1980's, students everywhere had begun to feel a generational tilt toward pre-professionalism. The natural tension between liberal arts and pre-professional education established new alliances at Holy Cross. Faculty who had never wanted to abandon a core curriculum found a meeting space, if not common ground, with young faculty increasingly anxious over guiding student choices responsibly. We entered into invigorating conversations about how a systemic rather than an individualized solution might better serve our students. Those debates yielded up, with only a few adjustments, the system of distribution requirements still in place at Holy Cross. Our catalogue describes these "Common Requirements" as: one course each in arts, literature, studies in religion, philosophical studies, historical studies, and cross cultural studies; and two courses each in language studies, social science, and natural and mathematical sciences. Students continue to complete the requirements of their chosen majors but must not take more than 14 courses in that major

The Holy Cross common requirements are far less proscriptive than they are directive. Rather



College of the Holy Cross.

than specify required courses or even required fields of study, they reflect what are, at Holy Cross, internal perceptions of academic specialties allied by shared methodologies or at least by shared philosophical assumptions. Encouraged by that implicit acknowledgement of faculty scholarship, many colleagues who did not routinely teach first year students began to rethink pedagogical strategies. In the early days of their enactment, these requirements also inspired rewarding curricular innovation in the newly emerging area of cross-cultural studies.

Though I came to cherish the resulting burst of creativity, I originally voted against distribution requirements. I was reluctant to take from students the freedom of choice I had myself enjoyed and

which I knew made it much easier for me to take a B.A. from Emmanuel College to an English Ph.D. at Yale. After about 10 years, though, I had accepted the "new" curriculum as one which better addressed the needs of new 18 year olds. These were the students, after all, who grew up as a millennium closed out and terrorism came home. They yearned for order. But 10 years later again, as the 21st century took hold and we inherited the "overscheduled" student, I worried as my advisees obsessively strove to complete all requirements during their first two years. Curricular programs in a post-modern academy seem of necessity to have a limited shelf life. That's exhausting, but not necessarily bad.

As I look toward retirement within the next decade, I anticipate with some interest a new "new" curriculum. Last year, Holy Cross introduced Montserrat, an ambitious, 2 semester seminar program for all first year students. Others on the faculty have discussed a requirement in "ethical studies." Still others recall with nostalgia the old core. The current requirement system is cracking under the burden. My only thought on the matter? When deliberating what the young need to prepare them for the future, none of us should look too wistfully at the program that served us well as undergraduates, whether 10, 20, or 30 years ago. The times, they aren't just changing. They have changed. ■

# ADVICE THE CORE CANNOT GIVE

Seminar members, knowing that sometimes even the brightest freshmen don't listen, offer a few words of personal advice.

Every faculty member looks out over that freshman class and wishes them the best; but each one has that half-buried yearning: "If I could tell these kids — excuse me, young men and women — just one thing and if they would listen to me, their lives would be richer forevermore. This includes the members of our seminar. So, we're making one more try.

Since we are men and women, priests and laypersons, with and without our immediate families, we address these letters to a son or daughter, a niece or nephew, to a general freshman, or in my case, since my nephew David is now 45, to some future grandnephew who might be named after my late brother Dave.

What unifies these suggestions is the realization that the core can't take care of everything and, for a real education, the student must strike out on his or her own. **RASj**

## Margaret Davis: Knock on that door.

To a freshman:

You are entering a wonderful time of your life, and I urge you to find a mentor to help you through the delights and challenges of the next four years. The faculty of your college are professionals experienced in their fields of study, but they are also caring individuals committed to helping you make the best of your college experience and your life afterwards.

I encourage you to find someone among the faculty whom you respect, trust, and like, and get to know that person on a personal level. Faculty relish relationships with students outside the classroom and are open to genuine and lasting friendships.

I love to go to weddings and parties for graduated students and delight in receiving letters, visits, and Christmas cards with pictures of children and dogs. Maybe your freshman advisor, a teacher in your major, or a priest with whom

you work and worship is one whom you will find to be a lasting mentor and friend.

Just knock on that door and invite yourself in for a conversation. The door might open to begin a friendship that you both will cherish forever.

*Margaret Davis teaches English at Spring Hill College.*

## Gregory Carlson, S.J.: Write for fun.

Dear Sonja,

You're off to college. Good for you!

What college started for and in me keeps growing, and those first four years remain special. Conversations Magazine has asked me to describe 'core experiences' not in the classroom. I write to recommend three to you.

1. Keep a book open to a great painting. Change often. Enjoy Picasso, Renoir, Pollock. You know that I haunt used book stores. I find lovely painting books and enjoy living with them.
2. Find a teacher with whom you can relate and then bother her. I met Fr. Len Waters when I was twenty; I am still growing from our relationship. He is long gone, but our conversations opened many doors! He listened, challenged, recommended books, read my writing, and criticized it fiercely. My thinking proudly bears his stamp.
3. Write for fun. I have written many assignments, but college also taught me to play with ideas. That practice helps me to write this letter! Write poems, essays, short stories. Writing makes me hungry for ideas and images.

This practice later morphed into my "worrying" homilies into shape.  
Uncle Greg

*Gregory Carlson, S.J., teaches English at Creighton University.*

## The joys, hopes, griefs and anxieties of the people of this age

### Leslie Liedel: Live on campus, but go away.

Dear Kian,

First, although you won't be old enough for college for a few years, choosing the right college is important, and we both know that there are so many options. There is not necessarily one right school for you and your needs. That being said, I demand that you live on campus. I don't care if you go to the college down the road from our house, you must live there.

I have watched generations of commuter students sitting in their vehicles, eating lunch, reading assignments, and writing papers on laptops. While I applaud these young people for pursuing higher education, I wish they were more connected with the university. The roommate you have during your first semester may become your best friend or your worst enemy... or neither. But living on campus will force you to meet all kinds of people, will encourage you how to make good decisions, and will assist you in learning how to negotiate differences. And while you may lose several hours of sleep, you will gain so much from the experience.

Second, study abroad. Again, there is a study abroad program in virtually any place you can imagine. You cannot make a wrong choice with regard to this issue. If you want to go to Italy to study art history, good for you. Maybe you want to go to Cameroon and work with marginalized people? Or possibly you want to spend time in China to work on your Cantonese? Once college is over your responsibilities will increase significantly. It is highly unlikely that you will ever again have a fifteen-week period to spend in another country, interacting with the folks who call that country home and receiving college credit while learning about a particular culture. Now is the time to take advantage of this truly win-win situation.

Love, Your Mother

Leslie Liedel teaches history at Wheeling Jesuit University.

### John O'Callaghan, S.J.: Listen

To a Believing College Student:

It's been a while since I went to college, but one thing I did then is even much more crucial in today's U.S.A.: an honest-to-God "Retreat."

I don't mean the kind of retreat where everyone gets together and talks a lot — though I think that has a place too. I mean a retreat where you can leave behind all the constant talk, of whatever kind (banter or texting or bar-conversations; even serious talk about serious things) and listen. To yourself; to wise words from a spiritual author or counselor; to what God may say in the depth of your heart.

Experiencing this kind of retreat in my college years made all the difference for my life. It put me in touch with myself in a way nothing else had done. It deepened my faith in a God who knows me better than I know myself, who guides me and leads me (though I sometimes realize that only in retrospect), and will see me safely home. It will never be listed as a Core Requirement, but nothing was more important for my college education.

If you go to a Catholic or another faith-based school, this kind of retreat will probably be available — or can be set up if you round up some interested others. If you're not at a place where God is a permitted subject, look for a Newman Center under whatever title: they'll probably understand what you're looking for. You won't be sorry.

John O'Callaghan, S.J., teaches medical ethics at Loyola University.

**Raymond A. Schroth, S.J.: Swim and read.**

Dear David,

As you leave for college here are two things usually not required for graduation — but are required, I suggest, for life.

First, learn to swim very well. Not just because it's a family tradition, but because some day you'll be standing on a bridge in Paris and some desperate person will leap into the Seine to end it all. You'll dive in and save her. Another day while running on the beach, you'll see an angry wave snatch two children and yank them out to sea. You'll plunge in and drag them back.

Then, above all, read a Big Fat Book. Let a classic lure you into another world, not the fantasy escapes of Tolkien or Harry Potter, but worlds of pain, prisons, murder, love and war. Usually teachers don't assign big books, either because they haven't read them themselves or fear students will drop the class when they see the reading list. Try David Copperfield, Les Misérables, Anna Karenina, and The Brothers Karamazov. You might lose some sleep and miss some parties, but you'll have an education.

Love, Uncle Ray

*Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., teaches at Saint Peter's College.*

***I love to go to weddings and parties for graduated students and delight in receiving letters, visits, and Christmas cards with pictures of children and dogs.***

**Mark Scalese, S.J.: Immerse yourself in serving others**

Congratulations! You made it to college, and more importantly, you have decided to study at a JESUIT college. No doubt, during orientation you have already heard that your school wants to help you develop into "men and women for others." I suspect that by the time you graduate you will be able to repeat that slogan in your sleep.

In my experience, one sure-fire way to open your minds and hearts to "the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted," is to go

on a service or immersion trip sponsored by your school. That quote is from one of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, known by the opening words of its first sentence in Latin, "Gaudium et Spes." Since 1965, Jesuit schools all over the world have taken those words very seriously. The campus ministry program of your school probably sponsors several service/immersion trips each year, usually during winter and spring breaks and after graduation. At my own institution, students encounter the poor in other countries such as Jamaica, Belize, and Ecuador, and closer to home, in locations such as Appalachia, New Orleans, the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, and even Washington, DC. More and more Jesuit schools also offer special service-learning courses that integrate classroom learning with real-life experiences in nearby inner-cities or even other countries. All the students I've known who have gone on such trips have been profoundly changed by the people they encountered. I bet you would be too.

*Mark Scalese, S.J., teaches film/video production and studies at Fairfield University.*



## Mary K. Proksch: Your life is your legacy.

Dear First Year Student,

You are entering one of the most exciting times of your life as you make the transition from high school to college life. Your whole life is ahead of you, and the last thing that you are probably thinking about at this time is your legacy. After all, isn't legacy something that people think about in their 50s, 60s, 70s, or beyond?

In reality, when you really think about it, your life is your legacy. Legacy isn't something to start thinking about and planning, for as you are ending your career; your legacy is the totality of your life. Legacy is the result of the choices that each of us makes every single day of our life, so choose wisely. Life is lived once and there is no going back to reverse the past.

On a lighter note, enjoy your years here. This is a wonderful gift of time to discover who you are on your journey of greater understanding of self and others. Embrace your liberal arts courses as they will be life-changing and broaden your worldview, your *Weltanschauung*. Choose a life work that fills you with passion.

Mary K. Proksch teaches nursing at Regis University.

## Harry Dammer: Contemplate and concentrate.

To My Daughter Katie:

Too soon you will be on your way to college. You will be told many things about how to approach your college years. I would like to weigh in too! I have just one thing to tell you....your most important job for the next four years is to determine what you would LOVE to do with your life. This is imperative because you may never again have the time and resources to help you make such a determination. Do not make a decision based on money or what others say you should do.

To help make this determination do three things: First, pay attention to your liberal arts courses. The study of philosophy, theology, biology, and math will reap benefits down the road. Second, attend cultural events that you would normally not attend. It will stretch your world view. Third, spend some time alone and spend all electronic things that the world has said you cannot live without and spend time with yourself. Contemplation and concentration are lifelong skills too!

The results will be that you will find what motivates you, what makes you tick, and then you can pursue it. What you love you will be good at. Then someone will pay you, we hope well; but if not then, it matters little. You will be happy, as you have made me. Enjoy your four years, but not too much!

Love, DAD

Harry Dammer teaches criminal justice at the University of Scranton.

## Aparna Venkatesan: Be present in your life.

Dear Leaders of the Future,

In our modern age, we are constantly bombarded with information. Cell phones, blogs, faxes, emails — we are often at the mercy of the scattered thoughts of others and ourselves. But is information knowledge, or even understanding? We are over-stimulated within and without. How do we develop patience and depth of perception in an era that thrives on the instant-ness of things? How can you develop thoughtful opinions on the people and topics you will study and encounter?

Thoughtful answers require a mindful self, a self-centeredness that has nothing to do with selfishness. Mindfulness requires in turn the opportunity for introspection. In a typical day, we may have to schedule this time for reflection. Try to slow down and be present in your education and in your life, for patient experiencing provides different insights than the instant opinions you may feel pressured to express.

Rilke once wrote "resolve to be always beginning, to be a beginner." Take advantage of the unique spiritual education you will receive here to cultivate this fresh mind, and a receptive heart. It will make you a good observer and a good listener, excellent qualities for any path that you choose (scientist, artist, writer, parent, President) and for any human being.

Aparna Venkatesan teaches physics and astronomy at the University of San Francisco.

## The Core Curriculum in Jesuit Institution

All Jesuit institutions are aware of necessary general education requirements. This curriculum is designed to set out the foundational truths, information, skills, and values of the institution.

While there is a common understanding of how Jesuit institutions speak about this “core,” there are different approaches to its structure. The most common method is the distribution approach, in which students choose courses within a discipline or area. Most institutions also require certain discipline-based or core-specific courses to fulfill the core requirements.

In some institutions, core requirements are set up in themes, including *Global Perspectives* or *Intercultural Understanding*, and students choose from either discipline-based courses or courses framed specifically to teach core values and skills. In general, schools have a mix of these ordering mechanisms. In some institutions, core requirements differ according to the school in which the student is enrolled. Because schools have different, and often unique, ways of defining their core curricula, and because there can be various ways of fulfilling core requirements, the chart here may not reflect fully what happens at every school.

—Margaret Davis

## SUMMARY OF JESUIT COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY GRADUATION AND CORE HOURS

	<b>Hours Required for Graduation</b>	<b>Common Hours</b> (For all students)	<b>Range of Core Hours</b> (For students within different colleges)
Boston College	120	45	45
Canisius	120	36	36-42
College of the Holy Cross	128	48	48
Creighton	128	24	57-69
Detroit-Mercy	126	45	45-66
Fairfield	120-123	62	62-65
Fordham	124	39*	39-53
Georgetown	120	42	42
Gonzaga	128	31	31-81
John Carroll	128	45	45-57
LeMoyne	120	42	42
Loyola New Orleans	120	39	39-54
Loyola Maryland	120	51	51-60
Loyola Marymount	120	48	48
Loyola Chicago	128	48	48
Marquette	126	36	36
Regis	128	45	45-59
Rockhurst	128	52	52
Saint Joseph's	120	47	47
Saint Louis	120	40	40-63
Saint Peter's	120	60	60
San Francisco	128	44	44
Santa Clara	175 qtr hrs	72 qtr hrs	72-76
Scranton	130	77	77-85
Seattle University	180 qtr hrs	71 qtr hrs	71-75
Spring Hill	128	51	51-60
Wheeling Jesuit	120	52-55	52-55
Xavier	120	64	64

\* 53 for Fordham College at Rose Hill

# A Call for Intellectual Boldness

By Andrew Dwulet

In a strict sense, a core is a common set of courses required of all undergraduates; but at many universities, including Georgetown, it translates to a common set of distribution requirements. Two philosophies, two math/sciences, etc. In truth, it is not much of a common core. I think it is, however, a system designed to serve as the base recipe for a balanced liberal arts foundation and the point of entry for future intellectual pursuits.

Whether the core curriculum achieves these aims, however, is open to debate. Many Georgetown students *and* professors actually believe the answer is a resounding no. In March 2007, a committee of ten professors and three administrators delivered an “intellectual life” report after fifteen months of self-assessment. The picture it painted was overwhelmingly negative. Georgetown was nowhere near where it wanted to be in cultivating a vibrant intellectual culture or delivering a spirit of academic boldness and strong independent learning.

These conversations about intellectual life and culture are deeply connected to the structure of the core, whether it is a common set of courses or a distribution system. In fact, I think it is the most important factor in shaping intellectual life. It is the face of the university to new students about what learning looks like. It molds the trajectory of further academic pursuits. And it is a profound, if nuanced, statement about what higher education *should* be.

My experience has been unique. I participated in the Liberal Arts Seminar, a nine-credit, two-semester program for 30 freshmen in Georgetown’s College of Arts and Sciences. It is a 42 year-old

tradition, based on an interdisciplinary study of literature, history, philosophy, and theology. For me, the program was outstanding. When I reflect back on what made it special, I think about the exemplary professors and the vigor of class discussions. But in many ways, it was as much about *structure* as anything else. It was a common pursuit, a common set of readings, shared for one year by the same 30 students. This program is no way the “answer” for a university at-large, but there is something really valuable in this, the raw makings of a vibrant intellectual community.

## *The face of the university*

So, I offer two thoughts, based only on the experiences of an outgoing senior. First, universities should give a hard look towards integrating something like this common seminar experience into their broader core curricula. Bringing an entire class of undergraduates into a truly shared academic experience – and perhaps for a full year – could be highly effective in building intellectual life. Columbia University and the University of Chicago are two of the few elite universities that maintain a true core, a simultaneous examination of the same key texts and questions from different perspectives. It is the spirit, and not necessarily the precise model, that should be considered.

I also have a unique perspective on these issues as a reporter and editor for *The Hoya*, Georgetown’s newspaper of record. I have covered the development of the intellectual life report, edited



opinion pieces about what professors and students believe a curriculum should look like, and spoken at length with our provost about this very topic. From many of these discussions, and from evidence gathered in the intellectual life report, it appears evident that the strength of independent learning and innovation at Georgetown is a cause for concern.

A modern university needs to cultivate and foster a spirit of intellectual boldness, both inside and outside of traditional academic bounds. I believe a common core course for freshmen, centered on the formation and execution of an innovative research project, could be immeasurably valuable. Its orientation would not really matter; it could be a project of scientific ingenuity, experimenting with something new, it could be a small contribution to one’s liberal arts discipline, or it could be something entirely unique. The scale would certainly be small, but igniting this spark in students from the beginning might make it more than worthwhile. And I personally think that is what intellectual growth is really all about. ■

*Andrew Dwulet, former editor of The Hoya, is a 2010 graduate of Georgetown University.*

# LESSONS LEARNED

## CONFESSIONS OF A CORE WAR BYSTANDER

**Timothy Wadkins**

**C**anisius College recently implemented a new core curriculum. For those of you who are about to embark on a core revision process I wish I could tell you that our new core emerged smoothly through an easy consensus on the part of a convivial and conciliatory faculty. I suppose it was a civil process, but only if you ignore the vicious name calling and backbiting that took place behind the scenes, or the barely controlled rage that lurked beneath the surface at heated senate sessions, faculty forums, group email interchanges, and numerous sub-committee meetings. This debate got personal.

There were many who chose not to get overly worked up or involved in the fray. I was one of them. But others entered it with great passion and there emerged a clear divide between mutually demonized parties that I will refer to in this essay as revisionists and traditionalists. The revisionist party believed the old core was overly large (twenty courses), that it lacked common learning goals (it did), and that it was difficult to assess (it was). Traditionalists, who uniformly ridiculed the assessment language of the revisionists, also argued that the revisionist enterprise would not only reduce the size of the core, but, by doing so, would also erode Canisius' commitment to the liberal arts and its Catholic and Jesuit identity.

In the end, a savvy slate of revisionist soldiers managed to get elected to the faculty senate and, as the loudly protesting remnant of traditionalist senators looked on in horror, they managed to carefully orchestrate the implementation of our new core, which took effect in the fall of 2009. Without a doubt, the new core is smaller and is more uniform. Instead of eight general studies courses, it contains only four foundational courses. Instead of twelve field studies courses scattered over vaguely defined area studies, it now contains seven "field of knowledge" courses with common learning goals. Instead of the vague hope that students will

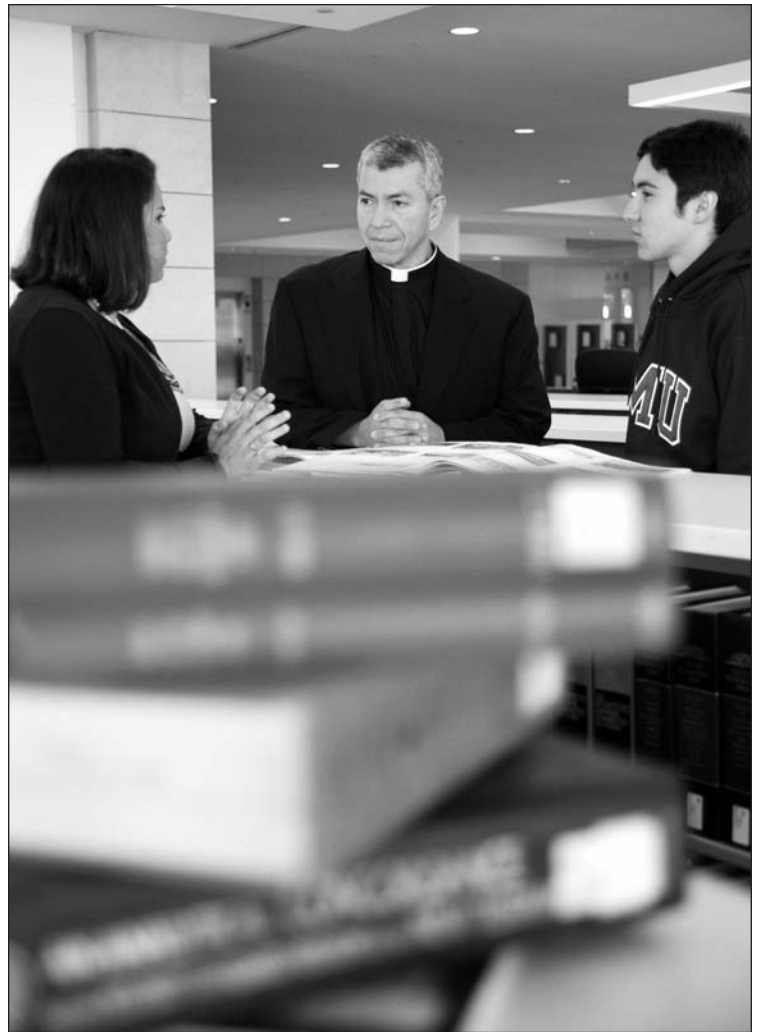
*But despite the blood left  
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in this process...*

receive specific kinds of information or skills, the new core also requires six attributes attached to various courses with themes of justice, global awareness, diversity, ethics, oral communication and writing. Instead of six religious studies and philosophy courses, taught from various methodological perspectives, the new core reduces this requirement to four (two in each discipline) with common learning goals that emphasize the Jesuit and Catholic heritage of the college. And instead of a vague hope that our students will actually benefit from the core, its content is reemphasized again through an interdisciplinary capstone course taken toward the end of a student's college career.

The new core is still experiencing growing pains. Students are often confused when it comes to finding and counting up attributes, and the faculty are resistant to developing first year and capstone courses. Nevertheless, it is also showing signs of settling in and working. Beyond anything else, it is proving to be flexible and adaptable to a variety of majors. A student could conceivably take as few as twelve or as many as eighteen courses.

I did not exempt myself from this debate because of conflict aversion. In fact I believe that the conflict was overall productive. It revealed that, far from just research and publishing interests, most members of the faculty are deeply committed to teaching and learning and they offer diverse and very valuable opinions on the subject. This, of course, made the whole process that much more difficult and, obviously, not everyone was happy with the result. But despite the blood left on the battlefield, there was a very productive dialectic in this process and faculty and administrators, even those of us not directly involved, were forced to think carefully about what constitutes good teaching and learning at Jesuit institutions, and what our core says about our commitment to the liberal arts and our identity as a Catholic and Jesuit institution.

My concerns with the core revision process have to do with two fundamental questions that I came to ask repeatedly during our process. First, can any core curriculum, no matter how structurally perfect it is believed to be, fully achieve what core revisionists expect? Second, will the language and efforts to assess the core eventually re-fashion and erode what it means to be educated? I was often perplexed by a kind of core curriculum determinism that seemed to pervade our debates and that

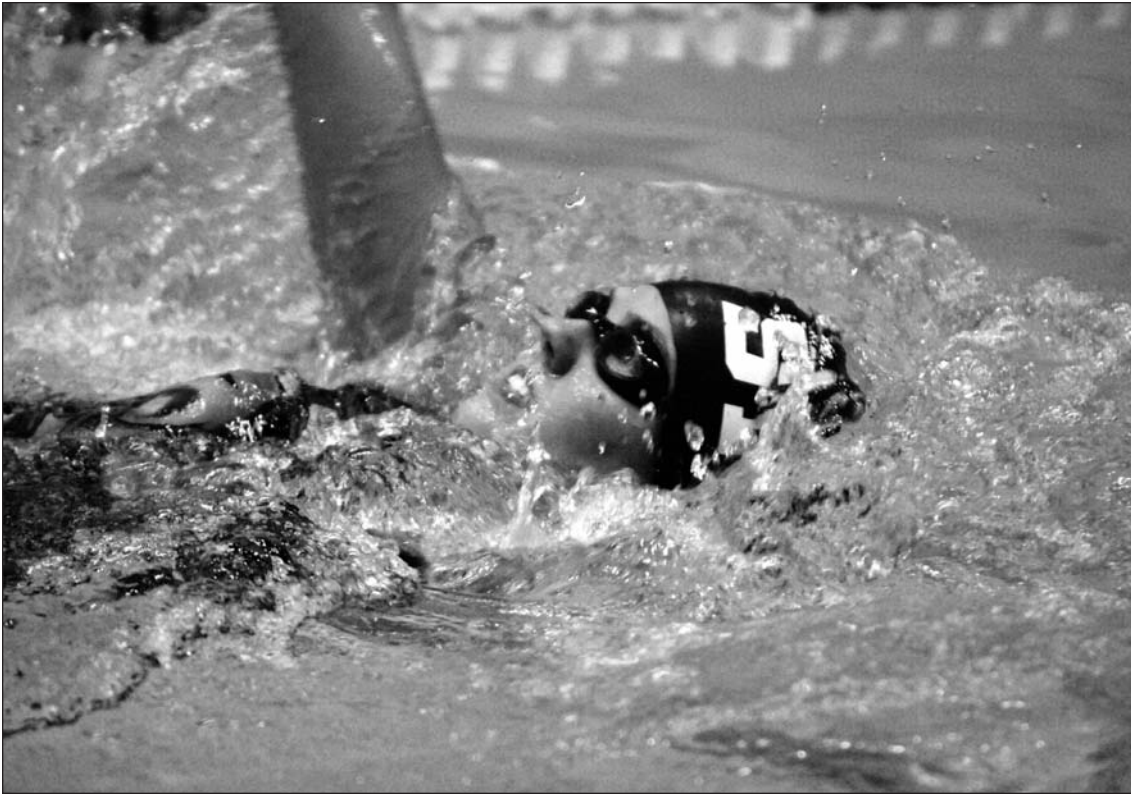


Loyola Marymount University.

repeatedly reminded me that the no child left behind educational culture had fully entered higher education. This was particularly apparent when discussion turned to issues of so called graduation outcomes.

I came to believe that alongside the commendable effort to create a more manageable core was the desire to create a uniform and quantifiable body of knowledge and skills that over the course of four years would produce a crop of exceptional college graduates who, like products from the same mold, were measurably the same. These graduates would possess information literacy in a variety of disciplines, would have a common understanding of

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Saint Peter's College.

the Catholic and Jesuit heritage, and would be equally aware of global diversity and ethical imperatives that resonate with the best of the Catholic tradition. The new core at Canisius College is set up to produce and measure these and other learning goals and outcomes.

But I wonder about the extent to which revisionists actually believe that these outcomes are the substance of what it means to be educated? At some level do they believe if we just implement foundational courses, fields of knowledge courses, and attributes that, through informational acquisition and exams, the core will magically predestine our graduates toward qualitative excellence?

Try as we might the core is not and never will be like software. No matter how well we program it, there is no reason to believe that the graduates of 2012 will be quantitatively the same or qualitatively wiser than those who graduated in 2002. I can't help but think that this pedestalling of knowledge acquisition might be subtly substituting a part for the whole, an attempt to equate patterned, measurable informational outcomes with what it means to be educated. No revisionist I know actually said this. In fact they would typically respond to my concerns by assuring me that the core was not meant to be one-sided or deterministic and that measurable outcomes would never fully substitute for what it means to be educated. But I was troubled by the fact that this was articulated only when pressed. Measureable outcomes dominated this debate and any other notion of what it might mean to be educated ended up being conspicuous by its

absence. Where will this lead? Our young children already attend schools that bow to the gods of assessment and teach for the test. Is this what is to come in higher education as well?

My reluctance to fully embrace our core revision process, however, was not grounded in a personal distaste for assessment. I believe we need to find ways to justify what we teach, how we teach it, and whether or not students get anything from it. But I strongly believe that education is also elusive—a complex and unpredictable process, and I think we need to emphasize and

celebrate this. Students matriculate with different personalities, backgrounds, levels of curiosity, and aptitudes. Classroom experiences vary widely. They encounter professors who care about the core in greater or lesser degrees, and who in various ways are charismatic, opinionated, religiously oriented, agnostic, dull, and brilliant, along with many other human eccentricities.

No matter how hard we try to structure education along a uniform corpus of information, students take what they want and leave the rest. Beyond the details of any given subject, which they often forget after the exam, they learn just as much, and often more from experiences they have outside the classroom—with fellow students, at parties, through athletics, in campus ministry experiences, in international immersion opportunities, and through the various media of pop culture. When they graduate we hope we have helped them become better thinkers and writers, life-long learners, intensely interested in the ultimate questions about life and meaning, curious about the world, and committed to making it a better place. But we cannot accurately predict nor quantify this, no matter what we are obligated to provide for accreditation agencies. Wisdom, which I consider the mostly unseen, but hoped for outcome of a college education, is not reducible to a body of information. And we cannot presume that one particular core rather than another will produce such wisdom. Despite efforts to the contrary, I hope that this sort of education will always trump core determinism.

I emerged from our core wars believing that the new core amounted to a needed pragmatic adjustment. It will greatly help certain disciplines and majors meet their requirements without sacrificing the liberal arts curriculum. Its deliberate inclusion of Jesuit and Catholic learning goals probably made our commitment to the Mission and identity of the college more explicit. But this does not mean it is revolutionary. I suspect that in a decade or so, when my thoughts are turning to retirement, a younger generation of faculty will rise and insist on the need for another core revision that will better educate our students. This is the nature of higher education and its faculty who are constantly navigating the often turbulent waters between cultural expectations and the teaching and learning enterprise that constitutes actual education. ■

*Timothy Wadkins teaches in the theology department at Canisius College.*

# THINK LOCALLY

**James L. Wisner**

**S**ince the early 1970's I have either observed or participated in three attempts to revise the core curricula at two Jesuit universities. Two were implemented; one was not. What have I learned?

## **Lesson 1: Begin with the most difficult issues first.**

In my view a successful core curriculum is one that fosters the learning, development, and transformational growth that we envision for our students. Given the ambitious nature of these goals, the difficulty of reaching a consensus regarding what it is that we actually wish for our students should not be surprising. In view of this the temptation might be to build incrementally by starting with those specifics about which there is agreement and save the big issues to the last; however that would be a mistake.

If the core is to cohere and be perceived by our students as more than a set of unrelated hurdles to be jumped, it must, in fact, build towards something. What that "something" is needs to be defined beforehand, provide discipline to the selection process, and establish the standards by which the results are assessed. Rather than reviewing specific courses and asking which are of such

*intrinsic* value and canonical importance that they should be part of the shared learning experience of every student, one should instead require that the proposed courses be justified in essentially *instrumental* terms. How does the course achieve the ends we intend and how does it propose to demonstrate and assess those achievements? To do so, the ends or objectives of the curriculum must already be in place.

## **Lesson 2: Rely on the Mission**

Efforts to revise the core are infamous undertakings in higher education. They are said to bring out the worst in the professoriate. Although one would be naïve to think that the protection of "turf" and petty institutional politics do not come into play, I believe that the difficult, time-consuming, and frustrating character of the process is due primarily to the serious, and in some sense fundamental, nature of the issues involved. For example, if one accepts that a Jesuit education seeks the betterment of the whole person, then our educational programs necessarily imply a certain understanding of the human good. The highly contested nature of our understanding of the human good — including debates as to whether such a reality even exists or, if it does, whether it can be known — all but guarantees a complicated discussion.

Inasmuch as the proper understanding of the human condition constitutes a perennial question of Western philosophy, it is unlikely that a compelling answer will be found within the context of an institution's curricular debate. How, then, can one achieve a working consensus about this and other issues of substance which will allow the process to continue? One way, I believe, is to move the conversation away from the realm of the metaphysical and towards the university's mission statement. These statements, if properly crafted, can provide direction and focus regarding how the traditions of a particular institution have elicited and sustained its understanding of the human good. In the end decisions regarding the core will be based upon assumptions — assumptions that can be justified pragmatically vis-à-vis the mission of the university rather than as hypotheses that are tested by an exercise in objective reasoning. Grounding "ultimate arguments" in the specifics of a particular mission statement may not satisfy the pure demands of the intellect, but it is sufficient for creating the core. These shared assumptions, informed by the mission statement can provide both the context and the discipline needed for a successful revision of the core.

## **Lesson 3: Think locally**

The debate over the core is further complicated by the variety of attractive models available for our consideration. Included among these are:

1. Should the curriculum emphasize specific content,

e.g. the “great books” or should it focus upon the development of critical analytical skills and the mastery of methodologies?

2. Within those curricula which do emphasize content how much weight should be given to the achievements of Western civilization and how much to the riches of a more multicultural, pluralistic, and global perspective ?
3. Should the core curriculum build upon the established disciplines, or should it focus upon interdisciplinary attempts to deal with themes and problems which transcend any single field?
4. Should the core offer a limited number of common courses taken by all students, or should it provide an elective menu of offerings which addresses a wide variety of topics within selected areas?

Given the legitimate alternatives, how does one decide? *The answer, I believe, is to think locally.* One should not attempt to create *the* core for some generalized or abstract “student body” at some “ideal” university. Rather the question should be “Given our students, their levels of academic preparation, and their socio, economic and demographic profiles, what curriculum is the most appropriate for them?”

I believe the answer would be different for an urban school whose students are economically and socially diverse, less well prepared academically, and likely to be among the first from their families to attend college than it would be for a residential school with a more homogeneous, advantaged, and established student body. For example, a meaningful Theology core for a school where 92 percent of its students are Catholic/Christian would most likely be different from one at a school where the corresponding number is 46 percent.

Just as our students differ from one another so too do our faculties. A university faculty that is expected to support a large number of Ph.D and advanced professional programs and at the same time is responsible for securing external research support differs from a faculty that is focused primarily on undergraduate education. Depending upon the nature of the programs they are expected to serve faculties at different institutions have differing sets of responsibilities, expectations, and working conditions. To develop a core curriculum without acknowledging the special character of the faculty, which is responsible for offering it, is to base a program upon an abstraction. Thus just as an institution must consider whom it is teaching so too must it consider who are its teachers. The “right core” depends to some extent upon the particular gifts, strengths, and character of the faculty who will deliver it. ■

*James L. Wisner is the former provost of the University of San Francisco.*

# FROM PLATO TO THE SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS

**One-dimensional justice is not good enough.**

**Robert M. Senkewicz**

I had the privilege of serving as director of the core curriculum at Santa Clara University for eight years. During that period, our core consisted of thirteen required areas. Some of them, such as composition and rhetoric, western culture, ethics, and religious studies, were relatively traditional. Others, such as world cultures and societies, reflected the broadening of global perspective which has occurred in American universities over the past few decades. Still others, such as technology and society, owed their existence to our location in Silicon Valley.

As its designers realized from the beginning, this core was far from perfect. It was replaced at the beginning of this academic year by another set of core requirements, which attempt to offer students a more interdisciplinary perspective, and whose design, both for better and for worse, reflects the current emphasis upon student outcomes and assessment. But my experience with what we now call our “old” core suggests to me some thoughts which I think might have some validity for existing and new cores as well.

## **1. Trust the Faculty**

One of the most impressive aspects I witnessed was the enthusiasm and creativity of our faculty in embracing the core and in experimenting how various core requirements might creatively intersect with their own disciplines. By the conclusion of my term as director, over 300 faculty were teaching almost 800 distinct courses which satisfied one or other of our core requirements. Faculty enthusiasm to develop new courses which might satisfy the core was uniformly high and the results were often unexpected and impressive. I occasionally wondered, for instance, what was contained in one of our courses, entitled “The Joy of Garbage,” which satisfied a natural science requirement, but I consistently heard from students that it was a demanding and rigorous, as well as joyful, experience. Also, a good number of faculty in the profes-



sional schools, business and engineering, reworked their courses so that they could become consonant with the core expectations. Our faculty development office made all of this much easier by offering a series of course development grants to interested faculty.

Of course, not all of this was selfless and disinterested commitment to general education. Some faculty participated in the core so that they could increase their student enrollments, a task sometimes imposed upon unwilling faculty by departmental chairs. Yet my overall sense was of widespread faculty willingness to participate in the core enterprise. Most faculty subscribe to our teaching mission, and conceive of their own scholarship, which is often extensive, as something which complements and enhances their teaching.

Like most undergraduate institutions we have a handful of colleagues who are by turns baffled and resentful that Stanford or Berkeley has not tried to recruit them away from us. But most of our faculty enjoy being teachers and scholars, and they believe that imaginative teaching and scholarship in their own disciplines can contribute to the university's mission, as that mission is articulated in our core curriculum. Acknowledging and nourishing that desire on the part of the faculty as a whole needs to be a central priority for academic and core curriculum administrators.

## 2. Trust the students

In the current economy, students can hardly be blamed for having a greater career orientation, and faculty or administrators who bemoan that orientation are not making a positive contribution to student development. Students also realize that most of them are not going to have just one career. They are acutely aware that they are going to change careers, willingly or unwillingly, many times during their lives. They are also aware that careers cannot be simply changed like clothing, but that career choices are intimately related to the kinds of persons they are and will become.

This awareness can make them more open to the insights and perspectives embodied in the variety of disciplines which constitute our core curricula. I have found that business students, for example, are much more interested in second language acquisition and in the cultural traditions of other areas of the globe than were their predecessors two decades ago. Natural science students no longer believe that all scientific discoveries represent progress and advancement, and they are urgently interested in rooting their professional lives in a system of ethics and values.

In many students these tendencies might be only faintly visible. But they are present, and they provide a significant invitation for the traditional disciplines of the core to help shape the vocational aspirations of those will become our graduates.

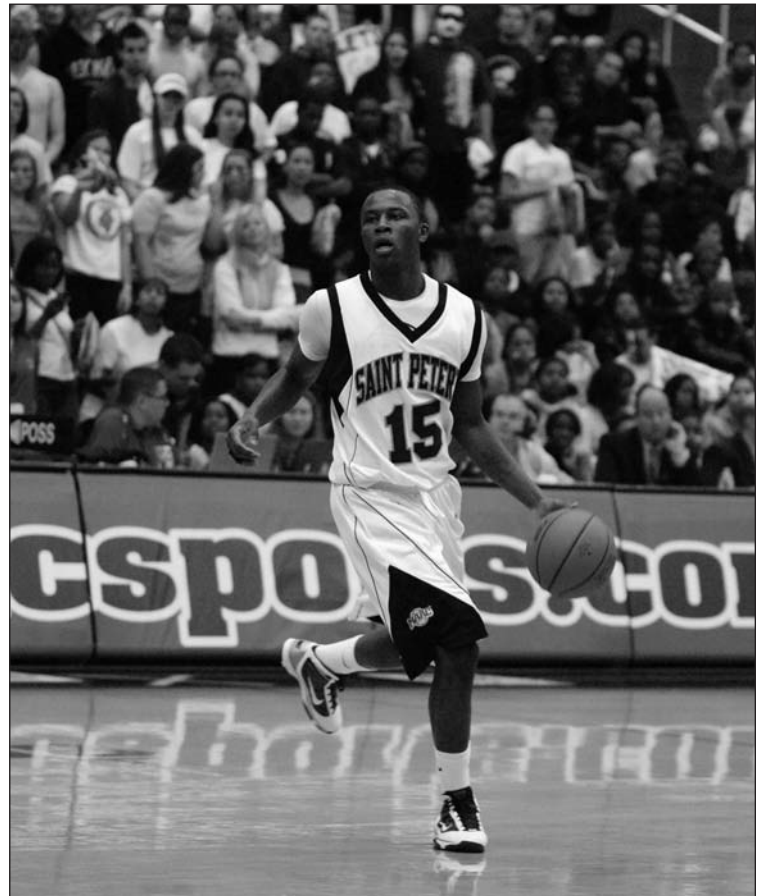
## 3. Biblical justice is a necessary but not sufficient principle of curricular integration

On our campus, and I suspect on other Jesuit and Catholic campuses, "justice" has become the de facto unifying principle of our undergraduate curriculum. Our own particular mantras tend to revolve around what we call the "three Cs"—conscience, competence, and compassion—which have basically become three synonyms for justice. The word justice itself has come to have a specific meaning. It

tends to be used in a biblical sense. It connotes social justice in the prophetic tradition, the denunciation of privilege which enriches some at the expense of others, and the care for the marginalized.

Since prophetic justice tends to emphasize immediacy and confrontation (the prophet denouncing the monarch or "speaking the truth to power"), it has naturally sparked a

*I occasionally wondered, for instance, what was contained in one of our courses, entitled "The Joy of Garbage."*



Saint Peter's College

host of experiential learning exercises, social justice activities, and immersion trips. These activities have become the normative high points of our students' educational experiences and the essential element of the

*The notion of justice in the curriculum has become a bit one-dimensional*

university's presentation of how we fulfill our mission. An unfortunate narrowness can sometimes appear, as over-zealous faculty or

unimaginative administrators occasionally argue that only courses which explicitly aim to inculcate this particular fashion of conceptualizing justice ought to count for the core.

Many of our graduates can say that they are deeply committed to justice while at the same time they are unaware of the profound reflections on the meaning of that term found in Plato's *Republic*. Few will have grappled with Aquinas or Mill, tried to come to grips with the choices in Toni Morison's *Beloved*, or engaged in the contemporary debates. The notion of justice on campus and in the curriculum has become a bit one-dimensional, and focused more on righting wrongs through protest rather than looking critically at the complicated preconditions for

a more just social order. Graduates of such an approach can turn out to be as earnest as they are uninformed.

This manner of foregrounding justice can then function as the default least-common-denominator in discussions about faith and belief: whatever God we believe in, or don't believe in, we can all agree that justice demands that the School of the Americas ought to be closed! But this short-circuits the original insight which the Jesuits developed when they started talking about justice decades ago. They spoke of "the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement." The notion was that a Jesuit could not understand faith without justice. But the converse was also present, that justice could not be understood without faith.

So faith needs to rejoin an expanded notion of justice in the curriculum. I mean faith in the broad sense of belief, and of reflection upon belief, as Anselm wrote, "I believe in order to understand." The potentially destructive implications of unreflective belief are tragically obvious in aspects of most of the world's religions today. Explicitly joining reflection upon belief to reflection upon justice in the undergraduate curriculum might well make that curriculum much more relevant to what seems to be facing us in the 21st century.

The core curriculum is the place where a college or university's deepest values are expressed. My own experience with one core helped me understand that justice in the biblical and prophetic sense is one of those deep values. But if it is not to become simply a set of slogans, it needs to be nursed by other equally deep values. These include trust in the faculty and in their disciplines, trust in the experiences and journeys of the students, and the willingness among all members of the community openly to reflect upon our own deepest beliefs. ■

*Robert M. Senkewicz is professor of history at Santa Clara University.*



Xavier University.

# TAKING THE HIGH ROAD

**Richard H. Passon**

In addressing the question — what have I learned from working with the core — I’ve chosen to focus on the process of the revision of the core curriculum (some folks call it “reform”). In my forty-five years in higher education I’ve worked at three Jesuit universities: the University of Scranton, Creighton University, and Saint Joseph’s University. And I’ve been involved in a variety of ways with the core revision process four times—twice at Scranton and once each at Creighton and Saint Joseph’s.

My role in curriculum revision was a bit different each of these times. In my early years at Scranton, for example, I was the faculty chair of a committee charged with rewriting a general education curriculum that had not been changed for many years. At Creighton, where I was dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, I initiated a faculty review of the core and ultimately accepted the results of a faculty deliberation.

At Saint Joseph’s, where I was the VPAA, I worked with the dean of arts and sciences in an attempt to promote a review and revision of what was called the GER (general education requirement) — a venerable and much revered institution of “the College.” We were largely unsuccessful in my view, through a few small changes were made. Back at Scranton, in the position of provost, I reminded the faculty senate that we had made a commitment at the last Middle States self-study to revise the general education curriculum, which was fundamentally the same structure installed by the committee I’d chaired in 1970. I then watched several faculty groups attempt to complete the job, with a fair amount of hassle with the faculty union. After the unsuccessful faculty vote, after which faculty leaders threw up their hands and asked not to be involved further, I attempted to rescue the process with the help of the deans and departmental chairs. The faculty senate—and then the board of trustees—ultimately approved a slightly revised version of the faculty effort.

What conclusions do these various—and varied—experiences suggest? First, I’m tempted to say that one should never expect to revise the core unscathed. I’ll say, instead, that the most significant thing I’ve learned is that revising the core is a complex and difficult process.

It is difficult to do well — indeed, difficult to do at all—because the process inevitably becomes politicized. Rather than being an opportunity for a university to clarify what it wants its students to learn, GE revision very frequently becomes a turf battle about gaining—or, especially losing—courses.

It’s easy to see why such a problem almost always occurs. Faculty members are, quite rightly, concerned about keeping their jobs and growing and developing their departments. Many departments have a large stake in core requirements. The prospect that a requirement might be reduced—or dwindled into a mere distribution—can seem to strike at a fundamental area of faculty self-interest.

Of course faculty folks, when they’re deliberating core modifications, don’t say that their self-interest is threatened. They say that academic values are at stake, that educational principles might be compromised, and that the institutional mission is threatened.

But have I learned anything positive about the core revision process at three Jesuit universities in forty-five years? Perhaps. Now that I’m an emeritus professor I’m reminded of something from my days as a relatively young faculty curriculum reformer. The key to doing a good job is to unleash the creative energies of the community and to engage faculty folks on the high road. And the only way to do that successfully is somehow to alleviate fears, which means achieving the proper focus.

The way to take the core out of the realm of turf warfare is start the process with the correct focus, by reminding those involved that a core is a way for a present faculty to express present beliefs about what present students should learn so that the University’s mission can be appropriately fulfilled *in the present*. That means that you’d don’t start by flogging the old general education requirement. You begin by re-imagining what the University should be about academically—now and into the future. That also means that faculty get to reinvent their stake in a new core.

So, does this mean that revising the core can be stimulating, creative, and interesting—in short, fun—rather than bruising and debilitating. Yes, it does. Too often, in the past, it hasn’t been fun. But, then, we are people of faith.

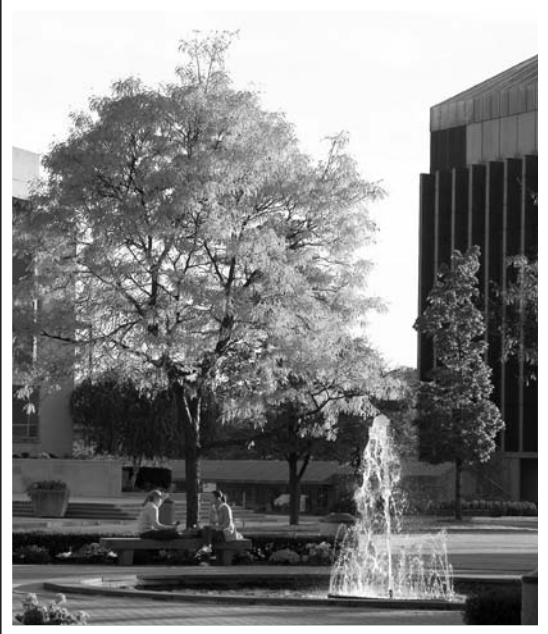
By the way, ask me some time about what all this has to do with educational objectives and—groan—assessment. ■

*Richard H. Passon is professor emeritus at the University of Scranton.*

*Anything positive?*



# UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT MERCY



# Swallowing the “interdisciplinary pill”

## Integrating the Fairfield Core: *Reflections on a Work in Progress*

By Suzanna Klaf, Laurence Miners, and Kathryn Nantz

[The Ignatian pedagogical paradigm has three elements: experience, reflection, and action. For the process to be successful, it must include a pre-learning element, that of context, and a post-learning

In 2005, under the leadership of a new President, Jeffrey von Arx, S.J., faculty at Fairfield University were asked to consider “integrating” the core curriculum, both horizontally and vertically. President von Arx encouraged faculty to make more intentional connections between core courses, and between courses taken to satisfy core requirements and other courses in majors, minors, and curriculum areas. Now in the fourth year of this project, Fairfield has created some cultural change among faculty and students around this idea of integrative teaching and learning.

In this article, we would like to share some of our most important lessons learned as we have helped to lead this initiative on our campus. Our model follows the Ignatian paradigm\*, allowing us to see this pedagogy itself as very intentionally integrative.

### **Context: Listening to campus voices**

Our first task was to hear from people across campus, and to listen carefully to their concerns. In

brown bag lunch sessions with faculty, we heard things like, “The core should provide students with a common experience on which we can build,” and “I need to know more about what faculty teach in their core courses so that I can make connections with my material.” In focus groups with students, we heard, “I love my core courses because I get to meet students from lots of other majors,” “I don’t know why my core courses can’t relate more closely to my major,” and “I don’t think it is fair for core courses to be harder than my major courses.” These comments indicated that faculty and students alike were yearning for the intentional connective tissue that would make core courses more meaningful learning experiences.

Fairfield’s undergraduate core is comprised of 60 credits (half of the credits earned by a typical Fairfield student) distributed across five areas: mathematics and natural science; history and social and behavioral sciences; philosophy, religious studies, and applied ethics; modern and Classical languages; and English and visual and performing arts. Additionally, there are two diversity requirements, a world diversity course and an American diversity course. Though some faculty and students would like to see this pared down, the focus of our discussions was not on debating the number of requirements or changing to a skills or competency-based set of requirements but rather on changing the thinking around the core by working together to highlight its cohesiveness.

## **Experience: What might integrative teaching and learning look like at Fairfield?**

The central goals of our core integration initiative are to: (a) create coherence within the core curriculum, both horizontally across disciplines and vertically in relation to the major, through mutual effort of faculty and students; (b) help students understand the impact of the core on their overall education; (c) create structures to foster discussion of the spirit and specifics of the core among faculty; and (d) develop a system for coordination and regular assessment of the core.

Faculty at Fairfield had already swallowed the “interdisciplinary” pill. There is a wide variety of interdisciplinary courses that students can use to construct minors, such as women’s studies, Latin American and Caribbean studies, and environmental studies. However, the idea of integration was new to most people, and asked them to reconsider the ways that students can engage in the construction of knowledge, not just the receipt and use of it. As described by Mary Huber and Pat Hutchings, “Significant knowledge within individual disciplines serves as the foundation, but integrative learning goes *beyond academic boundaries*. Indeed, integrative experiences often occur as learners address real-world problems, offering multiple solutions and benefiting from multiple perspectives.” (AACU/Carnegie Foundation Joint Statement on Integrative Learning) Core integration was also aligned at Fairfield with a living and learning initiative. This meant that students could be making connections between all parts of their college experiences — in the classroom, at service learning sites, during internships or study abroad semesters, while working with faculty on research — the opportunities to knit together different strands of interest and engagement are endless.

## **Action: Designing faculty development and student learning opportunities**

Faculty development for integrative teaching was grounded in a “learning communities” model. Our Faculty and Professional Learning Communities (FPLCs) are groups of faculty and staff who work together for an academic year on projects that promote integrative thinking. For example, one FPLC worked on development of an integrative minor program on the environment that incorporated academic and co-curricular components. Another is currently developing a series of video segments that interrogate students’ notions of and experiences with diversity on campus. Though each

community is organized around a different theme, all are asked to develop strategies that help students to make connections across disciplines, methods, and skills.

Course “clusters” were used to provide students with opportunities to see faculty working together to make connections around a theme. A cluster is a pair of courses that share the same students; faculty work together to make intentional and explicit linkages. This allows faculty to model the habits of mind that are required to do this work. Students see faculty engaging one another across disciplinary lines, using common language and exploring questions from different perspectives.

Course “couples” in the science disciplines work on the same model, but highlight two science disciplines; these teams of faculty use backward course design (see Fink, *Creating Significant Learning Experiences*) to align their course goals and learning objectives, and then create a series of integrative activities and assignments that help students to achieve those goals. Though not all students have the opportunity to enroll in a cluster, many of those who do report that they lead to other interdisciplinary work in minors, majors, capstone courses, etc.

This summer we will conduct two Summer Institutes on Integrative Learning. These three-day faculty workshops will provide colleagues with the opportunity to work in teams on particular projects related to teaching and learning; the workshops will be organized to promote integrative teaching and learning techniques. Just as we have to build integration as a habit of mind for students, so too for faculty. Currently, seventy-five faculty are enrolled for our workshops. Planning is involving a variety of campus partners with a focus on living and learning, assessment, and reflection.

## **Reflection: Students making meaning**

An essential component of helping our students make their core experience more meaningful has been reflection, engaging students in thinking carefully about the meaning and value of the core, relationships across the knowledge gained from the core, and appreciation of the core’s implications for their intellectual growth. Some of this happens in individual courses, where students are provided with writing prompts that engage these questions. Other reflective writing has been assigned as part of our First Year Experience program, and so has involved both residence advisors and community associates in the residence halls.

For several years, we have asked graduating seniors to write notes to incoming freshmen, completing the following statement: “Dear Incoming Freshman Student, Let me tell you a few things about Fairfield University’s core curriculum...” Though the responses to this prompt are



Wheeling Jesuit University.

varied, one student said, “Another really interesting aspect of the core curriculum is the fact that it pops up everywhere! I have felt a lot more prepared in some of my classes for my major because of philosophy and religion classes that I have taken for the core.” Another writes, “I should probably tell you that the core is actually what led me to choose my major. I took a ‘cluster’ course my freshman [year]; the cluster was a macroeconomics course, linked with an introduction to politics course. I took them to fulfill my social science core, and the ironically ended up being the first prerequisites for an international studies major...It is safe to say that the core gave me an advantage, and led me to a discipline that I love, but which I may not have ever considered.” These reflections on their intellectual journeys during college are important opportunities for students to consider their own progress and development as learners.

Building on these efforts, Fairfield is planning to implement an ePortfolio system as a tool to help our students reflect on their learning and make connections. Such a tool would allow our students to move beyond

knowledge to action. Students are encouraged to personalize and integrate their learning.

### **Evaluation: What have we accomplished?**

Making progress on this initiative required top-down empowerment of faculty and the academic and student services divisions, cross-campus collaborations, strategically drawing on campus resources.

Pursuit of core integration is intended to help students move beyond compartmentalization of their learning. Ignatian pedagogy has been instrumental to this end. At Fairfield, we are working to create a context in which integrative thinking and learning take place. ■

Professors Suzanna Klaf, Laurence Miners, and Kathryn Nantz are members of the Center for Academic Excellence, Fairfield University.

# NOT WHAT, BUT HOW

By Kelly Younger

What distinguishes a Jesuit core curriculum from a core at public, secular-private, or non-Catholic religious universities? We purport to “educate the whole person” but isn’t that true of all curricula whose aim is fostering well-rounded individuals? The difference in a Jesuit core may lie not in *what* we teach, but *how* we teach it.

Let me offer an example. At a recent international conference, I orchestrated a syllabus exchange for professors of introduction to drama courses. The diverse participants from a variety of institutions discovered we all mostly teach “the same stuff” regardless of our affiliations, traditions, or missions. Almost everyone was comforted that we taught mostly the same plays in the same order. I, however, was disconcerted, since I believe the core curriculum at a Jesuit institution should be differentiated from others. But how?

I decided to reform my core class by rediscovering the links to our Jesuit mission. I reorganized, restructured, and rearranged the content; but, as many of us who teach introductory courses do, I agonized over what I *should* teach (i.e., breadth) and what I *would* teach (i.e., depth) if given time. Yet nothing I did to the content resonated with our Jesuit tradition. That is when my own Jesuit education and understanding of the Spiritual Exercises reminded me that it is not always about the answer, but the question. I stopped making a list of plays undergraduates should read, and started making a list of questions undergraduates would ask about themselves, each other, and the larger world if given the chance: *Who am I? Whose am I? Why am I here? Who is God? What really matters? What does the world need? How ought we to live?*

I looked at my existing syllabus and highlighted the plays I thought would engage with each question. For example, I placed Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* and Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* under the question *Who am I?* Strindberg’s *Miss Julie* and Caryl Churchill’s *Cloud 9* fell under *Whose am I?* Margaret Edson’s *Wit* and Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* engage with *What really matters?* while Bertolt Brecht’s *The Good Woman of Setzuan* challenges *What does the world need?*

Never before had I considered teaching some of these titles in tandem, nor in this order, yet all the titles from my original syllabus remained. I managed to preserve the breadth while enriching the depth. In other words, this course now distinguished itself from the others not because it was formulated around content, but because it was founded upon the context of Jesuit inquiry.

That is when I realized this model could potentially apply to an entire core curriculum, regardless of discipline. As an exercise, I asked forty colleagues from around the university to incorporate these questions into an existing syllabus. For *Who am I?* a biologist would teach genetics, a philosopher Augustine’s *Confessions*, a computer scientist artificial intelligence. For *Whose am I?* a mathematician would turn to voting theory, a dance professor would study Kurt Jooss. For *Why am I here?* a theologian would assign “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” while an art historian would examine Susan Sontag’s *On Photography*. The list goes on and grows as more participate, each from faculty who changed nothing of their content, but reformed their core syllabus under this common context.

This model could potentially redesign a core curriculum around these or other questions while upholding academic freedom. Moreover, faculty could collaborate a great deal, or not at all, because everyone would be engaging with these common themes regardless of section, department, or college. Students would continue to pick their own course, but now there would be a clear link between offerings that once appeared as hodgepodge and “something to get out of the way.”

A Jesuit core curriculum should be distinct from any other in its promotion of identity, community, meaning, spirituality, purpose, passion, and social responsibility. Rather than just providing our students with these answers, we can lead them there with common questions.

All we have to do is ask. ■

*Kelly Younger is a playwright and associate professor of English at Loyola Marymount University. He has plays opening this year in Boston and New York.*



# An Apple Is Not A Tomato

By Kaellen Hessel

**T**he core of common studies is the reason I'm attending a Jesuit university.

I remember sitting with my mother at our computer, researching schools and trying to find the one that screamed Kaellen. After following numerous dead ends, my mother – who graduated from Creighton University – told me about how all Jesuit schools required students to take core classes from many different disciplines. At that point, I thought I wanted to study film but I wasn't dead set on the idea. A strong liberal arts background sounded like a good back-up plan.

A quick Google search later, we found Marquette University.

The core of common studies is something that I continue to hold dear, no matter how dorky that might sound. I've always wanted to learn a little bit about everything. It seems the core was made for me. What could be better than having the opportunity to learn about everything under the sun built into my schedule?

*Cura personalis* is the goal of many of my fellow students and me. We're still trying to figure out who we are and who God is calling us to be. In order to do that, we need to explore all our options. A Jesuit education isn't just about making us marketable for life after college, it's about making us whole and complete people, fully in touch with ourselves, our communities and our creator.

## *But what about art?*

Nevertheless, one thing the core curriculum fails to do is nurture students' creative sides. Creativity is essential to humankind, making life more enjoyable and beautiful. It's what makes the world interesting and exciting. When creativity exists life is wonderfully unpredictable and surprising. Art captures the beauty of God's creation and forces its viewers to look at the world in a way they hadn't before.

I'm told that art is important to Jesuits as they try to find God in all things, but I haven't seen this on Marquette's campus. It certainly isn't part of the curriculum here and I fear the same is true at other Jesuit institutions.

Universities don't want their graduates to become poor, starving artists when they could become CEO's or politicians. Graduates with thousands of dollars in debt and few job prospects don't look good to prospective students, so the arts get cut out of the budget.

The most common mistake people make when drawing a still-life is drawing what they think they see, instead of reality. An apple may look red at first glance but upon further study, it's fire engine red, scarlet and pink with white specks throughout and hints of yellow and green near the stem.

When trying to get every little detail correct, students are forced to scrutinize something they eat daily without really looking at. They realize the world isn't as simple as it seemed.



When the work is complete, they also experience a sense of pride for not only the wonderful drawing they have created but the fact they were actually able to do it. Art is difficult, especially for those who don't think of themselves as artists. It takes patience, precision, focus and attention to detail. It even teaches artists how to overcome difficulties and persevere. There's nothing more frustrating than spending hours drawing an apple and having it look more like a tomato.

Art teaches students to put aside what they think they see when they look at the world, and focus on what's really going on. It also proves misconceptions wrong. Students who originally thought they weren't blessed with a creativity gene would realize that with practice they too could create beauty. Lessons like these can be applied to life out of the studio.

In Pope John Paul II's letter to artists, he writes that not everyone is called to be an artist, but that God has entrusted men and women with "crafting their own life," making it a "work of art, a masterpiece." Although art may not be the vocation of many students, it is still part of their calling.

If as Christians we are supposed to strive to be more like God, shouldn't we also embrace his creative side? ■

*Kaellen Hessel is a recent graduate of Marquette University.*

# How Do We Know If We Are Doing Well?

## The Challenges of Core Curriculum Assessment *What Some Schools Are Doing*

By Margaret Davis

**W**hen *Conversations* last featured the core curriculum as its subject in 1999, Richard Passon, professor Emeritus at the University of Scranton, reported how his survey of Jesuit institutions had found “few universities with well developed and elaborated schemes of assessment.” He ended his article “What We’re Doing” with this question: “How will we assess our general education curricula to assure the kind of mission centeredness to which we all aspire?”

Writing in this issue eleven years later, (“What I Learned from Working with the Core”), Passon ends with this statement: “By the way, ask me some time about what [core revision] has to do with educational objectives and—groan—assessment.” It appears that the thorny issue of core assessment remains on the table.

But now we must do more than groan because assessment of student learning is a process whose time has come. Our accrediting agencies are demanding that we show value added in our educational process. And while accreditation and accountability are desirable, even necessary, educators have a better reason for forging ahead with this task. We recognize that only by examining students’ work at the program and institutional levels can we know whether they have gained the skills, knowledge, and values that we think we are teaching them.

The task has not grown easier in eleven years, however. One habitual challenge, according to George Sims, provost of Spring Hill College, is

decentralized governance of the core; core courses themselves usually belong to disciplines or departments, and this “dual ownership can create confusion about what needs to be assessed, what criteria to use, and who is responsible for the results.” Our Jesuit institutions, however, face some challenges that may be peculiar to our mission. Our schools tend to have larger core curricula than state institutions. Moreover, we are further interested in the assessment of values embedded in our educational mission, of evidence that students have learned to link faith, reason, and justice. Efficiency in mathematics can be determined by a paper and pencil test, but how does one know when students “take responsibility for [their] gifts and talents and help build up the gifts and talents of others”? (Rockhurst University core value)

Assessment should help us answer that question. Effective assessment must begin with clearly stated learning outcomes. James Wisner, in this issue of *Conversations*, relates his experience with three attempts at core revision and calls this step the most difficult but also the most crucial.

For Jesuit institutions, a productive way of establishing broad learning outcomes is to tie them to the college mission. Seattle University’s clearly articulated core learning outcomes provides a

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*Evidence that they  
have learned to link faith,  
reason, and justice*

model. Its college mission follows the 450 year old Jesuit tradition of educational excellence in “helping students develop into empowered leaders for a better world.” Seattle describes its core curriculum as “courses designed to form a coherent and developmental educational experience that helps students develop as whole persons, think deeply about the world and their place in it, and find and apply the special talents they have to share with the world to make it a better place.”

One of the university learning outcomes is this: “to assess [students’] own levels of commitment to community service and to a just world.” The corresponding core learning outcome calls each student “To articulate one’s vision of social and environmental justice, to assess one’s own personal commitment to justice, and to demonstrate actions taken to ameliorate injustice or to promote a better world.” This engagement between core goals and mission provides a coherent base for going forward.

After learning outcomes are in place, the challenge continues. Faculty leaders determine how to implement two general methods of assessment: micro-evaluation embedded in each course taught in the core, and macro-program evaluation from outside the course. Both micro and macro assessments take many forms. Indirect evaluation takes place through student and alumni surveys, interviews, observation, and reflective essays.

**T**o gain authentic information about student learning, however, institutions also need direct assessment. A number use standardized tests to measure quantitative learning. Student portfolios measure individual learning over time. Case studies allow students to respond to real-life moral and ethical situations. Rubrics administered at the course and program level are widespread (the AAC&U recently published its fifteen VALUE rubrics for the learning



Santa Clara University.

outcomes it considers essential and asks institutions to revise them for local use). Writing evaluations, especially those that measure pre-and post learning, continue to give reliable measurements. And capstone courses that measure many learning outcomes at once are proving to be one of the best venues for assessment of qualitative learning.

## What Rockhurst does

Much has been written about assessment strategies, but research yields little information about effective assessment of the kinds of values inherent in Jesuit education. Our institutions are grappling with this challenge, and a number report various successful programs. All institutions take part in some form of surveys, recognized as a valid means of indirect measurement. Rockhurst University has found a way to use these measures in assessing values. It clusters National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and Student Satisfactory Inventory (SSI) questions around the university mission, Jesuit core values, and university learning themes. In addition to this clustering, Rockhurst grafts questions pertinent to its mission onto its standardized test. For example, to measure evidence of attitudes and behaviors that support the university mission, the university adds to NSSE, “To what extent has your experience at Rockhurst contributed to your knowledge, skills, & personal development in understanding the Jesuit principle of being ‘men and women for others?’” To

## *You don't need a perfect tool.*

measure the core value of "Finding God in All Things" it adds to NSSE, "In your Rockhurst experience during the current school year, how often have you had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own?" The school's mission and ministry committee annually reviews freshman and senior responses to these instruments to gain information about changes in student attitudes and practices.

### **Creighton**

Eileen Burke-Sullivan, associate professor of theology and associate director of spirituality programs at Creighton University, makes novel use of the case study as a means of assessment. In this program, a real life situation poses an ethical problem, and students are asked to respond from various points of view. For example, a case study on sacraments poses the situation of non-practicing parents who bring their infant for Catholic baptism only at the insistence of the grandparents. Students explain the theological implications involved and respond to this event from the point of view of priest, parent, and grandparent. This assignment calls for knowledge of content as well as expression of an attitude toward the proposed situation, while providing students a context within which to understand and claim their values.

### **Spring Hill**

Several schools report instituting pilot programs. Rubrics, in particular, once tested and refined, are especially helpful in measuring degrees of achievement toward a standard. Spring Hill College plans to pilot the use of rubrics in assessing student learning from its required course in cultural diversity. Instructors of all the courses in various disciplines with a "D" designation will work together to adapt the rubric for *Intercultural Knowledge and Competence* published by the AAC&U VALUE project. This rubric measures student levels of achievement in knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Instructors then will write an assignment to be given to students in all the classes at the end of term, at which point a group of readers will evaluate a sample of the responses according to the rubric.

### **Boston College**

Boston College uses writing evaluations as the focus of its pilot program, comparing samples of essays from students in the freshman writing seminars with those of students in university capstone seminars. Both groups' essays are rated according to rubrics matching stated learning outcomes of the core in response to the same assignment: "Write a 3-4 page essay on the most important intellectual experience (book, course, lecture, conversation, etc.) you have had in the past year and why it was important to you." The university sees this as a guide in defining a comprehensive set of program goals for the general education curriculum.

### **Seattle**

Seattle University has also launched a program to evaluate sample essays from its 300-level ethics course to assess students' ability to engage in sophisticated ethical reasoning. In addition, the school will place reflective essay assignments dealing with social justice in several sections of its senior synthesis courses. It seems obvious that comparison of first- and fourth-year student essays from courses where students are grappling with issues of ethics and spirituality offer an ideal opportunity to assess values related to faith linked to reason.

Most of our Jesuit institutions are concerned about this issue of assessment of the core curriculum, and most are struggling to find ways to produce authentic data about student learning while they recognize that more needs to be done. No administrator seems fully confident that his/her institution's program is sufficient to demonstrate the transformative changes that the core presumes to effect. Joe Burns, associate vice provost at Boston College, however, gives this encouraging word: "You don't need a perfect tool. Have a tool that forces students to answer the right questions and develop rubrics to measure their answers." It sounds simple, but it's not easy. The 1986 document *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education* sets up its first premise for what our institutions intend: "Jesuit education is world affirming [in that] it assists in the total formation of each individual within the human community." Good assessment will help us to know how close we come to that ideal. ■



# UNIVERSITY OF SCRANTON



# IGNATIAN VALUES IN THE CORE CURRICULUM

## *Justice, Citizenship, and Reflection for a Globalizing World*

By Diane Jonte-Pace and Phyllis Brown

**A**s educators at Jesuit colleges and universities, we have high expectations for our core curricula. Not only should our curricula provide students with knowledge, skills, and values that will prepare them well for careers, for citizenship, and for ethical leadership; our curricula should also be deeply informed by Ignatian values, which will, in turn, inform our students' lives. As we periodically rethink our curricula to ensure that they meet these expectations, we must consider what curricular content will best prepare our students for our increasingly complex global world, and what pedagogies will most effectively help today's students achieve our learning goals.

In this essay we examine three major resources for revising the core curriculum in Jesuit universities, commenting on how each can contribute to an integrated Ignatian core, guiding us toward answers to our questions about content and pedagogy. Our rich Jesuit tradition is one of these resources. Two other important resources are contemporary publications about promoting citizenship in higher education and about supporting student learning through assessment.

### **I. Jesuit Education**

#### **The Constitutions**

We focus here on just two moments of particular innovation in the 450 year history of Jesuit education: 1554, the year of Ignatius' earliest formulations of an educational vision in the Constitutions of the

Society, and 2008, the year the Society of Jesus issued a new vision for Jesuit mission and education in General Congregation 35.

Although education was not part of Ignatius of Loyola's original vision for the Society of Jesus, the early Jesuits quickly became known as excellent and committed educators, creating schools and colleges for lay students and establishing centers at European universities for Jesuits and lay students to live in community. In 1554 Ignatius sketched a vision of education or *paideia* for these institutions, emphasizing socially relevant goals: education was to lead to moral goodness, a devotion to truth, and a disposition to act for the civic good. Ignatius identified the study of the humanities as the path to that goal: the content of this early Jesuit curriculum included the *trivium* (grammar, logic, and letters) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music), along with philosophy and science, fine arts, and theology. And he articulated a structure and order for the introduction of each component of the curriculum. Subjects were introduced in sequence, leading from the lesser to the more significant — culminating in theology, then seen as the queen of the sciences, the highest and most inclusive form of knowing.

If we can be forgiven a bit of anachronism, we might say that Ignatius' 1554 vision of *paideia* sketched out the first integrated Ignatian core curriculum. Its clear goals, its emphasis on the civic good, and its developmental pedagogical framework anticipate important later developments in higher education that continue to shape our understanding of best practices in the content and pedagogy of core curricula.

## General Congregation 35

The Jesuit statement of mission and identity issued in 2008, “The Decrees of General Congregation 35” (GC 35) articulate a vision for Ignatian works, focusing in particular on the education of the young. GC 35 urges Jesuits to focus their labors on universities and research institutes and to embrace an “an engagement that is long term...in the education of youth [and] in intellectual research” (2.13). The vision of pedagogy and content of GC 35 is activist, justice-oriented, and applied: “research results and advocacy [must] have effective practical benefits for society and the environment” (3.35); education must pursue active, collaborative experience; the focus must be on practical solutions to major social problems (6.9). The document urges a specific focus on globalization, technology, and environment. It emphasizes human responsibility for the future at the core of these concerns: globalization, technology, and environmental concerns have “challenged our traditional boundaries and enhanced our awareness that we bear a common responsibility for the welfare of the world and its development in a sustainable and life giving way” (2.20).

With its emphasis on global development and poverty, on the welfare of the world, GC 35 draws our attention to justice as an important theme for our curricula. Although not explicitly in the Constitutions, justice was nevertheless embedded in the fabric of the lives and practices of the Jesuits, who, from their earliest years, have been dedicated to helping the poor and the sick, not only in Europe but throughout the globe. GC 35 also issues a clear call for a pedagogy of engagement, urging that we “engage the world through careful analysis of context, in dialogue with experience, evaluated through reflection, for the sake of action, and with openness, always, to evaluation” (6.9). Thus, the emphasis in GC 35 on active engagement with issues related to justice and globalization is very much part of the long tradition of Jesuit education.



Statue of Saint Ignatius, University of Scranton.

The rich traditions of Jesuit education, therefore, demand an integrated core curriculum with global justice as a primary goal. An integrated Ignatian core curriculum should

- extend and deepen knowledge with the goal of comprehending the forces that have shaped the world we have inherited and the ways the world is interpreted and understood
- cultivate habits of mind and heart that allow positive contributions to a rapidly changing, complex, and

interdependent world

- foster engaged citizenship and refined self-knowledge in relation to others.

## II. National Discourses about Education and Civic Engagement

Though young compared to the Society of Jesus, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has been working to improve higher education since 1915. Identifying five areas of advancement fundamental to institutional purpose and educational practice in higher education, the AAC&U emphasizes:

- a guiding vision for liberal education
- inclusive excellence
- intentional and integrative learning
- civic, diversity, and global engagement
- authentic evidence.

The AAC&U guiding vision, “to prepare *all* college students for effective citizenship, personal growth, and professional success,” aligns well with GC 35’s emphasis on collaboration “in respectful dialogue and shared reflection, in labor alongside those similarly engaged who walk a different pathway” (6.15). The goal of engaged citizenship that permeates AAC&U’s research and publications on best educational practices can combine with the Jesuit emphasis on community understood in a global context. Advocating education for “personal and social responsibility for a world lived in common,” the AAC&U urges that curricula include civic, ethical, intercultural and global learning, and that pedagogies “create models for engaging diversity, democracy, interdependence, inequalities, and societal challenges” ([http://www.aacu.org/About/strategic\\_plan.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/About/strategic_plan.cfm)).

In 2007, building on this vision of education for citizenship for all students, AAC&U identified four learning outcomes essential to preparing students for twenty-first-century challenges:





- Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring (through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts).
- Intellectual and practical skills practiced across the curriculum through progressively more challenging problems and projects (including inquiry and analysis; critical and creative thinking; written and oral communication; quantitative literacy; information literacy; and teamwork and problem solving).
- Personal and social responsibility anchored in active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges (through civic knowledge and engagement, intercultural knowledge and competence; ethical reasoning and action; and skills for lifelong learning).
- Integrative and applied learning, demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems (through synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies).

The work AAC&U has done in articulating best practices in liberal education aligns well with the key components of the Ignatian tradition identified above, and provides an excellent framework for implementation of Jesuit ideas and ideals in Core curricula.

### III. Assessment of Student Learning

Both AAC&U and the Jesuit tradition attend to a kind of reflection that is fundamental to teaching, learning and assessment. AAC&U advocates assessment practices that deepen and integrate student learning and provide authentic evidence of student achievement. And the Jesuit tradition supports an emphasis on learning-centered education that focuses on the student but, at the same time, emphasizes the responsibility of the instructor as the crucial intermediary in the learning process.

Assessment in the academic context involves supporting student learning through a cycle of articulating clear learning objectives, asking whether students have achieved those objectives, and making adjustments as needed. GC 35 echoes this attention to evaluation and assessment at several points, most notably in reference to an “openness to evaluation” that follows analysis, experience, and reflection. This openness to evaluation emerges from the Ignatian tradition of discernment, development of the inner life, and careful self reflection: openness to evaluation and discernment are not far from what we now call assessment. The *Spiritual Exercises* might, in fact, be considered an early precursor of an “assessment” exercise.

From this perspective, assessment is neither complex nor new. Most of us do it informally with every course we teach: we reflect on what worked; we make changes to better support student learning the next day or the next semester. The innovation lies in making this familiar informal assessment process more systematic, more public, and more explicit in its analysis of authentic evidence of student learning.

The research on assessment suggests – and our own experience confirms – that students benefit from metacognitive reflection on their own learning process, and that faculty benefit from authentic assessment that involves reflection on pedagogy and student learning. Authentic assessment asks questions that engage us as teachers and identifies measures of learning that can be evaluated without creating intolerable demands on our time. Authentic assessment is meaningful and manageable. Call it structured reflection or discernment or assessment – by whatever name, it enhances our teaching and learning and is a crucial component of the integrated Ignatian core curriculum.

### IV. Conclusion

These insights from the Jesuit tradition, the AAC&U tradition, and the assessment tradition suggest answers to our questions about the content and pedagogy in an integrated Ignatian Core. They point toward Core Curricula that emphasize justice and the civic good and that focus on globalization, technology, and environmental concerns. The three resources suggest a clear goal-oriented approach to student learning; a developmental pedagogy of increasingly complex learning opportunities, and assessment practices that provide time and opportunity for reflection on learning. They suggest a pedagogy of engagement marked by relational, collaborative, active learning.

As educators at Jesuit institutions, we can draw on the three resources identified here to develop integrated Ignatian core curricula that will, in the words of GC 35, “engage the world,” through “experience and analysis,” complemented by “reflection and action,” and always, with “openness to evaluation.” ■

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# FIVE MISSION-INSPIRED QUESTIONS TO GUIDE CORE RENEWAL

*Can a core curriculum work like the Spiritual Exercises?*

By Jennifer Grant Haworth and Christopher Skrable

Almost 500 years ago, St. Ignatius Loyola compiled a series of meditations which we know today as the Spiritual Exercises. Over the span of 20 years, the Basque warrior-turned-priest paid close attention to and reflected on his own experiences as a spiritual pilgrim and guide, recording his learnings in a little book he hoped would welcome others into what George Aschenbrenner, S.J., has described as “the truth and wise intimacy of a new life.” Today the Exercises are regarded as the foundational “curriculum” of the Society of Jesus, offering a distinctive way of proceeding that informs Ignatian spirituality and thus Jesuit education.

As education professionals who have been formed by and now accompany others through the Exercises, we have come to cherish the ways in which they—and those who serve as guides in them—welcome participants into both a **course of study** (the subject of which is the purpose and meaning of their life) and a **way of learning** (or exercising) that evokes their active participation. In this respect, the Exercises are analogous to and foundational for the core curricula of our Jesuit colleges and universities, where educators invite students to encounter knowledge in ways that promote engagement, commitment, and faith-doing-justice in service to humanity. A core curriculum, like the

Exercises, aims at the transformation of those who experience it.

In an era when more and more Jesuit institutions are rolling out new core curricula, what insights might the “curriculum that started it all” hold for us as we engage in the work of core development and reform? As we examined the Exercises, we were drawn to its introductory materials, which offer guidance to those who facilitate others’ journeys through it. In this essay, we identify five guiding questions inspired by these sources and explore the considerations they raise for “the core” at our Jesuit institutions.

**Question 1: How does the core curriculum reflect and foster the “end for which [our students] were created”?**

In the “Principle and Foundation” of his Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius clearly articulates the end for which God has created us: to be with God forever. He also identifies the gifts of love and freedom as the means by which we may obtain this end. According to David Fleming, S.J., the Exercises are intended to help retreatants develop freedom around their self-limiting visions so they may “come to know God more easily, make a return to God more readily,” and “choose what better leads to God’s deepening life” within their daily experience. The response to which retreatants are called



**Division V: Philosophy and Religious Studies**

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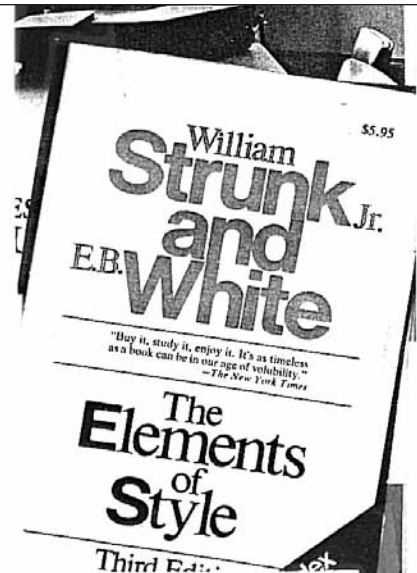
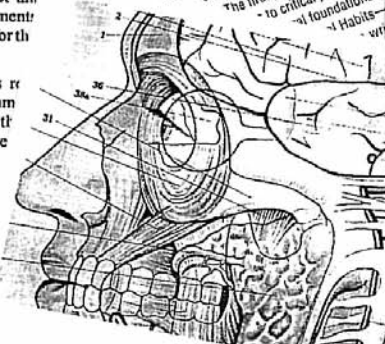
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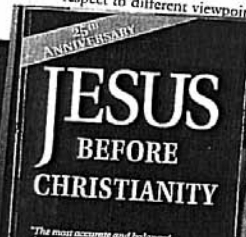
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expresses its Catholic character by including curriculum, by its liturgical life, by its and Christian morality, and by its ec

learning. Rockhurst University has gained who are committed to developing a deep understanding. discovering ways to share that understanding educational institutions. It is through excellent growth of the very best of what each student one of our students is a unique reflection of that student's gifts and potential the world with its students how to think. Students learn to appreciate new concepts and expand their respect to different viewpoints.



throughout the Exercises, therefore, involves far more than changing the way they think; it instead challenges them to act into a new way of being in the world that has the potential to transform their whole being—mind, heart, and will.

Like the Exercises, Jesuit education has a clear end in mind, and that end is also transformation. A Jesuit education invites students into a discerning community where they are free to explore their strengths and limitations, to identify and name their gifts and biases, and to act on their emerging callings to become “men and women for others.” At the same time, it challenges students to transcend their own narrow self-interests, exhorting them to consider how they might freely share the gifts of themselves and their education with others through committed lives of faith, knowledge, and service.

*Like the Exercises, Jesuit education has a clear end in mind, and that end is also transformation.*

The Principle and Foundation reminds us to begin with the “end in mind.” Rather than directing our attention to *what* should be included in the core or *who* should teach what content, this question urges us to focus on transformational education and its outcomes. This opens the door to ongoing dialogue about how the core can foster cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes in students; what kinds of curricular experiences might promote *metanoia* (a change of heart and mind) in students; and what specific learning outcomes might make sense in a core, given an institution’s particular social context, students, and mission. It encourages us to challenge our students to demonstrate not only content-based understanding, but also values-based and ethical understanding, thereby increasing emphasis on the importance of students’ articulation of the narratives of their own

learning as a complement to the marks that appear on their final transcripts. When we make a habit of asking, “How does the core reflect and foster the ‘end for which our students were created?’” we take a strong step toward ensuring that the resulting core curriculum will be congruent with our guiding Ignatian charism.

### **Question 2: How does the core place learners and their learning at the center of inquiry?**

In the first and second notes to the Exercises, Ignatius addresses the importance of “spiritual exercise” and the role directors play in facilitating it. Note 1 addresses exercise: retreatants are to participate in spiritual activities that will develop and tone their awareness of and desire to see, seek, and discover God’s purpose for their lives. In note 2, Ignatius counsels directors to keep their teaching “brief and to the point,” urging them instead to listen carefully to their retreatants, inviting elaboration and reflection on their experiences.

Simply put, these notes underscore that learners and their learning must be a primary consideration in the core. A growing number of educational scholars and national higher education professional associations have recently urged faculty and administrators to become more “learner-centered,” designing and facilitating curricular and co-curricular experiences that invite student engagement and ownership of their learning. Like Ignatius, these reformers grasp that transformational learning is fundamentally about students and the “laboring” they are invited to experience and that educators promote better learning when they see their role as designers and coaches creating rich contexts that encourage students to invest more fully and actively in themselves and their learning, as opposed to simply providing them with rich content for passive consumption.

### **Question 3: How does the core invite students into “deep learning” about themselves, others, and the world?**

Ignatius taught that personal discovery, reflection, and engagement are at the heart of a learning that transforms. While he believed learning could be facilitated through a guide, he understood that *real learning*—the kind which effects changes in the way we think, value, and behave—is a personal experience requiring critical reflection, engagement, and the construction of “felt knowledge.” In the second note to the Exercises, Ignatius tells directors “what fills and satisfies the soul consists, not in

knowing much, but in our understanding realities profoundly.” To foster this kind of “deep learning,” Ignatius reminds directors in notes 4 and 15 that the Exercises involve a dynamic relationship between the “prescribed” and the “experienced”: directors are to listen carefully for the “graces” retreatants are receiving, to recommend new reflections to help deepen the experience of those graces, and to move to the next set of meditations only after retreatants have sufficiently “savored” their experience.

This consideration invites an exploration of how core offerings welcome “deep learning” in students. Whether the core emphasizes breadth or depth, a key value must be integration. Students must be challenged to connect core ideas, skills, and values across their academic experience and relate them meaningfully to the realities of their own lives and the broader community. Only by deliberately and regularly engaging in this sort of reflective meaning-making—whether in class or in relation to other significant learning experiences—can learners move toward the transformative “felt experience” that Ignatius advocated.

Ignatius’ notes invite conversation about how the core is taught. If directors are expected to help facilitate “deep learning” how might educators who teach in the core similarly exercise this practice? In what ways could educators honor and facilitate student engagement with the material so that students begin to construct their own self-authored, critically reflective understandings? How might they “live the tension” between subject coverage and depth in ways that provide students with enough freedom to explore and savor whatever speaks deeply to their souls? Good education today displays an array of “engaged pedagogies”: problem-based learning, authentic encounters and dialogues with difference, student-directed research, service-learning, case studies, and field-based clinical applications. What role might these engaging pedagogies play in inviting students, in the words of Dean Brackley, S.J., “to consider both [the] factual knowledge and practical experience [that] stresses individual and communal reflection,” and how might we systematically and deliberately incorporate them into our core curricula?

### **Question 4: How does the core accommodate learners of various ages and life experiences?**

Ignatius repeatedly stresses that directors remain flexible, adjusting the retreat and its structures to accommodate persons of varying “age, education, and ability” (see note 18; also 4, 8, 9, 10, 17, and 19). This speaks to Ignatius’ belief that the “Creator

[deals] immediately with the creature” to effect personal transformation, and limits the role of the director to that of a third-party facilitator using the Exercises as a set of tools for supporting an already-existing relationship between God and the retreatant, rather than the omniscient administrator of a rigidly-defined “one-size-fits-all” program of spiritual growth.

Our contemporary reality confronts faculty, staff, and administrators with a similarly varied set of students. We are asked to provide meaningful, transformative educational opportunities to individuals who are diverse not only in their ages, but also in their educational backgrounds, life experiences, socioeconomic status, national origins, spiritual roots, and extra-curricular obligations. In this environment, Ignatius’ wisdom about flexibility and accommodation raises particularly important questions for our core curricula. For instance, how do we offer our core courses in formats and at times/locations that are accessible to students who work, have disabilities, are parents or veterans, or those who are part-time, distance-learning, or commuter students? How do our curricula respect and acknowledge the achievements of those who have fulfilled their general education requirements at other, less expensive institutions? Can we implement means for older, more experienced students to demonstrate their hard-won mastery of core skills, values, and content areas outside of traditional course-based assessment? And as an overriding consideration, how can we, as educators, best exercise “cura personalis” (care of the whole person) to provide developmentally appropriate, core experiences for *all* our students?

**Question 5: How does the core draw upon the wisdom of all those involved in students’ formation at every stage of their college experience?**

In notes 11 and 18, Ignatius reminds the director that all aspects of the retreatant’s development are important unto themselves. That is, the value of the Exercises is to be found, not in one’s arrival at any particular point in the retreat, but rather in each moment of the transformative journey *through* it. For this reason, Ignatius elsewhere offers additional considerations dealing with retreatant’s food, lodging, and leisure, all of which are constitutive elements of the experience of the retreat.

As our Jesuit schools have become more self-reflective through institutional and program-level assessment, we have become increasingly aware of the

ways that the entire college experience contributes to students’ learning. In reconsidering what learning experiences to include in a core curriculum, the insights of Ignatius and our own self-reflection prompt us to ask educators involved in civic engagement, service-learning, study abroad, living/learning centers, leadership development, academic advising, and campus ministry how they might more meaningfully contribute to transformative learning on our campuses. Engaging in this conversation helps us honor more fully the entirety of our students’ collegiate journeys—through the core and beyond.

In this essay, we have drawn upon the wisdom of “the curriculum that started it all,” seeking guidance for how our mission as Jesuit colleges and universities can meaningfully inform the development and revision of core curricula on our campuses. Ignatius invites those who follow the Exercises—and by extension, all those who enact Jesuit education—to a collaborative, open-ended, mission-inspired way of proceeding that seeks nothing less than our total transformation in grace, freedom, and love. Ignatius knew that such collaboration would itself occasion some challenges. Perhaps it was with these in mind that he chose to include a short “presupposition” at the end of his notes to directors. The first sentence of this final gentle word of advice bears repeating in full:

That both the giver and the maker of the Spiritual Exercises may be of greater help and benefit to each other, it should be presupposed that every good Christian ought to be more eager to put a good interpretation on a neighbor’s statement than to condemn it.

As 21st-century companions of Ignatius, may all of us take this supposition to heart as we work together to ask and answer the hard questions that our times, our students, and our mission of educating “women and men for others” demand of us. ■

*Students must be challenged to connect core ideas, skills, and values across their academic experience.*

*Jennifer Grant Haworth is associate professor of higher education and Christopher Skrable is service learning coordinator at Loyola University Chicago.*

# LIVING IN SILOS

## Jesuit Education as *Transformative*

By **Bridget Turner Kelly and Robert Kelly**

**T**hrough our lenses as faculty member and student affairs educator, we see students seeking a focus on values, relationships, and purpose. This manifests itself in packed evening church services on campus, immersion trips over spring break, and one-on-one conversations about coursework or student life that turn into discussions about grieving loved ones, remaining ethical in the face of peer-pressure and examining what it means to truly be a social justice advocate. We have also seen this on a larger scale with President Obama's message of hope and faith, which offers something larger and communal to believe in outside of one's self. This has inspired students to serve in church, grassroots organizations, and community service in greater numbers than we have seen in our lifetime.

This renewed focus has coincided with our own entry and reentry into Jesuit higher education. Being in a faith, mission and values-based institution reminded us of higher education's role in fostering students' need to search outside of themselves for purpose and meaning. Of course, Jesuit higher education does not hold a corner on the market of study abroad, Americorps, Vista volunteers or other visible ways students engage in meaning-making activities, but it is expected that Jesuit higher education will be doing all of this and more for students.

### **Transformative Education is Needed to Reach Today's Students**

More depth in student learning, the ability to lead and serve, a hunger for justice and service, leadership for

an extraordinary life, civic mindedness, and the recognition of God and the other. Sound familiar? These words embody the spirit of strategic plans and focus on students at our particular Jesuit higher education institution. We explore the context of today's world and identify five hungers of our students: for integrated knowledge, moral compass, civic participation, global paradigm, and adult spirituality.

But how do we as faculty and administrators make this happen?

Typically administrators do not include faculty in the programs and services that animate student life on campus. Faculty generally do not include student development professionals in conversations about learning outcomes and discussions on how students make sense of the campus and their lives.

We operate in our own silos. The problem is that students do not operate in silos. They see us as a university seeking to shape all of them in a holistic manner. We have a lot to learn from our students. We allow the structures of the university to keep faculty and administrators from working and growing together, and it is the students who suffer. Integrating the educational experiences of our students is not new to higher education, but it should be an area of excellence for Jesuit higher education. The academic, the personal, the spiritual, and the physical are clearly various dimensions of our students' lives and they need our assistance in melding these various aspects into one cohesive self.

Transformative education is a renewed call to do as we would have our students do: operate as whole beings who cannot succeed in one area of their lives (i.e. academics) if the other aspects of their lives are in turmoil (i.e. finances, family, health, relationships).

*We operate in silos.*

Institutions would do well to bring faculty and student development administrators together to develop a holistic approach to learning in which both have equal and valued contributions to the education of students.

Because we understand that personal, spiritual, social and intellectual growth takes place in all parts of students' lives and is centered in their educational experiences and because of our mission to deliver an education that empowers and transforms, we look forward to this new era in our work. Some examples of true partnership exist and they include these programs: living and learning where faculty live and teach classes in the residence halls; intergroup dialogue coordinated and taught by administrators and faculty; community service and service learning; first year experience; senior capstone and orientation sessions that are planned and implemented by faculty and administrators; as well as immersion trips co-organized and led by administrators and faculty.

**Y**et, these programs are rare gems on some campuses seeking to establish faculty and student affairs partnerships. To really tear down old ways of thinking (us v. them), how more effective might we be in educating students toward purposeful and meaningful lives if we ask them larger questions about values, relationships, and purpose and take the time to listen and act on their responses? How more effective might we be if we then ask each other these questions and listen and act on our responses?

To our faculty colleagues: In what ways have you formed a working relationship with a student affairs professional? How often have you met with a staff member to learn how they see their role in educating students? What do you think of the category 'co-curricular'?

To our student development colleagues: Have you learned about the general requirements for learning on your campus? To what extent have you involved faculty colleagues in program development? Do you know what draws your faculty colleagues to do the work they do with students?

We are fortunate and blessed to have experienced a faculty-student development educator relationship. We involve each other in our silos by: invitation to student development educator to teach aca-

## *Partnership is not easy.*

ademic courses, request to faculty member to serve on student development committees, joint appearances at academic meetings and student development programs, conversations about ways our academic programs and divisions of student development can partner on joint initiatives. Less tangible, but equally important ways we transform education are breaking down stereotypes and misconceptions about why "administrators are acting this way," or "how faculty do not care about students." These microaggressions kill transformative education and do nothing to uplift holistic learning for students. Our hope is that faculty and administrators will be encouraged to think about which partnerships they could cultivate with each other.

Partnership is not easy. Ego, area specialties, and disagreements over the role of the academy often get in the way. And yet we all know that anything connected to excellence is rarely easily achieved without considerable hard work. Shouldn't partnership for the sake and success of our students be the plane where Jesuit higher education further demonstrates its distinctness from other types of higher education?

Student affairs professionals and faculty alike have the opportunity to serve as models of partnership. Together we can address the hungers that our students have and provide the assistance they desire. We should be unapologetic, and proud for what we do to assist our students in addressing the world's most challenging problems. Working together, faculty and student development educators can be a powerful force to actively try to address the hungers of our students. They can graduate students ready to face the realities of a demanding and struggling world. Maybe it's a matter of respect and trust in the other? Maybe it is finding confidence in us as holistic educators? Either way, it is beyond time to provide a truly transformative education...for and with our students. ■

*Bridget Turner Kelly, is associate professor in higher education and Robert Kelly, is vice president for student development at Loyola University Chicago.*



# The Difference Between Monet and Manet

By Brittany Benjamin

**A**fter four years as an art history major, I should be used to the question: “What are you going to do with that?”

It’s a valid question. Art history majors are bred for primarily two occupations: curator or professor — and I can’t say that I’m particularly drawn to either. I do know that I have enjoyed every single class and I thank Santa Clara’s core.

In high school, we didn’t have art history, and the only difference between Monet and Manet was a vowel.

When I arrived at Santa Clara with its Western Civilization requirement, all the classes I wanted were filled by the time of my registration. Spur of the moment, I registered for an art history class to fill a simple requirement. I never guessed I would fall in love with it.

I have made lasting connections with my professors, who are interested in my personal and academic success. The study of the artwork itself has provided a lens to explore cultures that I otherwise would not have studied.

A common complaint however is that many of those classes which students take just to fill a requirement are unrelated to one another; they are simply just classes to “survive” before moving on to classes pertaining specifically to particular majors.

I can honestly say that my math was something I struggled to “survive,” but I

was happy to be able to check those classes off my list.

During this past school year, Santa Clara completely revamped its core curriculum for the 2009 freshman class by redefining, adding and subtracting courses that are mandatory for all students. The new curriculum places a greater emphasis on providing students with a more global education — not just focusing on a Western perspective, but how the West interacts with cultures around the world. It seeks to draw attention to the issues in an increasingly connected world.

The new core program also aims to address many of the problems of its preceding program. Instead of taking seemingly unrelated classes and compiling them into a to-do list, courses connect through transcending themes that translate across academic fields.

With the program in its first year, it’s difficult to tell what kind of impact it will have, but I believe it’s a step in the right direction—offering a more rounded education, a value that rings true with Jesuit philosophy.

## *Two dark moments*

It is my hope that as this new core continues to grow, it will address another issue: diversity.

In my freshman year, Santa Clara made national headlines because of a “south of the border” off-campus party where attendees dressed in Latino stereotypes.

It’s a dark moment in Santa Clara’s

history that I’m sure a lot of students would much rather forget. Having experienced the shame the university felt after the party, I never dreamed I would see another offensive theme party while I was at Santa Clara. I did. During my senior year, the party was hip-hop themed.

While the hosts of both parties insist that it was never their intent to offend, people were still hurt by the stereotypes portrayed.

I think the root of the problem comes from ignorance. One of the common complaints following the most recent party was that the university’s curriculum does not encourage students to take classes focusing on issues of diversity. Students do not understand the experiences of underrepresented minority groups and therefore don’t understand why the party was hurtful.

The new core has the power to address this ignorance. While there was a single ethnic studies requirement in the old core, clearly something was missing. With the reinvention of the core, students should be exposed to issues of diversity *repeatedly* within a classroom — in more than just one class. It should be an integral theme in the curriculum, one that is pounded hard into our minds.

On that day, theme parties will no longer have a host at Santa Clara. ■

*Brittany Benjamin is a senior art history and communications double major at Santa Clara University.*



# TALKING BACK

## Is a ‘hookup’ the first step on the pathway to romance?

Response to Q & A with Donna Freitas,  
author of *Sex and the Soul*.

By Kathleen A. Bogle

In *Sex and the Soul*, Donna Freitas makes a very important contribution to the ongoing national conversation on the college hookup culture by putting a much needed focus on how religion and spirituality intersect with sexual behavior. After reading and reflecting on her responses to questions posed by the editors at *Conversations*, I found many areas where our research findings and perspectives are similar. However, in an effort to add a different perspective to the important question of how Catholic institutions of higher education

should be addressing the hookup culture, I will highlight some of our differences.

Freitas and I agree on the basic definition of hooking up and that college students at Catholic universities, like secular institutions, have largely abandoned traditional dating in favor of hooking up. However, we disagree on how to characterize the hookup culture as a whole. Freitas’s portrait of the hookup culture reflects the extreme end of a more varied continuum of behavior.

I believe it is important to recognize that although hooking up dominates campus culture, many students do not participate

at all or do so minimally. Research also indicates that most hookup encounters do not include sexual intercourse and many use the term hooking up to refer to “just kissing.”

Furthermore, hooking up is not only a system designed to find sexual partners, but is a pathway to romantic relationships as well. Although Freitas believes hooking up is not a good way to find a romantic partner, many students (especially women) are utilizing hooking up to do just that. Although forming a long-term relationship is not the most likely outcome of any given hook up encounter (incidentally, it is not

## Talking Back

the most likely outcome of a date either), many students do form relationships via this sys-

*Many students come to college with the notion that college is the time to “let loose.”*

tem, including serious relationships that eventually lead to marriage. Thus, today’s college students are not entirely lacking emotional attachments and meaningful relationships.

In spite of the hookup system’s dominance, Freitas found that the majority of students do not like hooking up and instead long for forming deeper connections through tradi-

tional dates. This finding begs the question: If *everyone* would rather be dating, then why are they hooking up? In my study, I found that most men were happy with hooking up. Women, especially upperclassmen, expressed more dissatisfaction, but did not necessarily want traditional dating either. I present a more detailed analysis of gender differences in my



Summer Preview students gather and talk in the Hixson-Lied Science Building on Creighton University’s campus.

book, but the point here is that men's contentment with hooking up helps explain why the system stays intact. Another factor that sustains the hookup culture is that this system fits students' idea of how college life is supposed to be. Many students I interviewed came to college with the notion that college was a time to "let loose," "have fun" and delay adult responsibilities. Hooking up, and the alcohol-centered socializing that goes along with it, is one way students carry out this philosophy.

Defining college as a "time to party" is inextricably linked to many of the socio-historical factors that led to the emergence of hooking up on campus, a point Freitas suggests is not essential to examine, but I believe must be. The term and practice of hooking up has been common on campuses nationwide for decades. It is not a coincidence that hooking up emerged at the same time that there were more and more students living on campus (which made it logistically easy to hook up), and more Americans marrying later (which made utilizing college to find one's spouse less essential). There are many other relevant societal trends, but the point is that the current generation of students did not invent hooking up; for better or for worse, they inherited it. These socio-historical factors are as important to understanding the hookup culture as a discussion of contemporary values among youth. In my study, I found that those who lived through the hookup culture in college went on to embrace more tra-

ditional dating after leaving the campus environment, planned to marry, have children, etc.

**A**

lthough I highlighted many differences between Freitas's findings and analysis and my own, there is one point where we agree wholeheartedly. That is, educational forums and courses are an essential part of how Catholic institutions should be addressing the hookup culture on their campus. In addition to examining how hooking up is linked to students' ideas on spirituality, I think social science data can actually be a useful tool in educational forums with the "cura personalis" mission. Consider these facts on hooking up:

On many campuses nationwide, approximately 1 in 4 students do not hook up at all.

The virginity rate is much

higher than college students believe (at least 1 in 4 college students are virgins). One national study found a virginity rate of 39 percent among college women.

The average number of hookup partners a "typical" student has is far less than college students believe. One major study found the median number of total hookup partners *by senior year* was 5.

The majority of hookup encounters do not include sexual intercourse.

In order to address the hookup culture on college campuses, we need to begin by clearing up misperceptions. If we fail to do this, many students will continue to make decisions based on exaggerated, hypersexualized images of youth, which are so often portrayed in popular culture and the media, as well as by some scholars.

I do not believe we can eliminate the hookup culture, and a return to traditional dating is unlikely. However, we can give students the opportunity to reflect and critically analyze this culture they have inherited. Ultimately, this will help students make better choices on their journey to become their best selves which, after all, is a crucial piece of the Catholic educational mission. ■

*Kathleen Bogle is an alumna of Saint Joseph's University, where she also taught for several years. She currently teaches at La Salle University. Her book, *Hooking Up: Sex, Dating, and Relationships on Campus*, presents a sociological analysis of the hookup culture on college campuses based on interviews with students and alumni from two universities, one public, one Catholic.*

## A Basic Guide to Jesuit Identity

Thomas P. Rausch, S.J., and Others,  
*Educating for Faith and Justice*

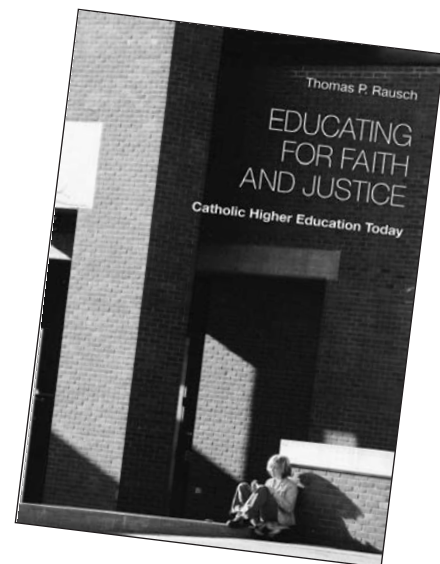
Liturgical Press. 165 pp. \$19.95

By James R. Kelly

At a recent faculty seminar on *The Marketplace of Ideas: Reform and Resistance in the American University*, the newly appointed dean of faculty suggested that we discuss Louis Menand's four key questions in the context of Fordham's history and mission. One faculty member, and by no means a Fordham newcomer, said she couldn't, as she knew nothing of Fordham's past and little of any singular mission. For the ever increasingly large number of Jesuit (the book's primary references) and Catholic Colleges faculty — hired more for their promise of professional disciplinary success than for any inner attachment to a Catholic university intellectual identity — Thomas P. Rausch's, S.J., *Educating for Faith and Justice: Catholic Higher Education Today* could serve nicely as a responsible and largely representative primer.

Nearly all the tradition's key identity-mission documents are referenced, stretching from the

*Ratio Studiorum* in the 17th century, through the critical mid-20th century 1955 John Tracy Ellis's *American Catholics and the Intellectual Life*, and up to Benedict XVI's 2008 Speech to Educators. In between 1600 and 2008 are John Paul II's 1990 *Ex corde ecclesiae* and, particularly important to Jesuit education, Pedro Arrupe's 1973 "Men For Others" and Peter-Hans Kolvenbach's 2000 "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Higher Education." While the book mostly notes rather than explicates the documents' main contributions, those interested or curious about core mission and identity premises can find where to download them. For Rausch, the Jesuit Father Generals Arrupe and Kolvenbach addresses especially ground the ongoing evolution of Jesuit promoted notions of the *telos* of teaching and the academic appropriateness of conscience affecting research motivated by a faith that does justice. These documents enrich and complicate what we mean by good teaching, good learning, and good research.



Besides a concluding chapter focusing on what sociological studies tell us about the religious attachments of our students, Rausch contributes the first four chapters providing overviews, by no means uncritical, of the history of university based theology, in the West since 1250 and of Catholic Higher education in the United States, a history characterized by both material growth — currently about 235 — and a diminution of religious identity

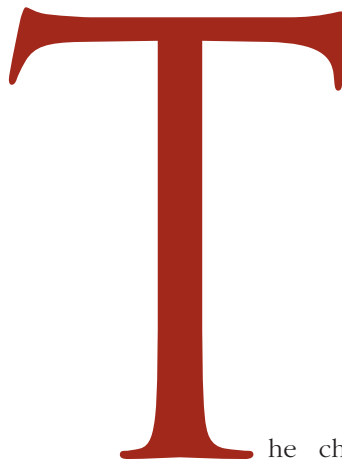
*James R. Kelly is professor emeritus in sociology at Fordham University.*

bestowing markers. For example, in 1900 lay faculty represented 10 percent of teachers (and virtually no administrators) but, by 1980, 90 percent. During the same period, philosophy class hours went from 25 to 6. Theology course hours are even less.

Rausch does not romanticize the more explicitly religious past, and includes the long list of Catholic theologians — Karl Rahner, Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac, Marie Dominique Chenu, Teilhard de Chardin, J.C. Murray, Charles Curran, Leonardo Boff, Gustav Gutierrez, Carmel McEnroy, Ivone Gebara, Tissa Balasuriya, Roger Haight, Jon Sobrino, Jacques Dupuis, Peter Phan — whose efforts to more fully engage the traditions of the past with their contemporary challenges led to their receiving Vatican sanctions.

The book's core concern of educating for faith and justice is developed in Chapter 3. Rausch's thesis — that Catholic academic institutions should steadily embody a Second Vatican Council (1962 - 5) perspective emphasizing the inner connection between faith and justice — can be succinctly captured through still another contemporary document cited several times in the book, Dean Brackley's "Higher Standards." Drawing from his experience since 1989, after the assassination of six Jesuits at the University of Central America in El Salvador, Brackley argues that for institutional integrity Catholic colleges and universities should abandon their "Harvard or Stanford" like measurement of academic excellence and adopt the following 7 criteria: 1. understand the real world; 2. focus on

the big questions; 3. freedom from bias; 4. help students find their vocations; 5. maximize scholarship aid based on need; 6. truth in advertising — actually follow the mission statement; 7. speak to the wider world and contribute public outreach. Rausch provides the reader harboring suspicions of any return to a '60s campus spirit and a curriculum that submerges objective scholarship in a sea of muddled apologetics with five cases studies of campus programs that explicitly aspire to integrate intellectual rigor, a justice dimension, and the formation of character.



he chapters include analyses of Catholic studies programs, community based learning, praxis-based education, and immersion trips. They are worth reading and reflecting on. I think most readers will find them fair minded and self-questioning, the very characteristics we might fear missing. Boston College's Stephen J. Pope, for instance, considers the dangers of "spiritual tourism" as an outcome of cultural immersion experiences. Mark Ravizza S.J., of Santa Clara draws positive lessons from the inevitable sense of failure and

inadequacy that both faculty and students feel after any serious cultural encounter in a different and poorer culture. Kristin Heyer, also of Santa Clara, zones in on the kinds of writing assignments that yield an articulate questioning by students of their cultural assumptions.

*Rausch does not romanticize the past*

I found most of pedagogical reflections in these case studies far from any catechetical or social justice fundamentalism.

So, *Education for Faith and Justice* is a fine primer to give faculty, especially faculty applicants. Still, some will legitimately question this choice. Rausch's tone struck me as midway between the, in retrospect naive, reformist confidence of the 1967 Land O' Lakes Statement and the muscular identity retrieval of, say, the Franciscan University of Steubenville. But perhaps a more telling question concerning this or any other chosen primer is, Who might have the task of giving it to a faculty applicant or inquirer? The vice president for academic affairs? The dean of faculty? The department chairperson? Alas, I think we already know — most likely, the head of campus ministry. The evidence so far would not lead a faculty discussion group at a representative Jesuit university to think their institutional experience would seriously challenge Menard's analysis, which never even mentions the terms justice or faith and which, in the terms of his subtitle Reform and Resistance in the American University, finds almost all the data on the side of resistance. ■

## The College in the ‘Most American’ City

### Ellen Skerrett, *Born in Chicago: A History of Chicago’s Jesuit University*

Loyola Press, 2008. 308 pp. \$25.00

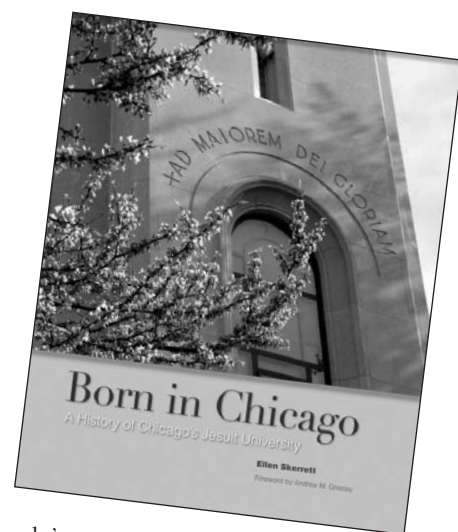
By Gerald McKevitt, S.J.

During an interview on the Charlie Rose Show, Rahm Emanuel, the White House chief of staff, was recently queried about his future. After completing work in Washington, he was asked, is there any other job you’d like to have? His instant answer: One day I would like to run for mayor of the city of Chicago. That’s always been an aspiration of mine. Emanuel’s response attests not only to his hometown devotedness but also to the singular importance of Chicago, the city that foreigners often describe as the most typically American place in America.

A similar enthusiasm for place informs *Born in Chicago: A History of Chicago’s Jesuit University*. Ellen Skerrett, an independent scholar and student of urban social history, argues that the history of Loyola University of Chicago cannot be separated from the history of the city itself. It was the potential of Chicago, that central city which seems ever on the

increase, as one Jesuit said in 1857, that led the missionary Arnold Damen, to found Loyola’s precursor institutions, Holy Family Parish and St. Ignatius College. Opening in 1870, the college drew clientele from the city’s working class immigrant population. Ever since, engagement with the great metropolis has been a constant of Loyola’s evolution.

President Alexander J. Burrowes, upon receipt of a donation to the school, once said that a gift to Loyola University was also a gift to the City of Chicago. If Chicago molded Loyola, the university also shaped the city. In the nineteenth century, it met Chicago’s educational needs, often preceding the public school system, by instructing its middle- and working-class populations. Loyola contributed to urban political life through alumni such as Carter H. Harrison who, beginning in 1897, served as the city’s five-term mayor. The school shaped regional Catholicism through the 125 priests who studied in its classrooms between 1870 and 1904. In 1959, nearly a fourth of Chicago’s physicians were alumni of



Loyola’s Stritch School of Medicine.

In an era when Catholic institutions faced widespread prejudice, Loyola pioneered in promoting good public relations. The cultivation of friends reflected a perpetual quest for funds and public support, but it also revealed the powerful influence of rivals who sometimes tempted Loyola, as one president put it, to drop out of the race. Competition

*Gerald McKevitt, S.J., author of several Jesuit histories, teaches at Santa Clara University.*

from the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, DePaul University, and the University of Notre Dame also prompted imitation, illustrated by Loyola's entrance into the educational mainstream through the inauguration of schools of law, medicine, dentistry, and nursing. The embrace of professional training had profound consequences. By 1935, half of the university's enrollment were women enrolled in its professional schools. Graduate programs also brought an expanded lay faculty, improved academic programs, and oversight by accrediting agencies.

Although there is much that is unique to Loyola's story, there is also much that is familiar. As students of Catholic higher education will recognize, Loyola's evolution paralleled the growth of other Jesuit institutions, revealing comparisons that are richly informative. Like its sister institutions, Loyola began as a preparatory school and high school, and its initial staff was dominated by clerics of European origin. Of the twenty priests and brothers who ran the institution in 1870, only one was American born; although historians might wish the author had explored the implications of the faculty's foreign origin. All Catholic colleges in the United States faced similar challenges: scant resources, religious prejudice, and immigrant students with limited educational aspirations. Pressed by European superiors to implement a curriculum centered on Latin and Greek, Loyola, like most nineteenth-century Jesuit colleges, struggled to accommodate the educational needs of its American clientele by offering commercial training and other non-classical subjects.



Loyola University Chicago.

Context is also important for understanding Loyola's undergraduate curriculum in the twentieth century. For generations, the hallmark of a Jesuit education was a course of studies centered on philosophy and theology. Over time, especially in the 1960s, that program underwent ideological adjustment aimed at

bringing academic practices into greater conformity with modern American higher education. As a result, Jesuit institutions were sometimes accused of abandoning their Catholic intellectual dimension. Skerrett describes Loyola as remaining unapologetically Jesuit and Catholic, but readers would appreciate learning how



Loyola University Chicago.

that is so and how the institution maneuvered the challenges confronting Catholic academic tradition in recent decades.

*Like its sister institutions, Loyola began as a preparatory school and high school, and its initial staff was dominated by clerics of European origin.*

This is, in part, a bricks-and-mortar story. The acquisition of real estate, the erection of buildings, and the creation of new campuses were integral to Loyola's history from the inception. Determined to create a place that would become the focus of neighborhood life, founder Arnold Damen strategically planted his institution among the city's expanding Irish and German population because it was large enough to fill a spacious church. Rising in a city renowned for its architecture, Loyola prized building design. When superiors in Rome once questioned the grandiosity of

a proposed new structure, Chicago Jesuits countered that the exterior makes a big impression on the American mindset.

Shifting urban dynamics necessitated relocations. Although St. Ignatius College escaped the fire that devastated Chicago in 1871, by the turn of the century a flood of new immigration had so transformed the ethnic make-up of its environs and curbed expansion that the college searched for a new campus. After settling in 1908 on a site in an upscale neighborhood fronting Lake Michigan, a rise in the level of the lake resulted in the loss of nearly two acres of prized campus real estate, a problem that challenged the university for years to come. Skerrett poses rhetorically, Did the bricks and mortar of the college matter? Absolutely.

This book is a welcome addition to the historical literature on Catholic higher education. Drawing on secondary material and archival sources in the United States and Europe, it is well researched. The publication is also nicely designed, although this reviewer regrets the press's decision to bundle multiple references together in a single footnote, making it impossible to discern the source of some quotations. A handsome volume with an abundance of illustrations and informative maps, *Born in Chicago* is eminently readable. Of the twenty-eight Jesuit colleges and universities in the United States, Loyola University Chicago has long stood apart as been one of the few institutions without a published history. With the appearance of *Born in Chicago* that deficiency has finally been set right. ■



## Resistance vs. Reform

# Louis Menand, *The Marketplace of Ideas: Reform and Resistance in the American University*

W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 2010. 174 pages. \$24.95

By Paul Almonte

*“Knowledge is social memory, a connection to the past; and is social hope, an investment in the future”*

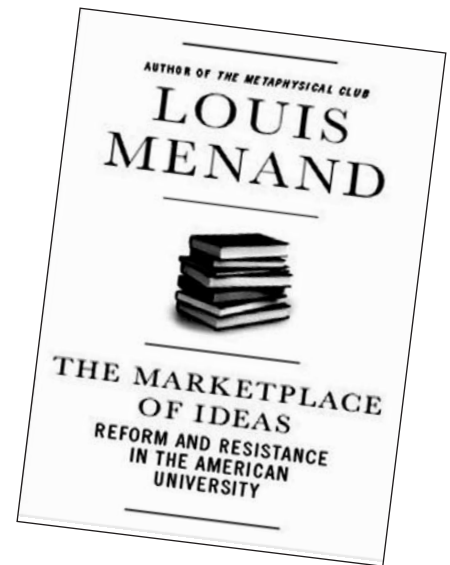
—Louis Menand

In *The Marketplace of Ideas: Reform and Resistance in the American University*, Louis Menand offers a concise history of how key structural components of the American university have come to be, and how these components have—or have not—evolved in the face of changing student demographics and public needs. According to Menand, resistance has always seemed to outpace, if not fully repress, reform: “There is always a tension,” he notes, “between the state of knowledge and the system in which learning and teaching actually take place. The state of knowledge changes more readily than the system.” That gap is the driving impetus for Menand’s work. How the skills and values universities claim to instill relate to the broader “marketplace” and how higher education has reacted to calls to renew or re-imagine itself to prepare students better for

the ever-evolving worlds of work and leadership they will inhabit, is crucial—both for the future of higher education and our nation.

The book breaks down his examination of the university into four questions: “Why is it so hard to institute a general education curriculum? Why did the humanities disciplines undergo a crisis of legitimacy? Why has ‘interdisciplinarity’ become a magic word? And why do professors all tend to have the same politics?” Menand’s argument is “that these issues are all fundamentally systemic—they arise from the way in which institutions of higher education sustain and reproduce themselves.”

Particularly valuable is Menand’s focus on general education and the history of the core curriculum (whether constituted as a distribution system or a series of “great books” or other form of classic knowledge seminar), which has been the cornerstone of a university education: “Historical and theoretical knowledge... unearths the *a priori* buried in present assumptions; it encourages students to think for themselves... the goal of teaching students to think for themselves is not an empty sense of self-



satisfaction. The goal is to enable students, after they leave college, to make more enlightened contributions to the common good.” Given the often fractious relationship between higher education and society as a whole, focus on what constitutes the common good, and how we teach it, is terribly important.

Having to legitimize ourselves — to students who rarely receive thorough explanations of what a core curriculum is

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supposed to accomplish or to a broader public that may view all non-career-specific education as ivory tower nonsense — is an opportunity neither to ignore or waste. As schools review and revamp curricula, they should pay close attention not only to what is offered, but how presumed outcomes are being presented: students should understand terms like “the common good” by knowing more fully why a business major should take courses in ethics or philosophy or why a biotechnology major studies religion or utopian literature. The ideas and values discussed within those courses will help them make informed and ethical decisions in their applied careers.

Also interesting, I think, is Menand’s discussion of interdisciplinarity. Wondering how this idea became a cure-all “innovation” for higher education’s ivory tower isolation, Menand suggests that it is wrongheaded to view interdisciplinary teaching as “opposed” to traditional disciplinary “silos.” Instead, he views the former as an extension of the latter — and, at its laziest, an eliding and replication of the worst problems of our disciplinary-specific, specialized models of teaching.

This is perhaps where the issues Menand raises are most applicable to the implicit assumption often made about four-year degrees: that students receive both a broad understanding

### *Professional conservatism*

and the beginnings of some specific professional training. Here, Menand challenges us to examine our own efforts. Are we, for example, relying too heavily on terms like interdisciplinary — and the few faculty members teaching together in what always seem to be “pilot” programs—and not focusing enough on how we’re actually teaching the core

curriculum in each of our individual classes or how the ideas from those courses are related to a student’s major coursework?

**M**enand

also reminds us of issues — the problems associated with the ways we train Ph.D.s and our professional and institutional “conservatism,” to name two — that often hinder innovation and our effectiveness in supporting and influencing the public marketplace of ideas. Menand worries, for example, whether graduate school self-selection narrows the idea pool and hurts our overall ability to attract a broad-enough group of would-be scholars and teachers to create and maintain the engagement of ideas, the dialectic that keeps the humanities relevant. There is less ferment from the bottom than is healthy in a field of intellectual inquiry.” Menand connects this to what he sees as the narrowing of our own professional thought and practice. The matter of a faculty’s “professional conservatism” — the refusal to change antiquated curricula and systems — combined with its relatively liberal public politics threatens to undermine the best values of the college. Again, Menand challenges us to ask ourselves who we are and whether the answer we come up with speaks to who our students are and what their—and society’s—needs are, contending that “[t]he academic world would be livelier if it conceived of its purpose as something

larger and more various than professional reproduction.”

With their emphasis on Jesuit traditions and values, our institutions have always viewed their purpose as “something larger” and we certainly ask our students to be more than just career-ready. Still, Menand’s questions are relevant; we are all struggling with “marketplace” issues, not simply in examining how we reflect or critique societal values, but also how our students — and the people who will presumably hire them — view our project. As Menand notes, “It is important... for the university to engage with the public culture and to design its investigative paradigms with actual social and cultural life in view.”

What is the role of the public intellectual and the role and responsibility of colleges and universities in shaping and preparing that individual? How do we — in our Jesuit philosophy, structure, and practice — better engage the “general culture” as we promote the values and relevance of a religious education and a citizenship founded on social justice? With Menand, we must ask ourselves what “investigative paradigms” we are missing or ignoring. “It is,” as he says, “the academic’s job in a free society to serve the public culture by asking questions the public doesn’t want to ask, investigating subjects it cannot or will not investigate, and accommodating voices it fails or refuses to accommodate.” Though somewhat short on his own answers as to how we effect the change or influence the discussions he sees necessary, the questions Menand raises, and the history — our history — he calls us to examine are valuable ones. Our answers, particularly as we look to secure the position of our institutions in the future of higher education, are even more important. ■

# MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL SEMINAR ON JESUIT HIGHER EDUCATION

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## A Note to Contributors

### HOW THE SEMINAR WORKS & HOW TO WRITE FOR US

The Seminar plans each of the two annual issues during its three annual meetings, each at a different Jesuit college or university. For the most part, an issue focuses on one theme; but, at the same time, through the various departments — letters, Talking Back, occasional forums, other articles, and book reviews — there are opportunities to keep the conversation going on a variety of concerns.

Our ten Seminar members come from across the spectrum of our colleges and universities, representing varied academic disciplines and a broad range of experience with the Jesuit educational tradition. The themes we choose to explore come out of our common reflection on that experience and from the discussions we hold with faculty, administrators, staff, and students as we rotate among our schools.

So, although most of the major articles are commissioned by the Seminar, we welcome unsolicited articles from the readers. Ideally, they should be written to explore an idea which will generate discussion rather than describe a newsworthy project at one's institution. Please understand that, since the Seminar meets only three times a year, it may take several months for each issue to take shape.

RASSj

## COMING UP

The January issue of *Conversations* building on the recent themes of the intellectual life, the soul of the millennial generation, and the reform of the core curriculum, will deal with the concept of **excellence**. Jesuit education has long prided itself on its reputation for intellectual excellence; but to what degree is this ideal realized and what are some examples of "best practices" which will help us raise our sights? These essays will include an analysis of honors programs, examples of the work of honorary societies, including Alpha Sigma Nu, and other attempts to bring the best students and faculty together to raise the intellectual tone of our campuses.

For future issues we are talking about **a general issue on faculty life, the different faith traditions on campuses, the impact of the economy**. We welcome your ideas on all these proposals.

### HOW TO WRITE FOR US

Please keep the article to fewer than 3000 words. **Do NOT** include footnotes. Incorporate any references into the text. Please, **DON'T** capitalize: chairman of the biology department, names of committees, or administrative titles, unless the title precedes the name, as in President Woodrow Wilson. We **welcome photographs**, fully captioned, preferably action rather than posed shots. Preferable format: a CD containing digital images scanned at not less than 300 dpi. Or a traditional print.

Send the article as a Microsoft WORD attachment to [raymondshroth@aol.com](mailto:raymondshroth@aol.com).

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