

Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education

Volume 38

Article 14

September 2010

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Recommended Citation

Turner Kelly, Bridget and Kelly, Robert (2010) "Living in Silos," *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*: Vol. 38, Article 14.
Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations/vol38/iss1/14>

• LIVING IN SILOS

Jesuit Education as *Transformative*

By Bridget Turner Kelly and Robert Kelly

Through 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 silos.

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).

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; inter-group 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.

Yet, 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.

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