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# Jesuit Graduate Professional Schools: Anything Distinctive?

## No Master Plan Has Guided our Progress

By Charles L. Currie, S.J.

### Introduction

**T**he statistics are impressive. Graduate enrollment in Jesuit colleges and universities today exceeds 76,000, or 36 percent of our total enrollment of more than 209,000 students. Six of our schools have a full array of doctoral programs, and fourteen others have one to four such programs. Twenty-one schools offer a full range of master's programs, with six others offering five or fewer master's degrees.

We have four medical schools, three dental schools, 14 law schools, 20 nursing and health education programs, 27 business schools, 14 education schools or departments, eight engineering schools, five schools of social service, and one school of foreign service.

Clearly, our colleges and universities have made a significant investment in graduate professional education. Elsewhere in this issue, Fr. Jeff von Arx provides some historical background and notes some of the challenges raised by these programs. I would like to suggest how our programs fit within the world of graduate education today and then suggest how they reflect some specifically Jesuit educational values.

### Trends in Graduate Education

We would like to think that graduate education is the natural result of students wanting to pursue their eager quest for knowledge to the next level, and that is indeed true in many cases. But, in a knowledge

society like ours, it would be naïve to downplay the obvious linkage between advanced degrees and access to successful careers. The two approaches need not be mutually exclusive, and in the best cases they are not.

Graduate programs span a broad spectrum from highly specialized doctoral research programs pushing back the frontiers of knowledge, to advanced professional degree programs in law and medicine, to doctoral programs in engineering, education, the social and health sciences, etc., to an increasing array of professional master's programs. In the highly competitive environment of today, there is always the need not only for the quality of these programs, but also for their marketability.

It shouldn't be surprising that graduate and professional education has not escaped the current concerns for accountability, assessment and measurement of educational outcomes. The demands come from students, accreditors, employers, funders, government and, increasingly, the public.

Students are concerned about whether and how well a particular program will prepare them for the career they want to pursue. Accreditors, under increasing pressure from Congress and the Department of Education, ask for more and more evidence that schools are delivering on the claims

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they make. Employers are concerned that graduates have both the expertise and the practical skills needed in the workplace. Particularly acute questions are raised today about the effectiveness of teacher education programs, so important for our nation's schools.

Graduate professional education is obviously more than skill training, and simplistic attempts to establish 1:1 linkages between education and a job are wrongheaded, but we do need to be responsive to authentic career concerns in developing and implementing programs..

To meet these demands and needs, efforts are underway to re-think curricula and teaching methods, to develop both interdisciplinary and skills-based courses, and to offer project/team experiences, the way more and more of us learn and work today. Online courses and

programs are becoming not only more popular, but more effective, thus complementing classroom courses and offering opportunities otherwise not available.

Readers of *Conversations* will be happy to know, from our bibliographical article, of the new initiatives of William Sullivan and his colleagues at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching to relate professional education with the liberal arts, in order to produce professionals with more holistic skills and values.

### The Jesuit Dimension

The graduate professional programs in Jesuit colleges and universities are no stranger to these realities and trends. Beginning with relatively few programs at the beginning of the twentieth century, e.g., in medicine and



law, programs have steadily expanded in type and size, in the last forty years, especially in the areas of business, education and the health and social sciences.

The programs and their growth illustrate a very pragmatic responsiveness and adaptability as schools faced changing demands, needs, opportunities and challenges. As with the origins of Jesuit education itself, there has been no master plan guiding the process. Of course, individual campuses have engaged in various kinds of planning, especially with reference to research programs, but master's programs have been more serendipitous. Their growth and variety has not been without critics who wonder if we are "losing our way" in the rush to respond to ever more requests and opportunities. Are we dissipating our efforts and resources, sacrificing quality for the quantity of programs? How do or can these programs foster our Jesuit, Catholic identity?

**R**eading the mission statements for the various graduate programs in AJCU schools reveals some common themes related implicitly or explicitly to Jesuit identity and mission: a consistent commitment to excellence and academic rigor; the claim to develop leaders both technically competent and willing to help others and serve society; and the combination of scholarship and research with practical

skills to enable graduates to operate at the growing edge of their field. Mission statements also include commitments to educate men and women with the "highest standards of personal integrity, professional ethics and a deep concern for justice," to develop educators "who will have the vision, skills and values to move American education to prominence in tomorrow's world."

While there can always be gaps between mission statements and their implementation, reports from our campuses provide significant evidence of success in achieving these ambitious goals: breakthrough learning and research experiences; service learning and immersion opportunities; innovative courses in ethics designed specifically for particular professional fields; and impressive alumni achievements, recalling Fr. Kolvenbach's measure of our success, viz., "who our students become."

To spell out more explicitly how graduate professional programs can be "Jesuit," let me group under five headings some brief comments on what might be considered specifically Jesuit about graduate education.

### *"Seeking God in all things," the magis and the intellectual life*

Missing from the often utilitarian discussions of graduate education today is the inherent drive to know more in the pursuit of truth and the excitement of ideas that

should characterize a vibrant intellectual life. On a Jesuit campus, the Ignatian ideal of "Seeking God in all things," not just in the traditionally religious and sacred, encourages an open-minded, generous and holistic quest for the truth in its many forms.

Add another Ignatian ideal, the ongoing pursuit of the *magis* or the more, and it is only natural that students and faculty on our campuses should be interested in probing further and deeper in their areas of interest, so that one might argue to an inner dynamic leading toward graduate studies, apart from any career concerns. Clearly, the emphasis on our campuses is on good teaching, but it is difficult to sustain good teaching without a restless curiosity. Good scholarship and research are clearly important if we are to develop and serve as models for the best of the Catholic intellectual tradition. This is happening in various ways, from undergraduate research, to master's dissertations and doctoral research, to the increasing emphasis on research by our faculty.

The pursuit of the *magis* also argues for us to be concerned about the quality of our graduate professional programs in whatever field. Everyone talks about excellence and quality today. If we are really pursuing the *magis*, these cannot be idle words but rather serious commitments.

### ***Educating for leadership and ethical concern***

The *magis* also argues to educating for leadership, for making a difference, another rationale for graduate studies on our campuses. This is a prevailing theme in the mission statements: to develop leaders. But not just any kind of leaders. The related ideal of "Seeking God in all things," or asking "Where is God in all of this?" encourages an ethical concern across the curriculum. Thus the increasing number of ethics courses and the commitment to professional ethics in our various graduate and professional programs: business, health professions, social science, information technology, etc.

### ***Cura personalis: student-centered education***

The Ignatian ideal of *cura personalis* is translated into student-centered education. Jesuit graduate education aims at more than just training for a profession, for getting a job, or for getting ahead. It is concerned about professional competence, but also the wholeness of the professional as a person, and the development of his/her leadership potential. It is discipline-centered, but much more than that; it is student-centered with all the specificity that entails. Thus the increasing commitment to mentoring our graduate students.

### ***Commitment to service and justice***

Contemporary Jesuit institutions are committed to educate for justice. A review of mission statements reflects

that commitment in various ways. Fr. Kolvenbach, the former superior general of the Jesuits and a linguistic scholar in his own right, has spoken of research for its own sake, but also research "for whom, for what?" Jesuit education, while respecting the integrity of disciplines, is instrumental. The Jesuits killed in El Salvador were publishing scholars using their knowledge to address what they called the "national reality" of poverty and oppression. They had insisted that whatever their university did for the national reality, it had to do as a university.

We have our own national reality, and our scholars are dealing with frontier issues in science, educational reform, community development, health care, human rights, family life, globalization, migration, poverty, HIV/AIDS, etc., in each case applying the best scholarship to social needs. We are not service stations, but we are in pursuit of viable both/and, rather than either/or resolutions to tensions between academic excellence and social commitment. This is not for everyone on our campuses, but it needs to be a defining identity for the campus as a whole, in graduate programs, and in all we do.

### ***Well-educated solidarity in a globalized world***

In his widely quoted and applied 2000 address at Santa Clara, Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach called on Jesuit colleges and universities to educate for "solidarity with the real world," by which he meant the globalized world of rich and poor, where major problems of inequity and injustice persist. Having taken that challenge to heart, Jesuit schools have been engaged in a range of initiatives to be at once local, regional, national and global, bringing community and global realities into the curriculum, and to every aspect of the college or university. Graduate programs are no exception, with more and more students engaged in service, study abroad and immersion experiences.

The articles in this issue of *Conversations* offer many examples of how all of this is being done. The total picture suggests it is indeed good for Jesuit colleges and universities to be engaged in graduate professional education, constantly trying to realize the ambitious and often difficult goals set for ourselves. The ultimate test of our success is and will be "who our students become." ■

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