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## From the Editor

# The Goal of Action...

On Wednesday morning I pack my bag with *David Copperfield*, *Crime and Punishment*, and the Arts Section of Friday's *New York Times* to teach fiction, theology and journalism. My teaching tools are the books themselves which the students must own, bring to class, and refer to as we talk - the daily quiz, the daily one-page paper, my body language of leaning back to draw everyone in or leaning forward to hear better or look the speaker in the eye. Plus chalk and a blackboard.

Down the hall a Jesuit colleague teaches Western History with no textbook. He posts a variety of documents and commentaries online and his students sit in their dorm rooms and search the net for information on the day's assignment. He teaches in a "smart classroom" equipped for TV, video, and PowerPoint presentations.

My year's clips from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and the *New York Times* deliver mixed messages on classroom tech. A former president warns that colleges in this digital age are like dinosaurs looking up at an incoming comet. A Montana State adjunct nursing professor researches her Ph.D. on terrorism defense online, presents her findings to no-campus Walden U by PowerPoint, and takes her exam by conference call - having rarely stepped inside a library. Students want more tech in the classroom but complain that untrained faculty waste time fumbling with projectors and software. Faculty notice that students with laptops in class do their email and play video games.

If our first two articles in this Ignatian pedagogy issue are correct, educational history is moving in my colleague's direction. If the next article and Jacques Barzun are on target, something basic to the Jesuit teaching tradition may be lost.

But both my colleague and I are Jesuits and both see our teaching styles as inspired by Saint Ignatius and the principles of the old *Ratio Studiorum*, the 1599 document which spelled out how Jesuit schools should be organized and how students should be taught.

Some of its principles - though unfortunately neglected - remain valid today. The basic point is that the students must be active, challenged to absorb increasingly difficult material. Its elements: the emphasis on *eloquentia perfecta* - speak and write with what was then called a "Ciceronian grace"; the prelection, where the professor explains tomorrow's assignment in detail and how to study for it; mastering a subject by exercise and more exercise; individual care for every student; and

emulation - competition for awards - that stimulates a young person's ambition.

Nevertheless we can walk the college corridors today and pass classrooms where the professor drones on from his or her index cards and students slump in the back of the room, wrapped in their hats and coats, swigging soda and toying with their cell phones.

But a basic Ignatian principle of governance was flexibility; his men were to adapt their methods as both teachers and missionaries to the needs of every situation. Thus Jesuits themselves have been spelunkers, clowns, Arctic explorers, astronomers, sculptors, and poets. They teach by drill, by dancing, by Zen meditation, by sending students to both Google and the library stacks.

This issue focuses on two aspects of Jesuit pedagogy: the growing use of communications technology - distance learning, computers in the classroom, etc - and the program in eight Jesuit colleges and universities, funded by the Lilly Foundation, to teach in a way that will make students aware of their "vocations." When our senior faculty were young, "vocation" meant becoming a priest or nun. Today, as these articles show, it means seeing how each of us is "called" to service.

To what extent is this possible? Some argue that the 18-year-old mind is well fixed on a diploma and a job. Period. But the schools discussed here have attempted to create a culture within a culture - through shared readings, structured community living, service projects, and spiritual experiences - that might penetrate the shell of materialism that walls off today's young from a world that needs them.

How will we know if these programs work? What standard do we apply when we compare the results of book reading, class discussion, online, distance, and other technology-assisted learning? In 1989 Jesuit General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, in an address at Georgetown, spelled out the goal in this way:

"The ultimate aim of Jesuit education is, rather, that full growth of the person which leads to action - action, especially that is suffused with the spirit and presence of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Man for Others. The goal of action, based on sound understanding and enlivened by contemplation, urges students to self-discipline and initiative, to integrity and accuracy. At the same time, it judges slipshod or superficial ways of thinking unworthy of the individual and, more important, dangerous to the world he or she is called to serve."

**RASsj**