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JESUIT EDUCATION CIRCLING THE GLOBE

Eileen L. Poiani

The evidence of international educational efforts at Jesuit colleges and universities demonstrates that they are in a position to help bring peoples around the globe together.

That sinfully delicious candy bar that you just devoured probably contained chocolate from Ghana, peanuts from the Sudan, corn syrup from Iowa, sugar from Ecuador, butter from Australia, fruit from Israel, and coconut from the Philippines -- all wrapped in paper from Canada or foil from Thailand. Enabling you to enjoy that candy are the countless diverse people around the globe who took part in the processes of harvesting ingredients, manufacturing, and shipping. (Thanks to Rolland Smith, WWOR-TV News Anchor, for this information.)

Not only in the world of products like candy but also in the digital world of communications, the global principles apply. That toll free phone call that you made last week to J. C. Penney Customer Service was most likely answered by a representative in India. Your call to AT&T reached a service representative in Nova Scotia. And that e-mail message from my fingertips just traveled around the world to Korea. So, "It's a small, small world," as the Disney song says, and it's shrinking.

How does our Jesuit educational system relate to all of this? First, Jesuits serve in all the aforesaid countries and beyond. The Jesuit educational system at the secondary and higher education levels traverses the globe. Global

alliances and exchanges among Jesuit and non-Jesuit institutions, like those described in Dean Jeffrey S. Brand's article, can "do good works." Also, service learning can be the catalyst among our Catholic universities for improving the human condition around the world in "human rights, economic development and the environment, among others."

Another dimension to globalization is the promotion of international solidarity through connections among our academic institutions. Dr. Kevin Yonkers-Talz makes the point that "Casa de la Solidaridad" in El Salvador, a collaborative initiative among AJCU, Santa Clara University, and the University of Central America, is a trailblazer in "education for justice." Learning through direct contact with the poor is indeed a transforming experience for the participants.

The President of the University of San Francisco, Rev. Stephen A. Privett, S.J., states that: "We need to figure out how to listen and respond with rigor, discipline and compassion to the other ninety-nine [out of one hundred] people in our global village who do not have a college education or own a computer, if we are to fully develop into the 'socially responsible learning community' that we claim to be in our Mission, Vision, Values Statement." The same could be said for the other twenty-seven

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American Jesuit colleges and universities.

Yet another example of Jesuit education circling the globe is international study. Dr. Maria C. Krane comments that: "The dialogue of *faith and culture* has been an intrinsic part of the Jesuit spirit since its inception. ... Like the early Jesuits, today's students should transform their vision by coming in contact with other cultures and by embracing new knowledge." Her paper comments on several strategies including the curriculum, student and faculty experiences abroad, organizational structure, international diversity on campus, climate for welcoming international visitors, and participation in international professional groups. To this group, I would add administrators in the academy who could benefit from participating in opportunities abroad.

All these authors expand upon points that I have made in an earlier issue of *Conversations*: "Colleges and universities across the nation are endeavoring to internationalize their curricula. Jesuit institutions can build on the international nature and network of the Society in order to internationalize their offerings. Faculty exchanges and regional conferences in the United States led by Jesuit scholars and teachers in a particular discipline from around the nation and the world would enable students to experience first-hand the richness of Jesuit scholarship. ... Electronic conversations and interactive satellite transmission are but two ways to bring the same scholars from distant locations to American Jesuit campuses." How to use technology to bring Jesuit scholars more effectively into the globalization of education still remains to be developed. Hopefully, effective strategies for doing so will emerge soon.

Demand for international study remains high despite increased safety and security concerns. My own experiences in doing reviews of American study abroad programs for our regional

accrediting agency confirm the richness of the opportunities and the importance of integrity within the program. Travel abroad can be cost-prohibitive for many interested students, faculty, and administrators. However, creative agreements among our Jesuit institutions around the globe can help remove this impediment.

Apart from international study, globalization reaches into our own institutions. For example, in my college, Saint Peter's, the faces of the world cross our campus every day. Reflecting the New Jersey/New York metropolitan demographics, many of our students are relatively recent immigrants. While not international students in the traditional sense, they often share the same needs for adapting to a new culture and, with proper programming, offer other students the sense of studying abroad while at home.

Finally, we must consider that increased focus should be given to ethics in the new millennium as a result of 9/11/01 and several corporate and dot-com debacles. True to their Ignatian roots, the Jesuit colleges and universities are again poised to lead the dialogue on ethics in a global context. As Prof. Peter Singer, Bioethics Professor at Princeton University, pointed out in the Oct. 11, 2002, issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*: "How well we come through the era of globalization will depend on how we respond ethically to the idea that we live in one world."

Simply stated, the faces of us humans around the globe -- regardless of their shape or size or color -- beam at seeing a baby, crinkle at hearing a joke, drop at seeing poverty, and streak with tears at a passing. The globalization process would be accelerated if we could confront and accept our human oneness. This process can be hard and difficult, but the rewards will be sweet. Enjoy your candy bar.



Photo Courtesy of Regis University

Cindy Benton, 41, took a little while to decide what she wanted to do with her life. A native of Virginia, she went to Africa as a young woman and worked in a variety of fields: tobacco farming, beekeeping, the tourist industry -- she even wrote a pest guide for local farmers in Zimbabwe, Uganda and South Africa. She gained a working knowledge of the languages Shona and Luganda. Toward the end of a ten-year stint on the continent, she volunteered with the Zenzele Empowerment Project, whose mission is to bring financial independence to women in the Khaylitscha township of Capetown. Experience brought her into hospitals in Zanzibar, Kampala, Harare and Johannesburg.

A desire to become a nurse grew, until one day she faced the situation of a sick child on a dirt road in Northern Kenya, whom she could not help. It was a defining moment. "Starting over with an undergraduate degree seemed to be the only way to do what I needed to do she said. She turned to Regis University for a combination of factors, not least was the Jesuit mission. She joined the accelerated program to earn a

Bachelors of Science in Nursing in the fall of 2001, and will graduate *cum laude* in spring of 2003.

"The Jesuit mission of giving back was of huge importance to me -- and became even more so after I got here," she said. "I participated in the volunteer work required as service learning and it cemented my path for the rest of my life. It just clarified for me that we're all connected. You can't have suffering in one human without feeling it throughout all of us. Nursing will be a vehicle to help me accomplish all I can in alleviating that suffering, whether here or internationally."

Cindy plans to take another two years before returning to Africa. She has applied for a clinical Ph.D. program at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center and has accepted a position as an ICU nurse in Denver. She hopes to be able to bring research methods and a higher level of training to Africa when she returns. "Ultimately I'd like to work with the World Health Organization or something like that," she said.



Photo Courtesy of Regis University