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Seven Characteristics of Jesuit Colleges and Universities: How to Strengthen our Catholic and Jesuit Identity

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CHARACTERISTICS OF JESUIT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES:

A Self-evaluation Instrument

The response of the Jesuits to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council and the renewal of the church continues

The document *Some Characteristics of Jesuit Universities* has been eight years in the making. The efforts were initiated by the Jesuit provincials who launched a strategic discernment process in 2004 for all Jesuit ministries to examine their mission of the service of faith that does justice and how it relates to the inculturation of the Gospel in every time and place in appreciative dialogue with other religious traditions.

Through a long process of exchange and frank discussion that began in earnest in October, 2010, the Jesuit provincials and the Jesuit university presidents endorsed this document in February, 2012.

It is a self-examination instrument. It is intended to be used by Jesuit universities and colleges as a tool for self-improvement, particularly with regard to the fulfillment of their Jesuit and Catholic identity. It fosters a crucial dialogue around the question of Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "What are the apostolic needs of the people of God in our times, and how are we called to respond?"

The Preamble to the seven characteristics affirms that "we need consciously to be on guard that both the noun 'university' and the adjective 'Jesuit' always remain fully honored." Catholic and Jesuit are not simply two characteristics among many. Rather, they signify our defining character, what makes us uniquely who we are.

This effort to implement a dialogue around the seven characteristics anticipates that a Jesuit university will have a clear, well-articulated relationship with the Society of Jesus which is formalized in a written statement ("Statement of Mutual Purpose"). It articulates the mutual commitment and support among the Jesuit community, the provincial superior of the Jesuits in the region, and the university's board of trustees for the support and preservation of the Catholic and Jesuit identity of the institution. All Jesuit institutions share with the Society of Jesus the commitment to promote "a faith that does justice through interreligious dialogue and a creative engagement with culture" (GC 34 and 35).

The document *Some Characteristics of Jesuit Universities* is meant to be flexible. It recognizes that the 28 U.S. Jesuit higher education institutions "vary considerably in size and scope, in the extent of graduate and professional programs, as well as relative emphasis given to teaching, research, and service." Each institution is invited to tailor the document to its own particular context and structures. It can be used as a springboard for dialog with boards of trustees, with faculty and staff, and with external stakeholders such as the Jesuit provincial, the local Catholic bishop, and other supporters of the institution.

Above all it is intended to be a living document that schools make their own, a document that is open to rewriting and rethinking as time goes on.

SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS OF JESUIT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

How to Strengthen Our Catholic and Jesuit Identity



John Carroll University's 60-acres campus is distinguished by its striking collegiate gothic architecture.

1 Leadership and mission. On every level — trustees, president and cabinet, academic deans and faculty — the leadership must clearly state, through the mission statement and personal initiative, the commitment to teaching, research, and service. All things being equal, they must seek committed Catholics familiar with Jesuit traditions for vice presidents, who understand how the Jesuit identity can be integrated into the curricular and extracurricular life.

2 Academic life which reflects the mission. The overall commitment to research and teaching should demonstrate excellence, particularly in the liberal arts and Christian humanistic education for all students. The core must reflect the institution's commitment to faith and justice, should include the world's major intellectual traditions, major religions, and an introduction to Catholic thought taught by professors sympathetic to the material. Promotion and tenure decisions should reflect a commitment to these ideals. These principles should apply to professional and graduate schools as well.

3 A Catholic Jesuit Campus Culture. All members of the community should work to foster a virtuous life

characterized by personal responsibility, respect, forgiveness, compassion, a habit of reflection and an integration of body, mind and soul. This includes liturgy, the opportunity to make the Spiritual Exercises, and the moral use of one's body with regard to sexuality, substance abuse, and health. It should also promote programs which offer an alternative to the "culture of superficiality" with which the Society has expressed growing concern.

4 Service. The university as an institution must insert itself into the world on the side of the poor, the marginalized, and those seeking justice. Those on service trips should learn the local language, learn to see the world through the eyes of those they serve. They should apply the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm: it stresses experience, reflection, and action.

5 Service to the local church. The university should educate first generation immigrant populations, Catholic and non-Catholic, and offer programs and resources which build the local church and provide a place where the local community can meet and discuss matters which concern the church and the neighborhood. It should sponsor ecumenical dialogues in a way which enables

the church and the community to learn from one another. The president should have an open line between himself and the local ordinary who should be welcomed on the campus.

6 Jesuit presence. The university must do all in its power to maintain a strong cohort of Jesuits — as faculty, administrators, and campus ministers — capable of playing a public role formally and informally in its life. The Jesuit community should be known for its vibrant hospitality. The university should participate actively in the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities and collaborate with other Jesuit universities throughout the world.

7 Integrity. In its management practices the university should offer compensation and benefits which demonstrate a commitment to fairness, equity and the well-being of the employees. Fairness should distinguish its norms for promotion and tenure and its practices concerning gender, racial, and ethnic equal opportunity. Its recruitment and hiring policies — concerning administration, faculty, and staff — should be clearly published in the mission statement and should attract and accept candidates who share and will promote the mission of the university. ■