From the Editor: Saving the "Jesuit" spirit without Jesuits

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n many ways, this issue on graduate professional education flows naturally from the previous issue on "Mission Matters," where a variety of faculty, students, and presidents spoke about how they dealt with the fact that some critics who are devoted to traditional Jesuit education were convinced that the founding principles had been compromised, that old-time Jesuit presence—symbolized by archived photos of 19th-century and early 20th-century SJ faculties—had dwindled.

Our students writers too were conscious that they were part of a culture shifting, trying to find its footing in a new world.

We answered the anxieties, in part, with testimonies from Jesuit history, from presidents, and non-Catholic faculty who, by various means, "caught the spirit" and gave credence to the idea that the Ignatian charism is not a gift delivered only to SJs but that it can be shared with lay persons of all faiths. Though the process of intensifying the Ignatian insight does not come easily, it is a product of introspection, study and experience.

Frankly, however, communicating the Ignatian identity to the professional graduate programs is more challenging, more complex. Historically, in the American 19th century, the Jesuit colleges were founded as seven-year combined high school-college programs with the Latin and Greek classics, philosophy and the Catholic catechism and liturgical celebrations at the heart of the curriculum. So-called commercial courses were tacked on as an accommodation to keep students from dropping out, to give them and their parents confidence that there was some connection between a college education and a job.

The medical schools and law schools were added both to attract students and to move the Catholic universities populations in the big cities into the professions as quickly as possible. Indeed, for many years, some of our now outstanding universities accepted students into law school who did not even have college degrees. Fordham president John J. Collins, SJ, with only a few classrooms in his disposal, announced the foundation of his law school on one day in June, 1919. We plunged in, ready or not.

The "boom" expansion in professional schools coincided with the great influx of veterans on the GI Bill of Rights following World War II, plus the federal grants to higher education that allowed us to build classroom buildings and residence halls and develop the schools of business, nursing, engineering, and social work that the post-war generation was calling for. This of course called for hiring full and part-time professors from the legal, medical, and business world who knew nothing of Jesuit tradition, who were not Catholic, and who may or may not have brought into the larger ethos of the school. A temporary stopgap was to appoint a Jesuit "regent" to oversee the leadership of the lay or non-Catholic dean.

But the fact was that the liberal arts curriculum, with its core courses on philosophy, literature, history, and theology, offered more opportunities to teach about Jesus identity than did courses in management or computing.

This issue asks, How do professional courses communicate what is unique to Jesuit education? Is it a good sign that a number of the articles do not simply rest on the idea that social commitment and public service themselves make a college relevant? Some of the student articles emphasize the necessity of the liberal arts. Others stress spiritual development as fundamental to professional values. In short, these essays give us much to think and talk about.

Thanks and Corrections, I thank all of you who, in response to requests from the members of our board, who have each assumed responsibility for keeping contact with three institutions, have sent in new pictures of your campus life. Our policy is to use as great a variety of pictures as we can, so that every college or university gets some "picture time" exposure. But we can do this only if you regularly renew our picture files by sending us new and exciting images. Don’t shy away from athletic and social life pictures, especially those which tell or imply a story. We have noticed that several campuses have recently installed modern statues of St. Ignatius. We would like to feature them as we go along. So, if you have not sent in your St. Ignatius statue, please do.

In the recent issue Boston College’s John McLaughlin's study on hiring for diversity, excellence, and mission featured a chart which compared the values assigned during the hiring process. In the magazine’s production, the titles of two columns were reversed, so that “mission” and “diversity” headed the wrong columns. We apologize to John McLaughlin, whose article gives a lot to think about, and have reprinted the corrected chart on page 10.