The University that Does Justice

William C. Spohn
"The fulfillment of Jesuit education is not just learning about justice, it is doing justice." This was the challenge of Santa Clara alumnus, Leon Panetta, former member of Congress and White House Chief of Staff, to the conference on Commitment to Justice in Jesuit Higher Education at Santa Clara on Oct 5-8, 2000. John A. Coleman, S.J. brought the message back to the faculty of Arts and Sciences at Loyola Marymount University. The noted sociologist of religion reflected on "the university that does justice," a description that would be foreign to most of American higher education but which is emerging as a central mission of American Jesuit colleges and universities. While a good number of academics could endorse "the university that reflects on justice," and some might support "the university that teaches justice," the assertion that higher education ought to "do justice" would likely sound like an imposition to most.

This issue of Conversations focuses on education for justice in AIUC institutions and on the conferences over the past year that brought that issue to the fore. The national conference at Santa Clara was the midpoint of a three year national process to integrate justice into curriculum and research, the main functions of the university. This introductory reflection will give an overview of that process and the issues that it surfaced, leaving fuller discussion to the articles in this issue:

* The first stage began in mid 1998 when the campuses undertook a formal assessment of their efforts for justice.
* The second stage was the three regional conferences the following year at University of Detroit Mercy, Santa Clara and Boston College.
* The final stage, the implementation of local strategies for justice education began, at the national conference and will extend into the future.

The idea for a national reflection on justice arose in a series of conversations among three presidents, Paul Locatelli, S.J. of Santa Clara, William Leahy, S.J. of Boston College, and Maureen Fay, O.P. of Detroit-Mercy. They represent three typical styles of Jesuit schools: the comprehensive university, the national research university and an urban university with strong representation of minority students. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the historic commitment of the Society of Jesus to emphasize faith and justice was approaching. The last national meeting of the twenty-eight institutions, "Assembly '89" at Georgetown, had been called by the Jesuit Provincials ten years before. It was largely composed of Jesuit faculty with some lay participation. It centered on questions of Jesuit character and influence on the campuses. Could the universities themselves pull together a conference to examine how to integrate into humanistic education the struggles for justice of much of the human race? Today's graduates face a world that has become more complex and intractable, yet they have less confidence in public institutions and are often led to believe that economic globalization will automatically remedy endemic pover-

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ty and oppression.

What had American Jesuit colleges and universities done to respond to this new world and the challenge of the Jesuits' 32nd General Congregation? How could the concern for justice become a distinctive focus for their efforts? Unfortunately, it seemed that those programs that did work on justice were often peripheral to the intellectual life of the university, dependent on charismatic founders or relegated to campus ministry and student services. They did not have a great impact on the faculty of the AJCU schools or the majority of their 190,000 students.

David O'Brien, American historian from Holy Cross who has worked for years on this question with the ACCU, summed up the situation: "Jesuit universities are quite good at volunteerism, do fairly well at service learning, but haven't scratched the surface on education for justice." Many undergraduates have done service in high school and want to continue face-to-face contact with the marginalized. Community based education that brings what is learned from the poor into classroom reflection is gaining ground in these universities. Justice, however, remains such a contested notion in our society that it often smacks more of ideological cheerleading than serious intellectual inquiry. Even though some faculty analyze unjust situations and advocate certain remedies, shouldn't the university itself remain above the fray?

The presidents asked some faculty members to address these questions: business ethicist Gerry Cavanagh, S.J. and social ethicist Art McGovern, S.J. of UDM, philosophers Patrick Byrne and Dave McMeen of BC, who have worked for years with the PULSE program, and historian Bob Senkewicz, director of SCU's Bannan Institute for Jesuit Education and Christian Values. They decided that the appropriate way to engage faculty would be conferences where serious discussion of issues and programs could occur. Later, Bob returned to full-time teaching and I replaced him at the Bannan Institute and on this ad hoc national planning group. We added two new members who had special expertise in conferences and group process, Kathleen Maas Weigert, then director of service learning at Notre Dame and now heading up a new center at Georgetown, and theologian Pat Howell, S.J. of Seattle University.

After considerable discussion, we first decided to focus on Jesuit institutions among the 232 Catholic colleges and universities because they had a common heritage and similarity of mission. Secondly, we agreed to concentrate on faculty because the moral climate of the institution, its educational ethos, is set primarily by their teaching and research. They are the ones responsible for the activities at the heart of the university. Students are central but they turn over quickly. Staff are often more receptive to learning about Jesuit and Catholic identity, but if staff and students have primary responsibility for raising questions of justice and injustice, they will remain extracurricular in the eyes of most faculty.

Assessments of Justice on Campus

The first order of business was to find out "the facts on the ground." Just what was going on around the country at the twenty-eight AJCU schools? We asked each of the schools' presidents to appoint someone to inventory programs and assess the ways in which justice concerns enter into teaching and research, campus policies, and the relations between the school and the surrounding communities. The responses indicated considerable variety of faculty involvement among AJCU schools. Some, like Seattle, Creighton, and Loyola of Chicago, had active faculty committees and administrative structures ready to take up the task. Others assigned the assessment report to directors of small peace and justice minors or to junior faculty struggling to get tenure. Still others relegated the project to staff directors of service learning programs or to campus ministers. Some of the assessments situated justice programs within a well thought out rationale that showed their structural relation to the mission of the whole university. Others were simple lists of programs and courses without any interconnection or structural analysis. The authors were not at fault here; they were simply reflecting the fact that some institutions had not given much attention to these issues.

The AJCU institutions have distinctive campus cultures, and no single approach could fit their structural and historical differences. Nevertheless, there are some typical indications of a university's commitment to programs for justice education; these measures apply analogously to the various campus cultures. Do the President and chief officers regularly showcase these programs internally and externally? Is there a body
with significant faculty representation that coordinates and initiates programs on and off campus? Is this body appointed by the President or Academic Vice-President? Is there an appointed director whose administrative work is part of his or her contract and not just added on to a full work load? Is the director an experienced and respected faculty member? Who does the director or the coordinating committee report to, a senior officer or a third assistant vice-President? Are the programs funded by "soft money" or are they part of the central university budget? Does the university give tangible support to faculty research projects and curriculum innovations to further justice education?

I mention these structural issues because the assessments showed that many of the programs for justice lack much structural support. When a charismatic program founder moves on, those programs will probably fade away. Education for justice in the academy requires a longer shelf-life than movements. Some justice movements prove to be transitory; as history changes, their goals are accomplished. The movement against investment in South Africa ended when apartheid was abolished. Good ideas need stable systems to get traction in the institution. If a university encourages community-based learning but leaves it to the faculty to set up community placements and arrange for transporting students to them, it means that community-based learning is not a real priority of the institution.

In addition to noting organizational deficits, the assessments indicated that some faculty feel that their views on justice issues are not welcome. The latter group believes that the Jesuit emphasis on justice slants to the left and cannot comprehend their own more libertarian or market-oriented positions. On the other hand, a considerable number of faculty write and teach about issues of justice, even though not many write about the theory of justice. Most of us start to inquire about justice out of experience of injustice, that is, some perception that people are being mistreated, marginalized or violated. In recent decades the American academy has made room for more of this sort of scholarship, while trying to prevent it from devolving into ideological special pleading. Historians research the effects of colonialism on indigenous peoples; education specialists examine disparities in public school programs; professors of literature examine neglected or excluded authors; engineers examine why waste treatment plants usually get placed in poor neighborhoods; biologists examine the effects of human cultivation and exploitation on non-human species and future generations. All these issues involve injustice, even though they may not be designated as such. One wonders whether good intuitions about actual injustice would not benefit from common reflection on broader theories of justice, lest one version of justice be taken as self-evident or its limitations go unnoticed.

Sociologist Michael Malek surveyed the faculty at Boston College and found that many faculty did research on justice, but few had much contact with other faculty who had similar interests. In addition, almost none of them had heard about the tradition of Catholic social teaching, a considerable body of reflection that has been building for over a century. Teaching at a Jesuit and Catholic institution may have encouraged their scholarship but had little effect on its con-
tent.

A survey by psychologist Michael O'Sullivan and ethicist Mary Beth Ingham of Loyola Marymount contacted over 1500 students in thirteen AJCU schools. Most reported that the Jesuit themes of faith and justice had rarely been mentioned in their classes, with the exception of courses in philosophy or religious studies/theology. Another assessment cited research that showed little change in the social attitudes of American college students from freshman to senior year. The greatest impact on them came when they took more than a single course in community-based learning that exposed them to the poor, combined with leadership training on campus.

**Regional Conferences**

The three regional conferences sought to clarify the meaning of justice and begin to identify what sorts of programs were needed. Each of the AJCU schools was asked to send a ten-person delegation to one of the conferences. The Midwestern universities met at Detroit-Mercy on June 4-6, 1999 and emphasized discussions among and across the delegations instead of formal papers.

Paul Locatelli, S.J.’s keynote emphasized that Jesuit humanistic education today has to take the suffering of today’s world with as much seriousness as it takes the best of human cultural expressions. He insisted that the Jesuit linkage of “the service of faith and promotion of justice” was not arbitrary because any justice stance necessarily involves some sort of faith. Practical approaches to justice questions presume an intellectual background, some understanding of the way the world is structured, and where meaning is to be found. Without even an implicit account of human flourishing it would be impossible to develop prescriptions for a more humane society. Locatelli said that disagreements about how to address the world’s problems will remain intractable until the dialogue about justice gets down to this level. Those who belong to traditional religions may call this fundamental level of reflection “faith,” but something akin to it also operates in those who are not connected with any religious tradition. He also noted that many faculty wonder “whose justice” and “which justice” will be respected in Jesuit schools and so are reluctant to join the dialogue. “If you think the deck is stacked against you, no wonder you don’t want to sit down at the table.”

The next two regional conferences adopted a more formal academic style, soliciting papers from faculty and presenting panel discussions on their content. The organizers believed that justice had so many competing definitions that some clarity was called for. Efforts were made to bring the communitarian tradition of Catholic social teaching -- which emphasizes human dignity, social interdependence and the common good -- into dialogue with the more common rights-based accounts which focus on individual rights and freedom from interference. Faculty also submitted papers on university programs that deal with justice and pedagogical experiments that brought out the social ethics dimensions of disparate disciplines from management to nursing to geology. Some of the best examples of these papers are included in this issue of *Conversations*.

At every regional conference the keynote speakers urged the participants to reflect on justice in tandem with faith. At the regional conference at Santa Clara, October 15-17, 1999 Joseph Daoust, S.J., currently President of the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley and formerly a professor at UDM’s School of Law, likened the connection of faith and justice to a plant. The branches that are visible and yield the fruit of justice are always nourished by roots that extend into the sources of meaning. Without touching that level of faith that inspires and shapes the approach to justice, education for justice would be shallow and short-lived. Two weeks later, Msgr. J. Bryan Hehir, acting Dean of the Harvard Divinity School and a key figure in the U.S. Catholic bishops’ peace and economics pastoral letters, urged the Boston College conference to take up the challenge of writing the new Catholic social teaching for the twenty-first century. Its old concepts cannot accommodate the new realities of globalization of markets and the blurring of state sovereignty that is occurring. Who better to do the serious thinking about a new social ethic than American Jesuit universities?
Hehir also drew interesting parallels between American Catholic universities and Catholic health care systems and Catholic charities. All of them had originated as strictly church ministries to serve needy Catholic populations. As Catholics entered the mainstream culture from mid-century on, so did these service institutions. They expanded significantly, took on a more public character as they sought to serve a broader public, became less clerical and grew into far more complex organizations increasingly dependent upon government support and market forces. Not surprisingly, the question of the Catholic identity of all three networks is being raised simultaneously. That concern can give the impression that these organizations have lost their soul when in fact they may be more effective instruments of good than before, even though they are no longer controlled by the Catholic hierarchy or religious orders.

The national planning committee learned several lessons from these regional conferences that indicated what design the national meeting should take:

1. There are a considerable number of articulate, dedicated faculty and staff already working hard on justice issues around the country; however, they have had little regular contact with each other.

2. We needed to increase the number of full-time faculty on the university delegations. Most universities appeared to think of justice as an issue for clinics, volunteer programs, and special groups, not part of the academic mainstream of curriculum and research. Some universities sent only one or two full-time faculty to the regional conference.

3. Education for justice had to be explicitly linked to faith. The participants in the regional conferences were much more interested in this connection than we had anticipated. Whether practicing Catholics or not, they frankly acknowledged the central role of faith in motivating reflection on and work for justice. Worship services and liturgies were optional at the conferences, yet almost everyone attended them.

4. Regional cooperation had already primed faculty and administrators on these themes in the West and Midwest. The West Coast schools and Regis University in Denver had collaborated on "Western Conversations" that for several years gathered faculty to discuss the distinctive mission and identity of Jesuit higher education. The Heartlands-Delta meetings had been even more effective in bringing together significant numbers of university personnel and forging personal bonds and working groups across campuses. Nothing comparable had evolved in the East and mid-Atlantic states, the region where the greatest number of Jesuit institutions is geographically concentrated. When the St. Peter's delegation described their continuing commitment to educate immigrant and poor populations, delegates from Fordham and Fairfield were delighted, but despite their geographical proximity, they had not heard of it before.

5. The national conference would have to be shaped around a strategic purpose. We did not need the usual academic conference centered on papers and panels. Although the discussion of competing notions of justice had been helpful, now planning and program innovation was the real work to be done. It was becoming clear that education for justice usually begins from personal contact with people in distress who know first hand the effects of discrimination, racism, or low wages on family life. Academic reflection needs to work on and be tutored by this direct experience of particular persons who are poor or marginalized. If faculty are to become educators for justice, they too need to learn from the poor, not just about them. What strategies and programs had worked at American Jesuit universities? Could similar programs be initiated at other Jesuit schools? Could networks of information and cooperation be established to bring this about?

6. Finally, the same themes emerged at each regional conference, from campus reward systems to the impact of globalization. These were the questions that would have to frame our conversations at the national conference.

National Conference

The decision by Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Superior General of the Society of Jesus, to address the conference shaped the conference in two ways: it considerably increased the number who wanted to attend and, as it turned out, his "keynote" speech actually set the dominant tone for the event. Paul Locatelli, S.J., who also chairs the AJCU Executive board, invited Fr. Kolvenbach in 1998. When he agreed to attend, the AJCU presidents decided to hold their fall meeting at Santa Clara in conjunction with the conference. The AJCU Academic Vice-Presidents and Provosts, and the Rectors of the campus Jesuit communities did the
same, followed by the AJCU deans of arts and sciences and their associates. This historic conjunction of administrative constellations meant that the principal campus decision makers would participate in setting strategies for justice education.

We approached the design of the conference with some apprehension because, as one former president remarked, "universities are wall-to-wall toes ready to be stepped on." Campuses rightfully guard their autonomy, and there is no blueprint for justice education that would fit such diverse settings as Spring Hill College, Marquette and Scranton. Better to let the delegates themselves frame the questions, learn from their faculty and administrative peers, and hear about the programs that had already been successful around the country. Over 180 delegates helped lead these discussions that ranged from core curriculum and faculty development to globalization, ethnic and gender questions, and the obstacles that the poor face in trying to get a Jesuit education. Then on the final day each delegation could set an agenda appropriate to their unique campus culture. At the same time, we hoped that the keynote speakers would vividly remind us that there are larger challenges that our culture and world present to everyone.

Whose justice? Which faith? Would the conference presume any version of justice? Art McGovern, S.J. pressed for a clear endorsement of a communitarian view which holds that humans are radically interdependent -- over any individualist approach that saw them as inherently competitive and self-interested. Art had championed that stance for over forty years. He stayed on theme even as he battled the cancer that would claim his life just months before the national conference.

Certainly the discussion should respect other versions of justice, but should Jesuit, Catholic universities hold they were all equally valid? Philosopher Tom Jeannot of Seattle had argued that an individualistic libertarian model was finally incompatible with what Jesuit higher education stands for. As John Coleman, S.J. put it, "Catholic discourse on equality insists on the protection of minimal human equality for all based on human need. Liberal egalitarian schemes may or may not - - more usually not - - honor 'need' as a pressing moral claim." That emphasis on need is rooted in the biblical tradition and reinforced by the "preferential option for the poor" originally urged by liberation the-
ual and the institution. Jesuit Catholic universities, unlike their secular counterparts, can provide space to push questions of value to the full extent, namely to the level of basic convictions that underlie those positions. In other words, they should be places where conversations about justice go deep enough to be conversations about faith. Certainly people of diverse perspectives on justice can work together to remedy injustice, but dialogue about justice cannot be truly educational if we avoid getting to basic assumptions. As Fr. Kolvenbach would put it, "Faith and justice...cannot be divided in our purpose, our action, our life."

Learning from the poor  If a Jesuit Catholic university is only a marketplace for ideas, a forum for discourse without end and without consequence, has it not failed its mission? Such a university ought to listen to the voices of the marginalized, since they are the test of how genuine a community we have. This theme emerged repeatedly in speeches and conversations: education for justice begins with learning from the poor through direct experiences of engagement. As Roger Bergman, director of Creighton's Justice and Peace program put it, "My own experience is that a passion for justice doesn't come out of reading books or listening to lectures. It comes out of personal experience." He advocates educational programs "that take people into the Third World, or into the inner city, or to the reservation ...where they learn to care about people who are suffering injustice. That tends to turn young peoples' worlds on their head."

What implications does that have for faculty? A similar engagement may be necessary to bring justice to the fore of our own scholarship and writing. What sort of faculty development programs would encourage socially engaged scholarship? Fairfield, Santa Clara and other schools have regular faculty "immersion programs" that bring faculty to places like Haiti, Guatemala and El Salvador. Do they have a lasting impact on the research and teaching of the faculty? Do they need follow-up collaboration and continuing support?

Faculty Development and Research  Should education for justice enter into the standards for hiring, tenure and promotion at Jesuit universities, or would that conflict with common professional standards? A number of faculty felt that their work on such programs did not count in their regular evaluations; indeed, it was seen as a distraction from scholarship or a part of adminis-
er from Seattle addresses the ethical dimensions of science in her essay in this issue.) Conversations with faculty from other disciplines can surface issues of justice in disparate disciplines, as Loyola of Chicago and Boston College faculty have successfully done for some time. In a "university that does justice" scholarship must have its own integrity and not simply be a way of using one's discipline as a soapbox. Fr. Kolvenbach, a distinguished scholar of linguistics, endorsed in his keynote the integrity of research while placing it in a larger moral framework:

I want to affirm that university knowledge is valuable for its own sake and at the same time is knowledge that must ask itself, "For whom? For what?"... In some disciplines, such as the life sciences, the social sciences, law, business, or medicine, the connections with "our time and place" may seem more obvious ...But every field or branch of knowledge has values to defend, with repercussions on the ethical level. Every discipline, beyond its necessary specialization, must engage with human society, human life, and the environment in appropriate ways, cultivating moral concern about how people ought to live together.

The "Whole Person" in Today's World

The Jesuit commitment to higher education as a moral enterprise that transforms students took on a whole new meaning at the conference. Seattle University President, Steven Sundborg, S.J., captured the new context when he said, "The traditional Jesuit commitment to ethics today has to become a commitment to justice." The focus can no longer be simply on the individual and on personal moral fulfillment, given the moral challenges posed by the complex systems that shape this world. Although the planning team decided against inviting many students because of campus facilities limitations and a reluctance to add additional costs to the twenty-eight AJCU institutions, student learning was the overriding concern of the weekend. Individual campuses were urged to organize local student justice conferences and support the nascent national group of Jesuit school undergraduates who meet on justice issues.

Fr. Kolvenbach emphasized that the true measure of our universities lies in the sort of persons our students become. He signaled the historic expansion of the 450 year-old Jesuit commitment to educate "the whole person." That "person" can no longer be imagined in isolated terms: "Tomorrow's whole person cannot be whole without an educated awareness of society and culture with which to contribute socially, generously, in the real world. Tomorrow's whole person must have, in brief, a well-educated solidarity." The virtue of solidarity bridges justice and compassion by locating the person affectively and intellectually alongside those who struggle in this world. He went on to say that solidarity outlines a new strategy for Jesuit education; "personal involvement with innocent suffering, with the injustices others suffer, is the catalyst for solidarity, which then gives rise to intellectual inquiry and moral reflection."

Campus and Community

Colleges and universities have to act justly in their internal policies if they are to model the justice they want to teach. Hiring practices, wages for custodial and other staff, fair policies of consultation and governance must all be held to standards of fairness and concern for the common good. Campuses also have a responsibility to their surrounding communities, as keynote speaker Claire L. Gaudiani, President of Connecticut College and chair of the New London Development Corporation emphasized. Though universities can't solve urban problems by themselves, they do have an opportunity to "do justice" locally. They can provide a unique forum where rich and poor, private and public interests can come together. Urging universities to be "do tanks" as well as "think tanks," she described how her college had worked with industry, government and community groups since 1997 to expand New London's tax base by 80%. That economic development provided the resources for social justice programs in the struggling city. She described how her own Catholic faith and involvement in the Church provided the motivation for this commitment. Her students had challenged her to go beyond the usual volunteer approach that was merely palliative to one that was transformative of social structures. In this time of unprecedented prosperity, she warned, universities must accept their social responsibility or future generations will look back on them with "anger and disgust."
Service of Faith and Promotion of Justice

A most significant moment of the conference came in Fr. Kolvenbach's opening presentation. Sources in Rome had mentioned that he might take the opportunity to make a major address on faith and justice, one that would speak not only to American Jesuit schools but also to the whole Society of Jesus. This challenging revision of Jesuit educational aims was one of his most important statements since becoming Superior General in 1983. He spoke in the historic Mission Church, Santa Clara being the only university built around one of the original California missions. He noted the significance of the conference's location in Silicon Valley, the heart of the new information economy that is refashioning the world, yet a place where much poverty also exists. Fr. Kolvenbach's address was attended by an additional 600 friends of the university who were inaugurating the sesquicentennial celebration of the founding of Santa Clara University.

Fr. General, as he is known in Jesuit circles, probed the meaning of the commitment to faith and justice made twenty-five years earlier. He reinforced the intent of the 32nd General Congregation to make this connection the "integrating principle" of all Jesuit works: "The way to faith and the way to justice are inseparable ways. Faith and justice are undivided in the Gospel which teaches that faith makes its power felt through love." Justice seeks social reconciliation which removes the barriers between individuals and groups. Justice finds positive ways to express loving service and build the common good through social structures, including higher education.

The impetus for serving faith and promoting justice did not, however, come from any Jesuit documents but from our complex world itself, "with its great possibilities and deep contradictions." He urged that students and faculty immerse themselves in that world as the primary text for humanistic learning today:

Students, in the course of their formation, must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering and engage it constructively. They should learn to perceive, think, judge, choose and act for the rights of others, especially the disadvantaged and the oppressed.

He pointed faculty to this same challenging "text" to find their inspiration and calling. "To make sure that the real concerns of the poor find their place in research, faculty members need an organic collaboration with those in the Church and in society who work among and for the poor and actively seek justice."

His message was enthusiastically received by the 420 delegates to the conference. They voted overwhelmingly to make it the basis of the strategic efforts they would take towards educating for justice on their own campuses and to share these strategies with the other AJCU campuses by March 1, 2001. His address has been widely distributed on many campuses already. The full text is available in English and Spanish at www.scu.edu/BannanInstitute by clicking on the Justice Conference link. While the conference at Santa Clara gave considerable impetus to the effort to incorporate education for justice into our curricula and scholarship, the responsibility for strategic change now lies with the campuses.

To assist in the follow-up efforts, the AJCU website will serve as a clearing house for information about campus strategies on education for justice. Videotapes of the keynote addresses are available from the Bannan Institute, and a fifteen-minute video of the whole conference is being prepared. A single volume containing the keynote addresses from the regional and national conferences and selected papers from them will appear in the next year.