In Deed: A Survey of Programs and Activities Related to Identity and Mission: Loyola University New Orleans

Editorial Board

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During the fall semester of 1993, Professor Donald Brady suggested to some of his students that they write and produce a play about the plight of the homeless in New Orleans. The students took him seriously. Seeking inspiration, they stood in food lines, sat beneath overpasses conversing with the homeless, visited shelters and asked for handouts. The result was Ain't Nothin but a Thing, a series of vignettes performed in Loyola's experimental theater. The local paper gave the project high praise. The homeless thanked the students for restoring their sense of self worth. Community access television will broadcast a televised version of the play dozens of times. Since General Congregations of the Jesuit order have called for radical identification with the poor, this is Jesuit education at its best.

Jesuit education also stands for academic excellence—vigor, honest, fearless intellectual inquiry and teaching—and for formation of the whole person. Such inquiry leads inexorably to the conclusion that injustice abounds. The whole person must respond with a commitment to work against injustice. Loyola's Common Curriculum, required of all undergraduates, asks students to reflect on values in the light of all their studies. Graduates affirm that their lives are different because of their Loyola experience.

The Jesuit tradition asks a high level of concern for the individual student. Surveys have established that Loyola's faculty are outstanding in their dedication to their students. American higher education has recently rediscovered the need for good teaching and for curricula which deal with values. Loyola has never abandoned its commitment to both.

In response to the call of Vatican II for lay participation in ministry, and out
of concern prompted by the declining number of available Jesuits, Loyola, in 1976, appointed a task force of Jesuits and others to explore ways of describing and perpetuating the Jesuit character of the institution. The task force has formulated a statement of vision which has become institutional policy. Over the years, it has been responsible for group discussions, has recommended that persons hired by the university be required to read and comment on the statement of purpose, has sponsored days of reflection on institutional purpose, and has invited speakers to address faculty and staff on Jesuit history and spirituality. Recently, a Jesuit has been assigned on a part time basis to oversee implementation of recommendations of the task force.

Loyola Jesuits led the struggle for desegregation in New Orleans. Fathers Louis Twomey and Joseph Fichter preached an unpopular gospel in a city where Catholics were comfortable with the status quo and hostile to change. Dr. Norman Francis, now the president of Xavier University of Louisiana, is one of the first black graduates of Loyola’s law school. The Twomey Center for Peace and Justice continues the work of its founder. Its current director, Theodore Quant, conducts regular sessions on conflict resolution with students in the public school system. The institute is involved with Bread for the World and an alliance for the homeless.

Loyola’s is a truly multicultural campus. Ethnic minorities comprise 24% of the student population. Students come to Loyola from 45 states, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and 59 foreign countries.

In the Jesuit tradition, Loyola faculty and students are active in every part of the world. Under the direction of Rev. Joseph Currie SJ and Rev. Edward Gros SJ, Loyola students spend their Christmas vacations working in poor parishes in Nicaragua. Loyola’s School of Music has entered a sophisticated exchange program with the music conservatory of Tbilisi in the Republic of Georgia. Loyola faculty are active in Japan, the Philippines, Canada, Mexico, Chile, England, Belgium, France, Italy, Bulgaria, Russia, and other parts of the world. The College of Business Administration is rapidly building a strong capability in the field of international business. Students perform meaningful internships in such remote parts of the world as Australia and Taiwan.

**Other Programs**

- Dozens of students are active in the Loyola University Community Action Program, an opportunity to tutor the young, to console the aged, and to engage in other forms of service to those in need. LUCAP sponsors an annual week of solidarity with hungry.

- The Loyola Institute for Ministry extension program trains religious educators in over forty sites around the nation. Bishop Walter Sullivan of Richmond, Va., has expressed heartfelt gratitude for the assistance the institute has provided his diocese, one of many served by the Institute.

- Jesuit education forms leaders. Loyola’s law alumni are leaders in the community. Graduates sit on the State Supreme Court and occupy numerous elected judgeships in the local region. The Law Clinic gives students practical experience in the courtroom. The Gillis Long Poverty Law Center provides students with an opportunity to learn the needs of the poor and conducts research in the legal needs of the underprivileged. The Death Penalty Resource Center explores the problems associated with this major social justice issue.

- The church of the parish of the Holy Name of Jesus dominates the entrance to the Loyola campus. The Loyola School of Music, the only Jesuit college of music in the United States is nearby. In combination with a vital campus ministry team, the parish and the music school provide the Loyola family with superb liturgies on solemn occasions. Vocal and instrumental groups rival the best in the nation.

- St. Ignatius Loyola began his serious studies at a relatively advanced age. Loyola has made a strong commitment to the needs of the adult learner.

Rev. James Carter SJ (opposite page), Loyola University's president, and students on the New Orleans school's campus. A Loyola student volunteer (below) tutors a child in a community based reading program.