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Editorial Board

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In Deed

An Ongoing Survey of Programs and Activities Related to the Identity and Missions of Jesuit Colleges and Universities

This issue of Conversations introduces “In Deed,” an ongoing feature which will present concrete examples of programs and activities that Jesuit colleges and universities sponsor to promote their identity and mission. Each issue will focus on three or four institutions as space permits, until all twenty-eight Jesuit schools have been covered.

These reports reflect core values that provide the identity common to all the schools, but they also highlight the unique character which comes from each school’s mission, history, and social context. Retreat programs have probably been implemented by all of the schools, but the type of retreat offered varies widely, ranging from the University of Scranton’s “Walk About Retreat,” which uses recorded material and a Walkman to guide retreatants around the campus, to Boston College’s “Andover Weekends,” which take faculty off campus to explore the process of teaching at a Jesuit university.

Institutions also vary in the way they view the issue of identity. The University of Scranton emphasizes the idea that Jesuit identity is a continual process rather than a project to be done and finished with. Boston College is noteworthy for the breadth of the programs which it includes under the umbrella of Jesuit identity. Wheeling Jesuit College takes pride in the face-to-face interchange among faculty and staff which its small size permits. Future issues of Conversations will further describe the unity and diversity that characterize Jesuit campuses where committed people work together to refine their goals and find new ways of achieving them.

The reports that follow present an overview of each school, followed by brief descriptions of programs that the school has developed.
The University of Scranton has made deliberate efforts over many years to foster a consciousness of Jesuit identity and Ignatian principles. In 1982 the Scranton Journal first published “The Jesuit University Today: An Introduction to the Ignatian Vision in Higher Education,” written by Father George Aschenbrenner, who was then the director of the Adult Spiritual Exercises Program. This long article has been much in demand and was reprinted as recently as 1991.

A more recent project is the Institute for Contemporary Spirituality, which runs programs both for the university community and the community at large. George Schemel SJ is the institute's director; he also leads the recently established Presidential Committee for Jesuit Identity. The committee comprises eight members who will help a process, expected to take three to four years, of meeting with other members of the university to gain input, encourage personal reflection, and engage in discussion about the university’s Jesuit identity.

“We have to get over the notion that this is a problem to be solved,” Schemel noted. “It is an on-going awareness and desire. It's a process. We are not trying to bring the university back to something. We want to take a good look at what we are and project what we will and should be.”

University President J. A. Panuska SJ described the process as a call for action and not just theories. Although the process is based on Ignatian principles, it is an exclusively religious one, nor does it rest solely with the Jesuit community.

“Ignatius was a real master at coordination, getting people to work together,” Schemel noted, “and that is what we are trying to do, get people to work together toward chosen goals. If it takes faculty, staff, and students to make up the university, then it will take faculty, staff, and students to make up the Jesuit identity. If all the teachers were Jesuits, there would still be a need for this process. It’s asking the question, ‘How do we incarnate certain attitudes in today’s society?’

Two intriguing and complicated areas in the process are implementing a movement that is more than a little countercultural. “Some people think of a university as a place to teach people to make money and get a better job. It is much more than that,” Schemel noted. “A Jesuit University indeed wants to promote vocational skills, but in addition wants to promote a person who is God-centered and world-minded, a person with a generous spirit, who has a free and creative use of the imagination in service of the global village.”

The work is based on the simple idea of helping people to know their values and freeing them up to pursue them. The committee presumes that by remaining Catholic and Jesuit the University of Scranton has its best opportunity of serving God’s people, serving the church, succeeding in admissions, preserving a niche in American education, and continuing a heritage that provides a valued meaning in life to many colleagues who work in this mission.

Other Projects

- “Metanoia,” a statue of St. Ignatius of Loyola, stands in the center of the campus as a celebration of life. Sculpted by Gerhard Bautz, the statue depicts the moment Ignatius turned his life over to God. The placement of the sculpture in the center of the campus reflects Father Panuska’s conviction that symbols help form our ideas and inspire those who visit the university to grow in wisdom and grace.

- A creative way of promoting spirituality is the “Walk About Campus Retreat.” Interested persons pick up a Walkman with a tape and a map of the campus with the “course” on it. One can make a retreat walking about campus in just under an hour. The tape makes suggestions for reflection and prayer, contains original music, and suggests stops at various points of interest on campus.

- The Jesuit Identity Program is open to both individuals and departments. It is broken down into three phases or workshops: the first covers the Ignatian and Jesuit heritage of the university; the second looks at one’s own particular giftedness within the university; the third provides an opportunity to experience a methodology of decision making that comes out of the Ignatian and Jesuit heritage. The Ignatian methodology of decision making is intended to be both personally and professionally helpful.

- The Second Cornerstone Campaign contained a drive for a “Jesuit Presence Fund” to support activities related to the university’s mission as an Ignatian institution. In the distant future there might only be a few Jesuits here, but the need for programs supporting the Ignatian heritage will continue. The fund is already well established, to a great extent through the efforts of the Jesuit community itself, and will be an important aspect of any new capital campaign.

George J. Schemel SJ is director of the Institute of Contemporary Spirituality at the University of Scranton and chair of the presidential committee to examine the university’s Jesuit identity.

- The Jesuit community in 1990 established the Campion Award, presented each year to an administration, faculty, or staff member who has contributed in an outstanding way to the pro-
motion of the university’s purpose as a Catholic and Jesuit university. The award is given at the final convocation of the academic year and carries a cash stipend of $1,000.

- For three decades Father J. J. Quinn SJ, professor of English, has conducted a program called “Weekend of Christian Living,” which is based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola and seeks to help students get to know themselves and others by seeing the extraordinary in life’s ordinary routines. Once a semester “Father J.J.” takes about a dozen students, men and women, to spend a weekend of relaxation, discussion, play, and prayer at the university’s Conference and Retreat Center at Chapman Lake. Father Quinn concentrates on the beginning and the end of the Exercises, because this shows the students who they are, where they come from, where they are going, and all the other things, creatures and people, here to help them.

- 3,700 undergraduates put in more than 20,000 hours of volunteer work a year.

Wheeling Jesuit College

Wheeling Jesuit College takes pride in being a small school characterized by direct personal interaction. A student body of about 1,500 and a faculty of fewer than 100 makes it possible to have an ongoing, informal conversation about the school’s identity and character. The Jesuit identity of Wheeling is incarnated in its mission statement, which was cited by a recent North Central evaluation committee as being one of the institution’s strengths. The evaluators noted how widely faculty have adopted the philosophy expressed in that statement.

Academic Dean Normand J. Paulhus sees a series of initiatives which coalesce to foster Wheeling’s Jesuit identity. He plans a more systematic examination of related issues among the faculty as it embarks on a program of curriculum reform. The new program for freshman year, for example, will include several lectures on Jesuit education, ensuring that all Wheeling students will be exposed to that vision.

President Thomas S. Acker SJ sees the sixteen-member Jesuit community as closely involved in presenting the school’s mission. Father Acker also interviews most of the new employees and discusses with them the mission of the school and of the Society of Jesus, with specific reference to serving the poor or economically disadvantaged. The faculty and all the staff participate in the mission of the college by accepting salaries at a level lower than they might receive elsewhere, because they are committed to serving the less privileged.

Wheeling Jesuit College is proud of its history of serving the needs of Appalachia. In recent years it has pursued a goal of drawing 40 per cent of its students from a three-state area, especially from West Virginia. In 1975 the American bishops’ “Appalachian Pastoral Letter” was promulgated at Wheeling. Student service projects also focus on meeting the needs of the poor communities in the region surrounding the school. In addition, the college has almost yearly sponsored one Jesuit from India as a visiting lecturer or professor, and each year it offers ten full-tuition scholarship grants to young men and women graduating from Jesuit institutions in Belize or Nepal.

Other Programs

- Father James O’Brien SJ has taught a course for the past five years on the nature of Jesuit education. Initially it was offered to freshmen as an introduction to what they would be experiencing in
their college years, but it did not attract enough students. Then he aimed it at juniors and seniors as a course reflecting on what they have experienced, and it has proven to be very popular and useful.

He breaks the course into four parts. The first deals with the life of Ignatius and the Spiritual Exercises; the second studies the history of the Society of Jesus from its early years up to the beginning of American Jesuit education; the third part covers the post-World War II period, with expansion of schools, the important general congregations, and the adoption of faith and justice as a thematic motif in Jesuit work; the fourth part considers the present time and its implications for the future.

Recently O'Brien asked a group of psychology majors to help him prepare a 20-question survey which he gave to the class. Students could respond to the questions on a ten-point scale, from strongly agreeing with each statement to strongly disagreeing. The questions covered topics such as student perception of the value of Jesuit education, of being at a small school versus a large one, of philosophy requirements, and of the adequacy of school involvement in the Appalachian region. O'Brien plans to revise the questionnaire during his current sabbatical year.

- Wheeling offers a peace-studies minor which involves 21 hours including courses in human geography of developing and developed regions, philosophy of peace and justice, ethics and public policy, conflict resolution, a practicum, and a senior seminar.

- Other student organizations offer activities embodying the Jesuit mission of the school. "A Springtime of Peace and Justice" was sponsored last year by the Peace Studies Committee together with campus ministry, the Appalachian Experience Club, International Students Club, JAPOT (Justice and Peace in Our Times), CALC (Wheeling Area Clergy and Laity Concerned), OVIRR (Ohio Valley Industrial Retention and Renewal), and JUSTICE (Jesuit University Students Concerned with Empowerment).

JUSTICE is a grass-roots student effort that began with the head of student government at John Carroll University who invited students from other Jesuit schools to John Carroll to initiate a new organization. Over 100 students from 18 schools attended the initial meeting in January 1992; the next meeting is planned for October 1992.

Below is the questionnaire from Father James O'Brien's course on the philosophy of Jesuit education. Students were asked to respond to the following statements by circling a number from one to ten to indicate their response on a range from strong disagreement to strong agreement with the statement.

1. I am generally familiar with the historical origins of the Society of Jesus.
2. I feel there is a big advantage in being educated here at Wheeling Jesuit College rather than at a larger non-Jesuit institution.
3. In my perception, education at the larger and older Jesuit institutions is better than it is at Wheeling Jesuit College.
4. I think there are more work-load demands on students here than at non-Jesuit schools.
5. I have found the academic work load here is appropriate to the growth potential of the individual student.
6. To my view core courses in philosophy and theology are essential components of a Jesuit education.
7. Some years ago the members of the Society of Jesus then stationed here at the college wrote: "[Many students] tell us they have come to this college, by and large, because it is small; they stay because it is Jesuit. They cannot define precisely what this means, but they know it is there, all the more so as seniors than as freshmen."
8. In my opinion the Student Development office here is geared to fostering the Jesuit ideal.
9. I have come to see that the help to religious life and practice available at the college are prized by its students.
10. It is my belief that Wheeling Jesuit College is not doing enough for the State of West Virginia and Appalachia.
11. I believe I will be a better person because I am attending a Jesuit school.
12. I have noticed that, for all its talk about justice, members of the Wheeling Jesuit College community do not treat other members very fairly.
13. I am convinced that religious life and practice here is not adequate for the kind of institution we claim to be.
14. In my experience the Jesuit ideal of "eloquencia perfecta," i.e., outstanding communication skills, is evident in our upper-division students.
15. I really enjoyed "A Springtime of Peace and Justice" this year.
16. I am motivated to a lived "excellence in the Jesuit tradition" as a result of my experience here.
17. The "faith-justice" emphasis at Wheeling Jesuit College seems entirely appropriate to me.
18. My identification with the goals and ideals of Jesuit education has a significant influence on my daily thoughts and actions.
19. The strongest Jesuit-related aspect of Wheeling Jesuit College is ... 
20. The weakest Jesuit-related aspect of Wheeling Jesuit College is ...
Boston College

Like many Jesuit colleges and universities, Boston College has a standing committee which works to promote its Jesuit and Catholic character, William B. Neenan SJ, academic vice president and dean of faculties, chairs this committee.

T. Frank Kennedy SJ, a musicologist at Boston College, works on Jesuit baroque opera manuscripts. (Photo: Geoff Why)

Inspired by the Ignatian vision of finding God in all things, the Jesuit Institute at Boston College—established in 1987 by the university’s Jesuit Community—among its other activities identifies and underwrites scholars who seek to preserve and deepen the Catholic and Jesuit character of the university through contemporary and interdisciplinary research projects. To further its objective, the Jesuit Institute sponsors a public conference and a series of lectures to share the research of its scholars with the university community and the public. Lecture topics have included “Jesuits in Geoscience: From Matteo Ricci to Daniel Lineham”, “Preservation and Enhancement of American Catholic Universities’ Religious Identity”; and “Women, Justice and the Church.”

The institute extends a visiting professorship each year to a researcher who later reports on his or her study during the annual public conference. For example, Boston College faculty members have been awarded research grants for projects on “Love of the Poor: From Almsgiving to the Preferential Option” and “The Cross and the Star: Faith and the Holocaust,” among many others.

Last year’s public conference focused on “Justice for Children at Risk: Training Mental Health Workers in a Context of State-sponsored Violence.”

Other Programs

- A Hunger for God: Ten Approaches to Prayer, published in 1991, is the latest achievement of the BC University-at-Prayer Series sponsored by the Jesuit Community and the Chaplain’s Office. The University-at-Prayer Series ran for two and a half years and brought together faculty, staff, students and to address the question, What does it mean to pray? Ten notable presentations made during the series have been preserved in A Hunger for God.

- Several ongoing retreat programs promote Jesuit identity at Boston College. The Jesuit Community sponsors regular weekend retreats for faculty and staff of all faiths to discuss what it means to work and teach at a university that is Catholic and Jesuit. These Cohasset Weekends (named for the Cohasset, Massachusetts, Jesuit retreat house where they take place) began in 1983. They provide a way of promoting Boston College’s aspiration to be a place where religious and moral values are important to the professional lives of all who work there.

Since 1974, Boston College has sponsored Andover Weekends, six retreats per year sponsored by the office of the academic vice president and designed to enable faculty to explore in a communal way the process of teaching and, specifically, the experience of teaching at a Jesuit university. Charles Donovan SJ was academic vice president when the program was founded. It has proved to be especially valuable for new faculty, with members of the Jesuit community participating in a discussion of issues related to the Jesuit and Catholic character of Boston College, in addition to issues related to teaching in general.

James Skehan SJ, director of the university’s Weston Observatory, directs nineteenth-annotation retreats for faculty each semester; the series has resulted in a book by Father Skehan entitled Place Me with Your Son: Ignatian Spirituality in Everyday Life, the third edition of which was published in 1991 by Georgetown University Press.

The Boston College Chaplain’s Office sponsors weekend Ignatian Retreats held twice a semester primarily for juniors and seniors. The retreats allow students to explore their faith and questions about everyday life, post-graduation relationships with family and classmates, and the integration of Catholic faith and career.

- The university’s Burns Library holds a significant collection of Jesuit memorabilia and writings available for faculty, staff, and special guests to use as reference materials and as means to educate themselves about the lives and works of Jesuits and Jesuit ideals. The Jesuitana Collection, part of the university’s John J. Burns Library of Rare Books and Special Collections, is among the most complete compilations of Jesuitiana in the United States, housing some 2,000 volumes of Jesuit-related material dating from the time of the Society’s founding. The collection documents the significant contributions of Jesuits to the fields of mathematics, science, history, travel, philosophy, and biblical exegesis.

- Boston College Magazine, the university’s quarterly alumni publication, devotes at least one feature per issue to a subject related to the Jesuit mission.
In ways large and small, individual and collective, public and hidden from view, Boston College consistently shares its knowledge and resources with others for the betterment of the human family. The following sample of BC's programs illustrates this commitment to service.

Pioneered on campus in 1970, PULSE involves approximately 200 students each year in a combination of social action and academic reflection to heighten social awareness and responsibility among students. At the same time, PULSE provides critical volunteer services to some of the city’s most needy community agencies. Volunteer opportunities range from shelters for the homeless, halfway houses, and hospitals, to environment projects and local jails. PULSE is based on the principles of inquiry, reflection, action and community. Its intent is to provide students with an increasingly critical understanding of social problems, greater self-knowledge and an appreciation of and skills for social change.

In an effort to address the rising dropout rate among high-school students of color in the Boston public schools, members of AHANA—African-American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American students at Boston College—have become tutors and role models for a group of Boston elementary-school students. Project 2000 is designed to strike at the roots of the dropout problem by offering academic help and encouragement to students in fourth grade, a level at which many students begin to lose interest in school.

Each summer since 1990, the university has sent a number of Boston College students to Belize, Central America. These Ignacio Volunteers conduct a summer camp for nearly 100 poor school children and perform community-service work.

Other outreach programs include Urban Immersion, which takes students to live in urban communities and work as volunteers in programs for the elderly, the homeless, and people in low-income-housing projects.

Second Helping delivers surplus food from restaurants to emergency kitchens in the city. First Serve helps rehabilitate low-income housing sites. Computer Camp provides Boston College doctoral students as tutors to inner-city youth during a summer computer program. The Chinatown Program enables second- and third-year law students to be exposed to social, economic, political, and legal issues concerning the Greater Boston Asian community.