

process, something being developed. It cares about the heart of education as wisdom but honors the craft of research and publication. Some say that it wants the best of both worlds academic excellence and ethical and religious reflection. It does. It is a model that sees the Jesuit/Ignatian character of the college and university as a purchase on being Catholic and Jewish and Muslim and Buddhist and agnostic. It does this because it trusts honest dialogue and reverent conversation as the coin of the realm of the intellect and the key to the house of wisdom. We might call this a Mission Model of education.^[9]

This sequence of models may reflect the larger context of change in higher education in the U.S. Perceptions, over the last fifty years, of what a college education offers and what the economic culture demands seem to have gone through similar shifts. Students who in the fifties expected to become "organization men" (surely a control model) and learned, in the eighties, to think of themselves as professionals with portable, equal-opportunity skills, may now be saying: skills, yes, but also creativity and the kind of critical thinking that will make us successful entrepreneurs. In the nineties, loyalty is not to an organization or to a professional guild but is self-directed. Another way of saying this is that there has been a shift in what it means to be a "whole person."

Interestingly, the evolution in computing also parallels these three models. The first computers were big brains taking up whole floors of buildings, with anxious attendants caring for and feeling these centralized authorities. Then, we had the revolution of the personal computer, in which educated professionals could tap directly into the central authority of the server (i.e. "get wired") and then move on with authority of their own. (Consider the ecclesial parallel of women and lay men earning PhDs in theology during this period.) Now we are into the wireless age, the age of the Internet, in which the idea of information as a stable body is being redefined, and in which being hardwired to the central authority is limiting, not freeing. New software (e.g. Napster) allows users to communicate directly from computer to computer, bypassing servers altogether. In this milieu, professional credentials and authority are much more pragmatic than foundational, the ability to navigate more important than the contents of the cargo.

Looked at this way, the three models we are proposing have not been generated by Jesuit education or unique to it; they are pragmatic institutional adaptations to paradigm shifts in the wider culture. This point suggests a useful warning. IBM almost self-destructed when it thought it was in the office-machine business, but it reinvented itself when it realized it was in the information business. Jesuit colleges and universities are in the education business, but we are also conveyors of a certain kind of experiential wisdom and formation. A conception of Jesuit education that can make a compelling case for the particular genius of the Catholic and Jesuit approach for our time will be one that can argue that the formative process of this model of education produces not just knowledge, skills, and cultural savvy but also a depth of reflection, maturity, and spiritual character that marks the way its graduates approach the world. This would be a conception of Jesuit education that could enhance and focus the mission of all Jesuit colleges and universities.

4. CURRENT ISSUES

If this Mission Model accurately describes the present situation of Jesuit colleges and universities, then several challenges would seem to be at the center of the current discussion. How can we integrate head and heart in students education, the formal curriculum with the hidden one that focuses on identity formation, affectivity, relationships, ethical commitments, and vocational discernment? Today, students are like patients in a medical center, parceled out among specialists. The big disconnect is between the classroom and the rest of student's lives. We have created a parallel curriculum in which students can address this split (cornerstone and capstone programs, leadership programs, internships, retreats, service programs that have a heavy dimension of life-changing reflection, etc.), thus reinforcing the very split we want to heal. Do we want to accept this dichotomy? Or do we want to admit that we have two missions, an academic one and a formative one, and find ways of enabling students to integrate the two, to connect intellectual commitment with spiritual maturation and a sense of how they can use their talents in satisfying work that makes a difference in the world?



How can we introduce a discussion of the university's mission into the hiring process? For faculty this process is usually department-based and, typically, the single criterion is professional competence as this is defined by the disciplinary guild nationally. Deans may have a veto but, in our experience, this is a rarely used and blunt weapon. The issue is no less acute with student-life administrators, who may have as little experience as faculty do of education that values ethical and religious reflection as well as academic excellence. What kind of process would enable deans, faculty and administrators to move from a purely professional model to include a mission model of hiring?

How is a Jesuit university related to the institutional Catholic Church? The question makes many people nervous. Most of us are more comfortable talking about Jesuit education rather than Catholic education (cf. David J. O'Brien's thoughtful article in *Conversations*). Students routinely say they are "spiritual but not religious." Formal church affiliation is problematic for many. Not a few older faculty and staff describe themselves as "recovering Catholics." In some Jesuit institutions fewer than half the undergraduates are Catholic. *Ex Corde* has forced the issue into the open. The document asserts the autonomy of the Catholic university but appears to envision mainly a Control Model of the relationship between institutional church and university. Is there a place in the Mission Model for a healthy relationship of the two? Can both institutions support and challenge one another in productive ways? Can the hierarchical church live with, and even support, the evolving and not-yet-fully-determinate quality of Catholic universities?

How do we conceptualize and describe the role of Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists in a Jesuit university? Or, for that matter, of agnostics and atheists? Well intentioned language is often a problem here. People are sensitive to being described as "welcome." If you have been a faculty member for 25 years, who is "welcoming" you and why? The implication that some are empowered to welcome sits uneasily with those who are welcomed. Frank Clooney,



in a recent issue of *Conversations*, has written on this topic in helpful ways ("Jesuit colleges and universities should promote religious diversity and dialogue in an authentically religious way")^[10] but we are a long way from being able to do this gracefully and habitually. One approach to the complex of issues arising from the diversity of belief in the university community could be to find ways of translating the apparently monolithic idea of Jesuit/Catholic identity and mission into categories that widen the conversation by making it more attractive and intelligible to larger groups of colleagues. Social justice is a clear example of a topic about which large numbers of faculty and staff share commitments. Other areas around which colleagues of quite different belief traditions might be invited into a productive conversation include ethics, student formation, teaching and research as vocations, and diversity of religious experience itself.

As more men and women in Jesuit institutions indicate a willingness to take responsibility for developing the Ignatian aspects of the institutional mission, how can time and resources be organized to help them do this? Once, they would have grown up in a religious culture that understood Jesuit education implicitly. Now we are asking them to take on a form of intellectual and spiritual development, in addition to their own academic and professional development. Moreover, we are asking them to take something that has normally been privatized and bring it into the public forum; they may have to struggle with their colleagues to make their views credible and practical. Have we begun to think about what's involved in developing this new kind of university citizen?

How can institutions share resources in this area of mission and identity? Jesuit colleges and universities cooperate in some remarkable ways (for example, the joint MBA program and the new AJCU distance-learning initiative, not to mention all the official and unofficial networks sponsored by AJCU) but in other respects (faculty and staff recruiting, especially of Jesuits) they often compete. Will the larger and better endowed institutions be able to develop institutes, centers, and programs that successfully address mission and identity issues,



leaving the smaller ones to do what they can with limited resources? Can we find ways of sharing our successes with one another? Generosity need not be one-directional. Some of the smaller institutions may have already clearly identified what they want to do and found ways of integrating the Professional Model and the Mission Model that could be instructive to the larger universities. The point is that we should be more conscious of how we can collaborate and more generous in following this up.

Whose criteria are we going to use to evaluate ourselves? The stakes are high. If the Professional Model prevails, we will have one set of ideas about the kind of students we admit, the advice we give younger faculty members about how to spend their time, and the way we think about residence-hall life. Will trustees set priorities entirely according to US News and World Report rankings in some ways the apotheosis of the Professional Model? Or can we imagine having the confidence to embrace the excellence implied by these rankings but also to define our own niche in the panoply of higher education and to evaluate our successes according to a model in which faith and learning persist in honest dialogue and reverent conversation?

Finally, can we work out a language that enables us to deal with the complex reality of our experience in this area? Writing this essay, we have struggled with the word "identity," long used to describe the central issue, even interchangeably with "mission." We have discovered that for many identity is a problematic term. They would say its connotations are static, essentialist, even coercive. It implies a distinction between those who share the identity and those who do not. Or it implies a false ideal of unity, one that either blurs desirable differences or tries to include so many views that its meaning gets watered down to plain vanilla versions of identity for example, tolerance of diversity. From this point of view mission is a more flexible and useful term. A mission can be assessed and evaluated, whereas claims about identity provoke arguments. Emphasizing mission enables people to choose among a variety of ways of contributing to the mission. It better captures the evolutionary



style of Jesuit education. And it is familiar academic language, at least in the U.S.

For others, mission is the less appealing term. It suggests a set of goals imposed by a few or by those in authority. Identity, on the other hand, is created by all the people in the institution. The term validates diversity. It says that nothing is being imposed on you, that you can take advantage of the resources the institution offers, that not every university has to be the same and that it's quite reasonable for an institution to have a distinct identity. It says that it is easier to find common places to work than to find common places to believe.

Clearly, the terms are equally problematic. Perhaps the truth behind these nuances of perception is that both terms are objectionable when they suggest a totalizing and exclusionary concept of mission or identity and that both are acceptable when they suggest that there are multiple ways of contributing to the mission and multiple forms of identity that can embody the spirit of Jesuit education. If so, we might go so far as to call this a postmodern version of the original inspiration of Jesuit education. Nothing is clearer, from the history of Jesuit educational practice, than that it was endlessly adaptive to time and place and the needs of those who sought it.

We began by noting that the current discussion is a good thirty years old. In fact, it seems to be as old as Jesuit education itself, which would mean that it has lasted four-and-a-half centuries. And, if we see it in continuity with the lively debate among the ancients, which the Renaissance revived, about the relationship between scientific and moral education, it can be traced back to Athens and the arguments between the philosophers and the sophists. We may be able to pause here, survey the scene, and draw some useful conclusions about our own predicaments but, in keeping with the flexible and adaptive style of Jesuit education, there seems little likelihood that the discussion will end soon.

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NOTES:

1. [\[Back to text\]](#) J. A. Appleyard, S.J., is Vice President for University Mission and Ministry at Boston College. Howard Gray, S.J., is director of the Center for Ignatian Spirituality at Boston College.
2. [\[Back to text\]](#). W. Ward Gasque, "What We Can Learn About Higher Education from the Jesuits," in *Should God Get Tenure?: Essays on Religion and Higher Education*, ed. David W. Gill (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 181. To be fair to Gasque, he is looking more at the history of Jesuit education than at present issues, stressing the continuity of vision from the Spiritual Exercises, the Constitutions of the Society, and the early versions of the *Ratio Studiorum* into Jesuit schools of the 19th and 20th centuries.
3. [\[Back to text\]](#) Alice Gallin, O.S.U., ed., *American Catholic Higher Education: Essential Documents, 1967-1990* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 7-12.
4. [\[Back to text\]](#) Martin R. Tripole, S.J., ed., *Jesuit Education 21 : Conference Proceedings on the Future of Jesuit Higher Education* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2000). A selection of the most important titles would include: Michael J. Buckley, S.J., *The Catholic University as Promise and Project: Reflections in a Jesuit Idiom* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1998); James T. Burtchaell, C.S.C., *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Paul FitzGerald, S.J., *The Governance of Jesuit Colleges and Universities in the United States, 1920-1970* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984); Alice Gallin, O.S.U., *Independence and a New Partnership in Catholic Education* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996); Gallin, *Negotiating Identity: Catholic Higher Education Since 1960* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000); Philip Gleason, *Contending With Modernity: Catholic Higher Education in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); George Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., ed., *The Challenge*



and Promise of A Catholic University (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994); David J. O'Brien, *From the Heart of the American Church: Catholic Higher Education and American Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994); Mark R. Schwehn, *Exiles From Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Martin R. Tripole, S.J., *Promise Renewed: Jesuit Higher Education for a New Millenium* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1999).

5. [\[Back to text\]](#) Cf. the issue of *Conversations* dedicated to "Service Learning" and especially the seminal article by Patrick Byrne, "Paradigms of Justice and Love," *Conversations* 7 (Spring, 1995), pp. 5-17.
6. [\[Back to text\]](#) . Thomas M. Landy, "Catholic Studies at Catholic Colleges and Universities," *America* 178:1 (January 3, 1998), 12-15.
7. [\[Back to text\]](#) Burtchaell, *Dying of the Light*, 620.
8. [\[Back to text\]](#) . We are indebted to Prof. Nancy A. Dallavalle, of Fairfield University, for this insight and for the computer analogy.
9. [\[Back to text\]](#) "Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education: Jesuit Sì, Catholic... Not So Sure," *Conversations* 6 (Fall, 1994), pp. 4-12.
10. [\[Back to text\]](#) . Francis X. Clooney, S.J., "Goddess in the Classroom: Is the Promotion of Religious Diversity a Dangerous Idea?," *Conversations* 16 (Fall, 1999), p. 31.

