

## Exploring Mission: A Primer

### Exploring the Jesuit and Catholic dimensions of the university's mission

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In its mission statement, web pages, admission brochures, and other ways Boston College identifies itself as a Catholic and Jesuit university.

Many in the BC community—alumni, students, their parents, faculty and administrative staff—will have very clear ideas about what these two terms "Catholic" and "Jesuit" mean. Not surprisingly, though, given the changing world we live in and the diverse backgrounds we come from, these ideas might vary considerably from person to person.

And many who come to Boston College as students or new faculty and staff members will have only a hazy idea of what these terms mean and will find themselves for the first time reflecting on their significance, especially in a university setting.

Many have asked for help in finding information that will answer their questions about the university's distinctive identity. They will find that they are entering a lively conversation that has been going on for some time and that shows no sign of flagging.

We don't usually talk much about things that are very clear to us and which we take for granted. Talk about the mission and identity of Catholic and Jesuit universities, therefore, might at first glance be interpreted as evidence that mission and identity are in question, not always well understood, or perhaps not fully the object of shared agreement. But such talk can also be interpreted as a sign of vitality and of commitment to working out ideas that are centrally important to our institutional self-understanding and yet not fully integrated into the other dimensions of our professional lives.

Gathered here are some resources for this quest. A caution is in order, though. Any list of recommended articles and books like this one will, of course, only scratch the surface of a complex topic. **Users of this site who want to recommend additional resources or who wish to comment on the ones mentioned here are encouraged to [contact us](#).**

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[Religion and the Academy](#) is an overview of the debate on religion's place in the academy and the growing phenomenon of secularization.

[Catholicism](#) explores some questions about a Catholic university that can only be answered by looking more closely at Catholicism itself.

[A Catholic University](#) looks through the historical documents and statements that have come out of the Boston College community.



[Jesuits](#) is a primer on Jesuit history and pedagogy with bibliographical sources and links to important websites.

[A Jesuit University](#) explores the idea of a modern Jesuit university from several angles.