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IGNATIAN VALUES IN THE CORE CURRICULUM

Justice, Citizenship, and Reflection for a Globalizing World

By Diane Jonte-Pace and Phyllis Brown

As educators at Jesuit colleges and universities, we have high expectations for our core curricula. Not only should our curricula provide students with knowledge, skills, and values that will prepare them well for careers, for citizenship, and for ethical leadership; our curricula should also be deeply informed by Ignatian values, which will, in turn, inform our students' lives. As we periodically rethink our curricula to ensure that they meet these expectations, we must consider what curricular content will best prepare our students for our increasingly complex global world, and what pedagogies will most effectively help today's students achieve our learning goals.

In this essay we examine three major resources for revising the core curriculum in Jesuit universities, commenting on how each can contribute to an integrated Ignatian core, guiding us toward answers to our questions about content and pedagogy. Our rich Jesuit tradition is one of these resources. Two other important resources are contemporary publications about promoting citizenship in higher education and about supporting student learning through assessment.

I. Jesuit Education

The Constitutions

We focus here on just two moments of particular innovation in the 450 year history of Jesuit education: 1554, the year of Ignatius' earliest formulations of an educational vision in the Constitutions of the

Society, and 2008, the year the Society of Jesus issued a new vision for Jesuit mission and education in General Congregation 35.

Although education was not part of Ignatius of Loyola's original vision for the Society of Jesus, the early Jesuits quickly became known as excellent and committed educators, creating schools and colleges for lay students and establishing centers at European universities for Jesuits and lay students to live in community. In 1554 Ignatius sketched a vision of education or *paideia* for these institutions, emphasizing socially relevant goals: education was to lead to moral goodness, a devotion to truth, and a disposition to act for the civic good. Ignatius identified the study of the humanities as the path to that goal: the content of this early Jesuit curriculum included the *trivium* (grammar, logic, and letters) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music), along with philosophy and science, fine arts, and theology. And he articulated a structure and order for the introduction of each component of the curriculum. Subjects were introduced in sequence, leading from the lesser to the more significant — culminating in theology, then seen as the queen of the sciences, the highest and most inclusive form of knowing.

If we can be forgiven a bit of anachronism, we might say that Ignatius' 1554 vision of *paideia* sketched out the first integrated Ignatian core curriculum. Its clear goals, its emphasis on the civic good, and its developmental pedagogical framework anticipate important later developments in higher education that continue to shape our understanding of best practices in the content and pedagogy of core curricula.

General Congregation 35

The Jesuit statement of mission and identity issued in 2008, “The Decrees of General Congregation 35” (GC 35) articulate a vision for Ignatian works, focusing in particular on the education of the young. GC 35 urges Jesuits to focus their labors on universities and research institutes and to embrace an “an engagement that is long term...in the education of youth [and] in intellectual research” (2.13). The vision of pedagogy and content of GC 35 is activist, justice-oriented, and applied: “research results and advocacy [must] have effective practical benefits for society and the environment” (3.35); education must pursue active, collaborative experience; the focus must be on practical solutions to major social problems (6.9). The document urges a specific focus on globalization, technology, and environment. It emphasizes human responsibility for the future at the core of these concerns: globalization, technology, and environmental concerns have “challenged our traditional boundaries and enhanced our awareness that we bear a common responsibility for the welfare of the world and its development in a sustainable and life giving way” (2.20).

With its emphasis on global development and poverty, on the welfare of the world, GC 35 draws our attention to justice as an important theme for our curricula. Although not explicitly in the Constitutions, justice was nevertheless embedded in the fabric of the lives and practices of the Jesuits, who, from their earliest years, have been dedicated to helping the poor and the sick, not only in Europe but throughout the globe. GC 35 also issues a clear call for a pedagogy of engagement, urging that we “engage the world through careful analysis of context, in dialogue with experience, evaluated through reflection, for the sake of action, and with openness, always, to evaluation” (6.9). Thus, the emphasis in GC 35 on active engagement with issues related to justice and globalization is very much part of the long tradition of Jesuit education.



Statue of Saint Ignatius, University of Scranton.

The rich traditions of Jesuit education, therefore, demand an integrated core curriculum with global justice as a primary goal. An integrated Ignatian core curriculum should

- extend and deepen knowledge with the goal of comprehending the forces that have shaped the world we have inherited and the ways the world is interpreted and understood
- cultivate habits of mind and heart that allow positive contributions to a rapidly changing, complex, and

- interdependent world
- foster engaged citizenship and refined self-knowledge in relation to others.

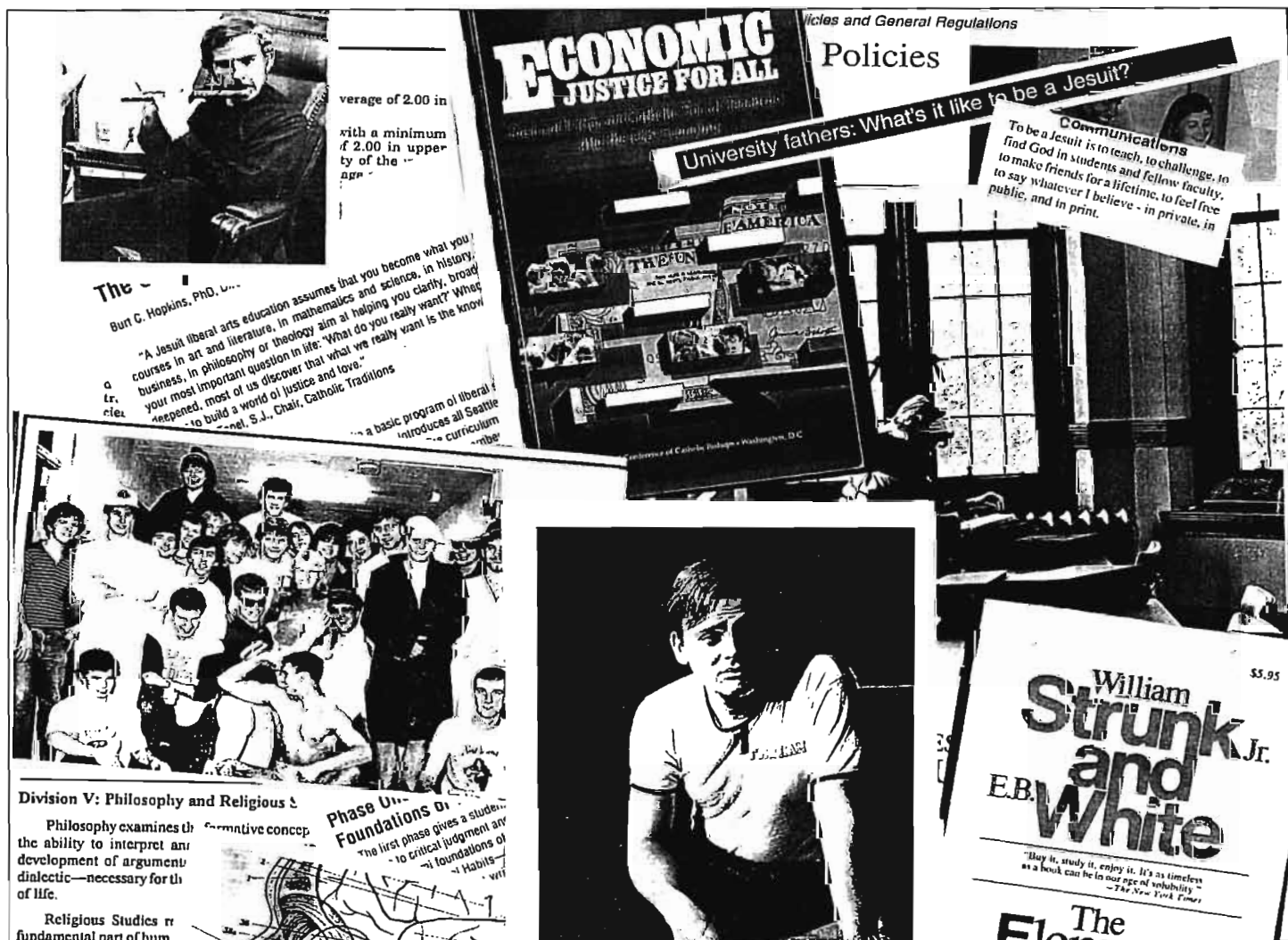
II. National Discourses about Education and Civic Engagement

Though young compared to the Society of Jesus, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has been working to improve higher education since 1915. Identifying five areas of advancement fundamental to institutional purpose and educational practice in higher education, the AAC&U emphasizes:

- a guiding vision for liberal education
- inclusive excellence
- intentional and integrative learning
- civic, diversity, and global engagement
- authentic evidence.

The AAC&U guiding vision, “to prepare *all* college students for effective citizenship, personal growth, and professional success,” aligns well with GC 35’s emphasis on collaboration “in respectful dialogue and shared reflection, in labor alongside those similarly engaged who walk a different pathway” (6.15). The goal of engaged citizenship that permeates AAC&U’s research and publications on best educational practices can combine with the Jesuit emphasis on community understood in a global context. Advocating education for “personal and social responsibility for a world lived in common,” the AAC&U urges that curricula include civic, ethical, intercultural and global learning, and that pedagogies “create models for engaging diversity, democracy, interdependence, inequalities, and societal challenges” (http://www.aacu.org/About/strategic_plan.cfm).

In 2007, building on this vision of education for citizenship for all students, AAC&U identified four learning outcomes essential to preparing students for twenty-first-century challenges:



- Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring (through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts).
- Intellectual and practical skills practiced across the curriculum through progressively more challenging problems and projects (including inquiry and analysis; critical and creative thinking; written and oral communication; quantitative literacy; information literacy; and teamwork and problem solving).
- Personal and social responsibility anchored in active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges (through civic knowledge and engagement, intercultural knowledge and competence; ethical reasoning and action; and skills for lifelong learning).
- Integrative and applied learning, demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems (through synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies).

The work AAC&U has done in articulating best practices in liberal education aligns well with the key components of the Ignatian tradition identified above, and provides an excellent framework for implementation of Jesuit ideas and ideals in Core curricula.

III. Assessment of Student Learning

Both AAC&U and the Jesuit tradition attend to a kind of reflection that is fundamental to teaching, learning and assessment. AAC&U advocates assessment practices that deepen and integrate student learning and provide authentic evidence of student achievement. And the Jesuit tradition supports an emphasis on learning-centered education that focuses on the student but, at the same time, emphasizes the responsibility of the instructor as the crucial intermediary in the learning process.

Assessment in the academic context involves supporting student learning through a cycle of articulating clear learning objectives, asking whether students have achieved those objectives, and making adjustments as needed. GC 35 echoes this attention to evaluation and assessment at several points, most notably in reference to an “openness to evaluation” that follows analysis, experience, and reflection. This openness to evaluation emerges from the Ignatian tradition of discernment, development of the inner life, and careful self reflection: openness to evaluation and discernment are not far from what we now call assessment. The *Spiritual Exercises* might, in fact, be considered an early precursor of an “assessment” exercise.

From this perspective, assessment is neither complex nor new. Most of us do it informally with every course we teach: we reflect on what worked; we make changes to better support student learning the next day or the next semester. The innovation lies in making this familiar informal assessment process more systematic, more public, and more explicit in its analysis of authentic evidence of student learning.

The research on assessment suggests – and our own experience confirms – that students benefit from metacognitive reflection on their own learning process, and that faculty benefit from authentic assessment that involves reflection on pedagogy and student learning. Authentic assessment asks questions that engage us as teachers and identifies measures of learning that can be evaluated without creating intolerable demands on our time. Authentic assessment is meaningful and manageable. Call it structured reflection or discernment or assessment – by whatever name, it enhances our teaching and learning and is a crucial component of the integrated Ignatian core curriculum.

IV. Conclusion

These insights from the Jesuit tradition, the AAC&U tradition, and the assessment tradition suggest answers to our questions about the content and pedagogy in an integrated Ignatian Core. They point toward Core Curricula that emphasize justice and the civic good and that focus on globalization, technology, and environmental concerns. The three resources suggest a clear goal-oriented approach to student learning; a developmental pedagogy of increasingly complex learning opportunities, and assessment practices that provide time and opportunity for reflection on learning. They suggest a pedagogy of engagement marked by relational, collaborative, active learning.

As educators at Jesuit institutions, we can draw on the three resources identified here to develop integrated Ignatian core curricula that will, in the words of GC 35, “engage the world,” through “experience and analysis,” complemented by “reflection and action,” and always, with “openness to evaluation.”

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