

Santa Clara University

Scholar Commons

English

College of Arts & Sciences

2018

Community and Conscience Formation

Phyllis R. Brown

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/engl>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#), and the [Social Justice Commons](#)

This Book Chapter is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Arts & Sciences at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in English by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact rscroggin@scu.edu.



Community and Conscience Formation

PHYLLIS R. BROWN¹

The three Cs, competence, conscience, and compassion, are fundamental to Santa Clara University's distinctive identity as a Jesuit and Catholic university. However, a fourth C, community—and communities within communities—provides a context for conscience formation through dialogue and critical engagement not only with the academic subject matter of course work but also outside the classroom with the wicked problems facing humanity. This chapter will explore ways individuals and programs at Santa Clara University (SCU) invite students to experience communities in classroom and co-curricular settings that encourage dialogue, critical engagement, and social consciousness aimed at fostering the greater good. This engagement is not limited to Catholic social consciousness and most often does not result in formation in the usual religious sense. Rather it is central to SCU's goal of "a community that is enriched by people of different backgrounds, respectful of the dignity of all its members, enlivened by

¹ Phyllis R. Brown is Professor of English at Santa Clara University, where she has been on the faculty since 1982. She earned her MA and Ph.D. from the English Department at the University of Oregon. Before returning full-time to the English Department in 2015, she served as Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies (2010-15) and Director of the Undergraduate Core Curriculum (2008-12). She publishes articles on learning, education, and medieval literature.

open communication, and caring and just toward others.”² However, cultivation of respect and caring in a diverse community is not easy, and it requires awareness of the complexity of identity formation as well as attention to individuals’ intellectual and social growth.

When undergraduates begin their education at SCU as first-year students, they are welcomed into one of eight residential learning communities (RLCs). Outreach and community building begin, however, before students arrive on campus fall term. Communication with prospective, admitted, and matriculated students is shaped around the values and goals that make Santa Clara distinctive. For many years Orientation has been divided into seven sessions to allow personal attention to each student, and the RLC faculty and staff begin building community and clarifying community values during these sessions. More recently, Santa Clara’s Center for Student Involvement has sent incoming students and their parents Bronco Prep Guides, weekly online newsletters with reminders and information about resources to help them prepare for summer orientation, Welcome Weekend, and the students’ transition to college. Since 2016, these newsletters include a brief note on Values.³ For example, the second Prep Guide sent 5 May 2017 (and 2 June 2016) draws on the Community Handbook to define integrity:

As a member of this community, I will practice personal and academic integrity. Living this value looks like:

- Being a “person of conscience,” a person who acts ethically, whose decisions reflect moral sensitivity, judgment, commitment, and courage.
- Showing consistency in my beliefs, my words, and my actions personally and professionally.

² Santa Clara University “Mission, Vision, Values,” <https://www.scu.edu/aboutscu/mission-vision-values/>.

³ An archive of Bronco Prep Guides is available at <https://www.scu.edu/orientation/guides/>.

- Being honest, responsible, and accountable in my scholarly activities, making course work my top priority, and taking credit only for my own work.
- Accepting responsibility for my own actions and holding others accountable for their actions.

In 2017, in response to events described below, the Prep Guides were expanded from 8 editions to 21, and a second brief note, “Know Your Latin and Other Jesuit Terms,” was added to many of the weekly messages. The first two Jesuit terms introduced new students and their parents to *cura personalis* and *magis*, articulating the relationship between the care for the whole person and for a “greater universal good.”⁴ Subsequent Prep Guides in 2017 define a rich array of concepts and values central to Jesuit education with links to additional information for those who want to learn more. Among the additions are definitions of competence, conscience, and compassion with a link to a page on the Provost’s website, “Modeling Competence, Conscience, and Compassion,” with brief stories about student, staff, and faculty actions.⁵ Orientation and Welcome Weekend sessions emphasize these values and recently added oral and written affirmation of a pledge: “I am committed to being a person of integrity. I pledge, as a member of the Santa Clara University community, to abide by and uphold the standards of academic integrity contained in the Student Conduct Code.”

However, “Welcome to Claradise,” a play written and performed at SCU during spring of the 2016-17 academic year, explored many of the

⁴ In “What Magis Really Means and Why It Matters,” *Jesuit Higher Education* 1.2 (2012), 18, Barton T. Geger discusses the range of meanings associated with *magis* and the emphasis on its association with the greater or more universal good specified during Jesuit General Congregation 35. Geger explains that the idea of *magis*, though clearly related to the Jesuit motto *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* (to the greater glory of God), originated sometime in the 1950s, 17-19.

⁵ Santa Clara University, “Modeling Competence, Conscience & Compassion,” <https://www.scu.edu/provost/modeling-competence-conscience--compassion/>.

ways SCU has fallen short of meeting our goals.⁶ Anna Deavere Smith, 2016-7 Artist in Residence, provided the inspiration for the play, which dramatized the words of Santa Clara community members. Playwright Brian Thorstenson described the process as starting with questions designed to provide some interesting material. Those questions were printed in the school newspaper October 19, 2016:

1. Can you tell me a story when your idea of SCU was disrupted?
2. Can you tell me a story about experiencing a moment of grace at SCU?
3. Tell me a story when you said something that you regretted saying.
4. What would you/have you said in confidence or privately that you wouldn't say publicly?
5. Can you tell me about a time you were outraged by something someone said/or posted online and how you responded.⁷

Not long after research for the play began, it became clear that incidents on campus between September 19 and October 8 as well as

⁶ Using a play to explore the complexities of living and learning in a diverse society is a development of a characteristic of Jesuit education from the beginning. In "Andrea Perrucci's *Dell'arte Rappresentativa* and the Influence of Jesuit Theater," *Music as Cultural Mission: Explorations of Jesuit Practices in Italy and North America*, ed. Anna Harwell Celenza and Anthony R. DelDonna (Saint Joseph's UP, 2014), Francesco Cotticelli writes, "In Jesuit circles theatrical performances involved the circulation of ideas, the refinement of debating techniques, and above all reverence for the dignity of human beings." (p. 47) and "Since the founding of their first collegio in 1548, the Jesuits have looked to their schools as the most effective and efficient way of promoting the 'common good.'" Their central goal has been to broaden the Society's distinctive apostolic ministry through intellectual, civic, and cultural engagement." A 1511 letter to Ignatius specifies, "Those who are now only students will grow up to be pastors, civic officials, administrators of justice, and will fill other important posts to everybody's profit and advantage," (p. 45).

⁷ "Welcome to Claradise' – Questions," *The Santa Clara* October 20, 2016: <http://thesantaclara.org/welcome-to-claradise-questions/#.WUQ4qvytaR>; Brian Thorstenson, "Behind 'Welcome to Claradise,'" YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niF_-sIH0NQ.

student and administrative responses to the incidents would provide a focus for the play. Advertising for the resulting play specified,

Majestic palm trees. Bountiful sunshine. Wide walkways winding between adobe and tiled buildings. A perfect place for study, reflection, and discussion. Using techniques pioneered by Sinatra Visiting Artist Anna Deavere Smith, and coordinated with her residency at SCU in February 2017, this new documentary play invites the community to use their own words to take an inward view at SCU and address what happens when there's trouble in paradise.

The trouble in paradise included acts of vandalism that could be classified as hate crimes. During the week when classes began in September, 2016, students damaged an outdoor art installation, a tribute to 43 students who were kidnapped in Iguala, Guerrero, Mexico in 2014. SCU security video captured images of groups of students punching and karate chopping the cardboard figures representing the Mexican students on September 19, 20, and 23. The October 6 issue of *The Santa Clara* included a message from University President Fr. Michael Engh specifying that the vandalism “violates everything we stand for as a community” and urging members of the campus community “to engage in dialogue that is not destructive, but constructive.” Fr. Engh also wrote, “The violation of the work, ideas and property of others diminishes trust within our community. Instead, we must support one another in our individual expressions of who we are and what we value.” He went on to emphasize solidarity within a diverse and inclusive community as a means to achieve social justice.⁸

Included in Fr. Engh's message to the community were examples of progress toward these goals and acknowledgement that there is still much work yet to be done to live up to our ideals of inclusion and solidarity. The way forward begins with integrity, integrity in which we hold ourselves and each other accountable for our words and actions. We must all remain vigilant against attacks on open dialogue and civil discourse. We all have a responsibility as members of this

⁸ “An Honest Conversation,” *The Santa Clara* <http://thesantaclara.org/an-honest-conversation/#.WUq7NevyuM8>.

community not only to treat others with respect, but to encourage that same treatment from our peers.

Fr. Engh reminded his readers, “In instances of injustice or aggression, speak out. To remain silent is to accept these acts as part of who we are.” Although Fr. Engh’s message did not include the words “conscience” or “compassion,” conscience formation featuring care and respect are dominant themes of his message.

Then during the night on October 8, a swastika was painted with blood in an elevator and slurs against members of the LGBTQ community were written on posters in one of the RLCs. University response to these violations of community conduct standards was complicated when images from the surveillance videos of the incidents were made public. An article by Sophie Mattson in *The Santa Clara* reported on October 13,

A group identifying itself as SCUWatch posted the footage [of the students vandalizing the art installation in September] on the video-sharing website vidme on Oct. 12, and emailed the link to several members of the campus community on Oct. 13. The leak is the second of its kind this week—CCTV footage showing two students using their own blood to draw on a poster in a Casa Italiana Residence Hall elevator was posted on YouTube on Monday, Oct. 11.⁹

Concern about the ethical implications of the leaked videos subsequently became part of the University’s investigation into and concern about the September and October incidents. On October 12, Jeanne Rosenberger, Vice Provost for Student Life and Dean of Students, followed up on her October 9 email to the University community about the incident in the RLC. Not only were the City of Santa Clara police and campus leaders investigating the “disturbing vandalism”; a new investigation was under way to “determine how surveillance video from the ongoing confidential investigation was disseminated without authorization.” Rosenberger’s email also

⁹ “New Leak of Surveillance Footage,” *The Santa Clara*, <http://thesantaclara.org/new-leak-of-surveillance-footage-depicting-vandalism-of-43-students-memorial/#.WUqt2evyuM9>.

reminded the community about the university's responsibility to use "limited video surveillance to protect our students, faculty, staff, and guests while respecting their privacy."

"Welcome to Claradise" became a means to engage with challenges, tensions, and opportunities related to cultivating and supporting diverse and inclusive communities on campus. Interviews with students, staff (including senior administrators), and faculty provided the words of the play as the student actors dramatized the tensions implicit in the diverse perspectives on the events of fall quarter and other similarly fraught incidents from earlier years. The play explored the frustration of students whose frequent experiences of micro-aggressions intensified their reaction to the violence and hatred of the fall events. It also explored the need for the administration to conduct investigations in ways that would protect the rights of the victims and the accused and work toward a larger goal of learning for all involved. In "talk-backs" after each performance, students and faculty involved in the play reported on ways the script changed with each performance in response to feedback from audiences.

The talk backs were also able to respond to an open mic event called "Nothing About Us Without Us," organized by the Ethnic Studies Club and approved to take place on the lawn outside the theater during the opening night of the play. The application for the open mic event, which aimed to provide opportunities for expression in multiple creative ways, specified, "This event will provide members of the Santa Clara University community, especially students of color, with the opportunity to have their voices heard and experiences affirmed." One motivation for the open mic event was the absence of persons of color in the cast of the play.

Especially important for both the play and the open mic event was a desire for different voices to be heard. The actors described the processes central to development of the dialogue in the play and also spoke about the challenging experience of impersonating individuals with widely varying understanding of the events described. The play, the talk backs, and the open mic event all aimed to provide opportunities for the campus community to respond intellectually and emotionally

to tensions as individuals and groups struggled to provide support for those who felt threatened by the vandalism. The play also aimed to open up understanding of the perpetrators' motivations and respond to the breaches of community standards in ways that would contribute to learning, discernment, and transformation. The open mic event offered creative outlets for expression of the sense of violation experienced by students who felt denied the opportunity to speak for themselves, even when the intentions of the other speakers was to serve the greater good. The play and the open mic event offered all participants and audiences rich opportunities for discernment and for questioning the extent to which Santa Clara's co-curricular programs and Core Curriculum combine successfully to accompany students on a journey of transformation and engagement with the values and goals of the University.

Nevertheless, members of SCU's student organization Unity 4 have clearly communicated that the University needs to do more. Formed in May 2015 as the fourth iteration over twenty years of attempts to communicate with university administration, Unity 4's goal is to participate in changes that would improve the quality of community for students of color. The events of fall 2016 may have encouraged University administration to commit more resources to addressing the list of concerns Unity 4 had submitted to them in May 2015. Significantly, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion provides background and historical information about Unity 4, with links to significant documents and to an account of the history of the Multicultural Community Center.¹⁰ Another outcome was creation of the Jesuit Values in Action Project in the Office for Student Involvement.¹¹

Despite the progress, the experiences of Unity 4 illustrate how difficult dialogue leading to transformative change is. That this difficulty is not unique to SCU is highlighted by focus on "Difficult Conversations" in the spring 2017 issue of *Conversations in Jesuit Higher Education*. Both "Welcome to Claradise" and "Nothing About Us Without Us"

¹⁰ "Unity 4 Information," <https://www.scu.edu/diversity/initiatives-and-reports/unity-4-information/>.

¹¹ "Jesuit Values in Action Project," <https://www.scu.edu/csi/leadership/initiatives/jvia/>

did more to welcome engaged listening than to promote dialogue. The dialogue that was encouraged tended to be between like-minded students rather than between students with differing views. Moreover, it seems likely that the members of the SCU community who would benefit most from listening to the perspectives presented in "Welcome to Claradise" and "Nothing About Us Without Us" did not choose to attend. In *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* Beverly Tatum explores the challenges of cultural transformation and eradicating racism with the powerful image of cultural norms like racism as a moving walkway in an airport. Because racism is embedded in institutional structures, is part of the "flow" of society, we cannot halt it completely. However, as an institution that strives to cultivate values and to exercise virtues through classroom experiences, student life programming, and faculty conversations, students and faculty can be invited to turn against those currents which would diminish human dignity and civil discourse and engage in practices that might transform human society. In other words, we can turn around and walk the other way, and the more people who walk the other way, the better the chance of changing the flow of society.¹²

More attention to the Jesuit and Catholic elements of our tradition is one way to change the flow within our campus communities. But an important element of that attention must be awareness of what Maureen O'Connell calls "clean white conscience," noting that blatantly evil acts are not the only manifestation of racism. She specifies,

Failing to name racism as a cultural phenomenon -- a set of dispositions and perspectives on the world that are collectively learned and symbolically shared -- only perpetuates white complicity in racism. Since few of us have probably ever committed conscious, intentional and deliberate acts of racial hatred, most whites can be assured of our lack of culpability with the events related to the Martin case in Florida and shirk any kind of responsibility for it that others try to foist on us. Catholic social teaching tells us that our consciences are clean.

¹² Beverly Daniel Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race* (Basic Books, 1997; rpt. 2003), 10.

O'Connell continues,

It's this clean white conscience that is the biggest impediment to racial justice. As philosopher Barbara Applebaum noted in her book, *Being White, Being Good*: "White people can reproduce and maintain racist practices, even when, *and especially when*, they believe themselves to be morally good."¹³

Tatum provides evidence from a national survey about racial attitudes in an epilogue to her book:

In a review of national survey data about racial attitudes, Lawrence D. Bobo reported that Whites tend to minimize the contemporary persistence of patterns of discrimination, whereas Blacks, Latinos, and, to a lesser extent, Asians perceive these patterns in most areas of their lives. Further, people of color are much more likely to attribute these problems to racial bias; Whites are more likely to attribute them, to the extent they acknowledge them, to the level of individual effort or cultural values within the disadvantaged groups.¹⁴

Tatum, O'Connell, and others invite us to consider the extent to which shortcomings in dominant thinking about conscience formation may actually contribute to unconscious racial bias.

Therefore, SCU needs to attend closely to ways the unconscious and unexamined social values contribute to conscience and compassion as we continue to focus on ways our communities can contribute to the University mission and goals. In "Conscience Formation and the Challenge of Unconscious Racial Bias," Bryan N. Massingale invites attention specifically to shortcomings of dominant thinking about conscience formation because the approaches are not "adequate to the challenges raised by the reality of nonconscious racial bias."¹⁵ The approach he proposes requires "an ability to hear and be present to black

¹³ Maureen O'Connell, "Catholics and Racism: From Examination of Conscience to Examination of Culture," *NCR Online* (March 30, 2012).

¹⁴ Tatum, "*Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*" p. 208.

¹⁵ Bryan N. Massingale "Conscience Formation and the Challenge of Unconscious Racial Bias," in *Conscience and Catholicism: Rights, Responsibilities, & Institutional Responses*, ed. David E. DeCosse and Kristin E. Heyer (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2015), p. 62.

anger; the interior space to welcome perspectives that significantly differ from one's own; and the cultivation of genuinely affective relationships with persons of color."¹⁶ The approach also involves

loving and committed relationships [that] give one the visceral outrage, courage, strength, and motivation to break free from the 'rewards of conformity' that keep most whites complacent with white privilege. Transformative love, or compassion, empowers them for authentic solidarity. This makes them ethical agents who are able to see, and willing to act upon, truths to which they were previously blind or impervious.¹⁷

What Massingale proposes aligns very well with the Jesuit way of proceeding, which aims to combine compassion understood as transformative love with conscience to foster individual and community commitment to the common good.¹⁸ However, increasingly Catholic moral theology and philosophical understanding of virtue acknowledge that culture unobtrusively shapes the morals and conscience of individuals with greater force than overt teaching. Conscience and beliefs about what is good are formed not only through intellectual understanding but also by communal frames of reference, cultural conditioning, and beliefs that, in the words of Charles Lawrence, "are so much a part of the culture, they are not experienced as explicit lessons."¹⁹ Hence, Stephen J. Pope urges us to attend to ways social structures, institutions, and practices of the church shape the conscience of individuals and the responsibility of thoughtful Christians "to contribute to the deliberate shaping of these social structures, institutions, and practices so that they help

¹⁶ Massingale "Conscience Formation and the Challenge of Unconscious Racial Bias," p. 65.

¹⁷ Massingale "Conscience Formation and the Challenge of Unconscious Racial Bias," p. 66. Massingale is also author of *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*.

¹⁸ See the discussion of the Jesuit way of proceeding in "Community as Sacrament" in this volume.

¹⁹ Charles L. Lawrence, "The Id, the Ego, and Equal Protection: Reckoning with Unconscious Racism," *Stanford Law Review* 39 (January 1987), 322.

form people to be active, adult, co-responsible members of the church instead of just passive recipients of its teachings and sacraments.”²⁰

These observations may help contextualize Fr. Engh’s comment in his October 2016 letter to the University community after the vandalism of the art installation and the disappointing results. Fr. Engh wrote, “Some members of the community have expressed the idea that this act [of vandalism] is symptomatic of a larger problem surrounding inclusion at Santa Clara. Regardless of motivation, we cannot allow this destructive behavior to continue.”²¹ The fact that the destructive behavior did continue suggests a need to attend more closely to the ways our SCU communities are going with the flow of the racist social walkways Beverley Tatum describes. It also suggests the importance of attention to the reality that no universal moral rationality exists independent “of the social matrices in which it is exercised” and what has been understood to be “objective standards of reason are themselves the products of socially embedded assumptions about what is reasonable, logical, coherent, and self-evident.”²² The play “Welcome to Claradise” dramatized the very different ways of perceiving and interpreting events; Unity 4 has brought together diverse members of the University community to discuss the larger problem(s). Solutions are far from simple or easy. But Jesuit practices that have developed over the centuries from the original Ignatian way, “a habit of attending to the way God animates all creative reality,” can offer insight.²³

In 2016, Decree 1 of Jesuit General Congregation (GC) 36, “Companions in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice,” reaffirmed commitment to global justice and challenged the Society and all its works to acknowledge the “shocking forms of suffering and injustice

²⁰ See Stephen J. Pope, “Conscience, Catholicism, and the New Science of Morality” in *Conscience and Catholicism*, especially p. 52.

²¹ His letter to the community in the newspaper.

²² Linda Hogan, “Marriage Equality, Conscience, and the Catholic Tradition” in *Conscience and Catholicism*, 89.

²³ Howard Gray, “Reports: The Retreat Master is - GOD! The Ignatian Spiritual Heritage Reanimated for Today’s Higher Education Challenges,” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* 42.1 (2012), p. 42.

that millions of our brothers and sisters endure,” and turn, with even greater fervor, “to a ministry of justice and peace, serving the poor and the excluded and helping build peace.”²⁴ The Decree identifies three tasks which need to be engaged by Jesuit institutions: first, to address the problem of “secularization,” especially among the young; second, to renew a personal and institutional commitment to interreligious dialogue; and finally, to acknowledge that Catholics are “abandoning the Church” and are seeking “personal meaning and spirituality” elsewhere. The decree acknowledges, “Collaboration with others is the only way the Society of Jesus can fulfill the mission entrusted to her. This partnership in mission includes those with whom we share Christian faith, those who belong to different religions, and women and men of good will, who, like us, desire to collaborate with Christ’s reconciling work.” To accomplish this, “theological and scriptural studies. . . should involve accompanying people from the depth of *their* spiritual traditions [emphasis added].”²⁵ Continuity of GC 36 with GC 35’s emphasis in 2008 on collaboration “in respectful dialogue and shared reflection, in labor alongside those similarly engaged who walk a different pathway”²⁶ is significant, but there may be greater urgency in the 2016 decrees. The incidents at SCU in fall 2016 can add to our perception and understanding of the urgency.

One possible response to these challenges is for Catholic schools to be more transparent about what distinguishes them from the “competition,” especially from schools without a religious affiliation. Melanie M. Morey and John J. Piderit discuss the importance of “distinguishability” in *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis*:

To secure distinguishability at a Catholic university, proposed activities have to be significant in two senses. The activity must play a central role in the life of the university as university, and the activity must be related to a central activity of Catholics. Activities not central

²⁴ General Congregation 36, Decree 1, 25. <http://jesuits.org/gc?PAGE=DTN-20170215020206>.

²⁵ General Congregation 36, Decree 1, 24.

²⁶ General Congregation 35, Decree 6, 15. <http://www.sjweb.info/35/documents/Decrees.pdf>.

in one of these two senses may contribute to the Catholic culture, but be insufficient to establish distinguishability.²⁷

After specifying that the value of Catholic culture must be evident to non-Catholics as well as Catholics, Morey and Piderit advise,

If there is to be a future for Catholic culture in Catholic colleges and universities, those concerned and involved must be able to do three things. First, they must differentiate the elements that constitute a rich, coherent Catholic culture from those that dissipate it. Second, they must be adept at identifying new actions or strategies that will strengthen the Catholic culture. And third, they must be capable and willing to promote these new actions and strategies over a long period of time within their own institutions.²⁸

However, Catholics do not all agree on which elements enrich and which dissipate Catholic culture. In addition, Catholics do not all agree on the way conscience formation should happen or what the outcome should be. In “To Follow and to Form over Time: A Phenomenology of Conscience,” James F. Keenan examines the evolution of conscience in Europe and the United States after World War II and Vatican II and concludes that Catholics in the United States need a “more robust notion of conscience that requires more from the ordinary Christian and that sees the conscience as the source of moral agency.”²⁹ In “Fostering a Catholic Commitment to the Common Good: An Approach Rooted in Virtue Ethics,” Thomas Vogt suggests that encouraging the practice of three key Christian virtues—solidarity, compassion, and hospitality—offers one way to move Catholics closer to a shared understanding of and commitment

²⁷ Melanie M. Morey and John J. Piderit, *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 34.

²⁸ Morey and Piderit, *Catholic Higher Education*, p. 37

²⁹ James F. Keenan, “To Follow and to Form Over Time: a Phenomenology of Conscience,” in *Conscience and Catholicism*, p. 12; see also Keenan, *A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences* (London: Continuum, 2010).

to the common good.³⁰ Vogt's conclusion seems relevant to conscience formation including a strong sense of compassion at SCU:

Compassion serves as a moral source for justice in the sense that it is through the emotional intersubjectivity and beneficent activity of that virtue that our common humanity is made real. Where compassion is absent, people slip into a culture of self-absorption in which their understanding of justice is limited to the protection of their own rights and interests. . . . Compassion moves us toward these goals [social justice and a politics of the common good] by establishing new relationships and occasions for dialogue and by providing the emotional formation that enables us to notice "others" and to hear their needs. However, if the cultivation of compassion is to achieve these goals, it must not be pursued in isolation from other virtues. The practice of compassion must be paired with hospitality and its preferential option for strangers of all kinds, and with solidarity, which manifests itself in a global concern for the other and in a demand that society and international affairs be organized in ways that promote universal respect for human dignity.³¹

New initiatives in the Center for Student Involvement, the Office of Student Life, and the Multicultural Center combined with student initiatives at SCU may touch the minds and hearts of more students in the future.

However, in *Revisioning Mission: The Future of Catholic Higher Education*, John Richard Wilcox suggests faculty development is key to the creation and sharing of a rich and coherent Catholic culture. Although not all schools will go so far as to require all new hires to participate in a year-long faculty learning community designed to engage them with readings and discussion of Catholic intellectual and educational traditions, as Wilcox recommends, all faculty and staff might benefit from increased access to information about what is Catholic (or Jesuit) in the university's culture. The SCU website advertising faculty and staff openings asks, "Wouldn't you rather work

³⁰ Christopher P. Vogt, "Fostering a Catholic Commitment to the Common Good: An Approach Rooted in Virtue Ethics," *Theological Studies* 68 (2007), 394-417.

³¹ Vogt, "Fostering," 416.

for a place with a Mission?”³² But it is likely that most faculty and staff are vague on the details of our mission beyond the commitment to Competence, Conscience, and Compassion (whatever they might mean!). New faculty are introduced to fundamental concepts related to the Jesuit way of proceeding, but faculty and staff who have been here for many years have widely divergent ideas about the meaning of the three Cs. They also share the wider Catholic disagreements about the course Catholicism should take in the 21st century.³³ In the words of Father General Arturo Sosa, Jesuits are “called to the mission of Jesus Christ, that does not belong to us exclusively, but that we share with so many men and women consecrated to the service of others.”³⁴ In December 2016 General Congregation 36 specified,

Our educational apostolates at all levels, and our centers for communication and social research, should help form men and women committed to reconciliation and able to confront obstacles to reconciliation and propose solutions. The intellectual apostolate should be strengthened to help in the transformation of our cultures and societies.³⁵

Rightfully, it is left to Jesuits and laypeople collaborating with them to determine how best to strengthen the apostolate to help in transformation of their particular communities.

In “Not What, But How,” Kelly Younger reflects on what “distinguishes a Jesuit core curriculum from a core at public, secular-private, or non-Catholic religious universities” and concludes that the “difference in a Jesuit core may lie not in what we teach, but how we

³² Santa Clara University, Department of Human Resources, <https://jobs.scu.edu/>.

³³ See, for example, Raymond Reys, “Too Catholic, Not Catholic Enough,” in *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* 51 (spring 2017), p. 43.

³⁴ The Jesuits’ website, www.jesuits.com, provides links to and background information about the General Congregations and relevant documents and decrees. Particularly relevant are General Congregation 36, “Companions in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice,” Decree 1, 20, and the 2nd call, “Reconciliation with Humanity,” 25-28. <http://jesuits.org/gc?PAGE=DTN-20170215020206>.

³⁵ “Companions in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice,” Jesuit General Congregation 36, Decree 1, 34.

teach it.”³⁶ Reflection on ways his Jesuit education and understanding of the Spiritual Exercises might contribute to his teaching reminded him that learning

is not always about the answer, but the question. I stopped making a list of plays undergraduates should read, and started making a list of questions undergraduates would ask about themselves, each other, and the larger world if given the chance: Who am I? Whose am I? Why am I here? Who is God? What really matters? What does the world need? How ought we to live? In other words, this course now distinguished itself from the others not because it was formulated around content, but because it was founded upon the context of Jesuit inquiry. A Jesuit core curriculum should be distinct from any other in its promotion of identity, community, meaning, spirituality, purpose, passion, and social responsibility. Rather than just providing our students with these answers, we can lead them there with common questions.³⁷

Younger’s shift in thinking about how to distinguish Jesuit education from secular education overlaps with thinking about conscience formation. The play “Welcome to Claradise” also illustrates the value of questions, especially when the questions aim to illuminate multiple perspectives on a subject and do not aim to lead students or their teachers to a single answer.

At SCU the Faculty Collaborative for Teaching Innovation, a partnership among Faculty Development, Academic Technology, and the Office of Assessment, is concerned with how we can improve teaching to foster deep, transformative learning in all of our students. The Collaborative “works across program boundaries to support imaginative teaching informed by new technologies, deliberate course design, reflective teaching practices, and meaningful assessment of student learning.”³⁸ Recently a variety of Faculty

³⁶ Kelly Younger “Not What but How,” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* 38.1 (2010), p.30.

³⁷ Kelly Younger, “Not What but How,” p. 30.

³⁸ Santa Clara University, “Faculty Collaborative for Teaching Innovation,” <https://www.scu.edu/provost/teaching-and-learning/faculty-collaborative-for-teaching-innovation/>

Learning Communities have provided quarter-long opportunities for collaboration across disciplines as faculty grapple with the goal of fostering deep, transformative learning. The SCU Ignatian Faculty Forum and Senior Leadership Forum have provided other communities in which faculty and senior administrative leadership explore spirituality in the workplace and collaborate to foster the mission and values of the University.³⁹ But more needs to be done to increase the likelihood that all faculty and staff will understand the substance and value of the Jesuit way of proceeding and ways Jesuit practices and values intersect with ideas about morals and virtue shared by diverse communities of belief.⁴⁰

The spring 2017 issue of *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* emphasizes with its focus on difficult conversations the importance of multiple perspectives and questions in Jesuit education. For example, one article, “Urgent Values: Sustaining a Very Fine Balance” begins with a series of challenging situations Eileen C. Burke-Sullivan encountered in her first weeks as Mission Officer at Creighton University. Each situation she describes reflects the differences of opinion inside Jesuit universities and between Jesuit universities and “others on the outside judging whether this institution lives up to its self-stated mission, either as Catholic or as a university.” Burke-Sullivan then identifies six basic Catholic and Ignatian values and behaviors that guide her as she pursues her responsibilities as “a representative for the Catholic, Jesuit character of the mission of higher education.” Significantly,

³⁹ Santa Clara University, Ignatian Center, Ignatian Faculty Forum, <https://www.scu.edu/ic/programs/ignatian-tradition-offerings/offerings/ignatian-faculty-forum/>

⁴⁰ Santa Clara University, Ignatian Center, Ignatian Faculty Forum, <https://www.scu.edu/ic/programs/ignatian-tradition-offerings/offerings/ignatian-faculty-forum/2016>) is one example of a philosophical exploration of how moral self-cultivation, or what Catholics might call conscience formation, can be fostered. Significantly, Vallor stresses the role of “a broader community of practitioners who hold each other accountable for the success or failure of their efforts, and whose collective activity constitutes a historical *tradition* of pursuing what they agree to be the highest human goods,” 49.

Burke-Sullivan sees her responsibilities as extending beyond mission at Creighton University. Her list of values and behaviors emphasizes the limits of our ability to know truth and the importance of dialogue—and respectful listening—as the way to academic freedom that serves truth. For example, “What truth we can know is best discovered in dialogue with persons we don’t necessarily agree with, persons who have had very different life/cultural experiences than we have, and persons who have an investment in a specific issue that I might not have.” She concludes,

. . . it is important to state that difficult conversations, even well conducted with all the grace that God sends, will not necessarily bring agreement of purpose or practice. Living with polarities is the essential character of Christianity. All Christian doctrine is a series of ideas in tension – insisting on the both/and rather than the either/or. In practice we can’t always do both/and, but it is worth pursuing the possibilities and finding the ground of – at least – mutual respect.⁴¹

Burke-Sullivan’s comments specifically related to administrative leadership are consonant with other articles in that issue of *Conversations* providing suggestions related to teaching.

The events of September and October 2016 at SCU offered “teachable moments” for students, faculty, staff, and administration. Hateful national and international events in the months since then have provided example after example of the difficulty and importance of living with polarities and learning to listen respectfully, knowing the limits of anyone’s ability to know the truth. The Boston College *Pocket Guide to Jesuit Education* provides a convenient list of nine qualities that early Jesuit educators set out to cultivate in themselves and develop in their students. The belief from the earliest days was that “attentiveness to their own experience and to others,” “respect for intellect and reason as tools for discovering truth,” and “a conviction that talents and knowledge were gifts to be used to help others” would contribute to self-knowledge and prepare graduates “to live meaningful

⁴¹ Eileen C. Burke-Sullivan, “Urgent Values: Sustaining a Very Fine Balance,” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* 51 (spring 2017): 30-31.

lives as leaders in government, the professions, and the Church.⁴² In 1965 the Second Vatican Council articulated “how it conceives of the presence and activity of the Church in the world of today.”⁴³ Central is the idea of the common good and the interconnectedness of diverse communities within humanity:

Every day human interdependence grows more tightly drawn and spreads by degrees over the whole world. As a result the common good, that is, the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment, today takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race. Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family.⁴⁴

In other words, the communal and social nature of humanity results in opportunities for betterment—for virtuous conscience formation—aimed at the common good. However, the Catholic Church has been deeply divided in its understanding of conscience formation and moral theology.⁴⁵ In addition, psychological studies have demonstrated that human behavior is not always shaped by the rational processes that have been the focus of Catholic understanding of conscience.⁴⁶ Moreover,

⁴² Boston College Division of University Mission and Ministry, *Pocket Guide to Jesuit Education*, <http://www.bc.edu/offices/mission/publications/guide/success.html>

⁴³ *Gaudium et Spes*, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, no. 2.

⁴⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, no. 26.

⁴⁵ Linda Hogan summarizes key points in James F. Keenan, *A History*, about “the transformation that has occurred in Catholic moral theology in the last five decades, which has seen a move away from the act-centered, legalistic, minimalistic, and casuistic enterprise of the manuals and toward more biblically based, historically conscious, context-sensitive frameworks” and the difficult debates accompanying this transformation” in “Marriage Equality, Conscience, and the Catholic Tradition,” *Conscience and Catholicism*, 84.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Peter Cajka, “C. Ellis Nelson, Liberal Protestants, and the Rise of the Catholic Theology of Conscience, 1944–1987” *U.S. Catholic*

as Massingale explains, “preconscious motives and beliefs in individual persons” are “the effects of *cultural conditioning*, that is, the effects of a culture that transmits certain beliefs and preferences through its symbolic code of meanings and values.”⁴⁷ Hence, community can have positive and negative effects on conscience formation. Therefore, ongoing questioning is essential: what can SCU do better to achieve our goals of competence, conscience, and compassion enacted in communities that encourage dialogue, critical engagement, and social consciousness aimed at fostering the greater good? Time will tell whether the new online course all first-year students complete will make progress toward its goals:

- To discover and connect with the Bronco [SCU mascot] community
- To develop and strengthen individual understanding of personal responsibility
- To form and nurture positive relationships with people who are similar to and different from themselves.
- To promote well-being, academic achievement, and personal success.⁴⁸

Sessions during Summer Orientation 2017 introduced the course, and students are required to complete the first two modules before attending Welcome Weekend. Perhaps, though, as important as the initiatives addressed at student learning are, it may be even more important for Santa Clara and other Catholic schools to provide greater opportunities for staff and faculty to know and appreciate what Catholic identity offers that is different from the goals and values of secular colleges and universities and valuable for non-Catholics as well as for Catholics.

Historian June 1, 2017, 47-74, and *Conscience: theological and psychological perspectives*, ed., C. Ellis Nelson (Newman Press, 1973).

⁴⁷ Massingale, “The Challenge,” 59.

⁴⁸ Santa Clara University, Office of Student Life, “Being a Bronco,” <https://www.scu.edu/osl/being-a-bronco/>.