

Introduction

Scrolling through the websites of Catholic colleges and universities reveals a not surprisingly common theme related to the stated goals for student learning, namely, a desire to “develop the whole person.” For Catholic institutions this includes intellectual, emotional and spiritual aspects, “with a commitment to knowledge and growth that endures beyond the college experience.”¹ Each institution will place this goal in the context of its own ethos and charism.

Surely this is not a new expectation in our Catholic institutions; one way that Catholic colleges and universities strive to distinguish themselves from their secular counterparts lies with those less tangible human qualities and characteristics—the life of the spirit, compassion, and so forth. Saint John Paul II in *Ex corde Ecclesiae* made clear that the Eros of the mind is not the only outcome we should expect from a Catholic education. Besides a cultivation of the intellect and deepening of critical thinking, *Ex corde Ecclesiae* states that the Catholic college or university assists students “in achieving wholeness as human persons.”

In their efforts to attract a robust and qualified student body, all institutions, secular and religious, pay much attention to student life, particularly on residential campuses. The number of student service personnel working on Catholic campuses is far greater than two decades ago. The number and quality of student amenities on some campuses boggles the mind of those who remember higher education a generation ago. All of these elements (increased staff and upgraded facilities) are intended in some way to serve (if not educate) the whole student.

Another aspect of this effort to “educate the whole person” involves various forms of service learning, extended service trips, experiential learning, and the like. Some of these programs are imbedded in the curriculum, while many others are co-curricular, with their base in student affairs departments or divisions. Again, some ask whether these are mainly in response to the felt needs of recruited students—millennials who have a penchant for service and outreach—or grow out of a rich,

¹ *Strengthening Catholic Identity: Student Affairs* (2014). Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities and the Reid Group. See <http://www.accunet.org/Strengthening-CatholicIdentity>.

thoughtful reflection on the stated mission of the institution. To what extent does any of this consciously, intentionally, and purposefully tell the deeper narrative of the institution, and further, to what extent is the mission evident to those who participate and those who look on from the outside?

What are we to make of all these efforts? While designed to help “educate the whole person,” do all or any of these activities and additional professionals really make a difference? How do they add value? While we had not consciously intended to make student learning and development a special focus of this particular issue of the *Journal of Catholic Higher Education*, providentially all the articles in the following pages do discuss the development of the whole person in one form or another.

We begin with a compelling question raised by Michael Lovette-Colyer, who wanted to know whether students’ level of compassion increased over the time they spent at the University of San Diego. His is a preliminary study, and does not purport to provide a full answer to that initial question, and he contends that much more research is needed. A review of the literature finds a large number of studies on the effects of student activities on several areas of their lives, but little research on levels of compassion. Lovette-Colyer studied the entire first-year class at USD, and followed up with the same cohort during its sophomore year. To the institution’s credit, USD does seem to live up to its calling, in that half of the students demonstrated an increase in compassion. Not surprisingly, female students scored higher than males, but the author found an intriguing difference between students who volunteered for service trips or local service programs, and those who were expected to participate in service activities as part of a course. Lovette-Colyer believes that more research is required, especially in developing ways that engender greater compassion among males; that increase the overall level of compassion from 50 percent to significantly higher numbers; and that address the reasons for disparities between expected and volunteered service activities.

Following on some of the questions and themes discussed in our first article, Christopher McMahon also reflects on the mission of Catholic colleges and universities in two respects. First, the challenge to maintain a vibrant program in theology (or religious studies); and second, in light of Catholic Social Teaching, to engage students in credible and meaningful ways with the larger society and community beyond the ivy tower—particularly those people who suffer injustice, poverty,

disease, hunger, and the natural disasters that frequently afflict our world.

The Saint Vincent College (Latrobe, Pennsylvania) theology department struggled with the tension between providing basic information to students who are impoverished in terms of religious literacy, and the desire to bring students to a deeper level of critical thinking—which naturally requires some foundation in fundamental ideas, concepts, and information. A growing literature on the importance and effects of community service on student learning and critical thinking abilities suggested that the theology faculty develop a pilot course blending theological “content” with engagement in community projects, both local and international. The initial success of these courses convinced the department to require all students in the introductory “First Theology” course to partner with local service organizations such as nursing homes, homeless shelters, food pantries, and Boys and Girls Clubs. Eventually two types of “engaged theology” courses were offered to students: one that kept students engaged for a whole semester in the local community, and a second that took students for one week of a semester-long course to an international site. Evaluating the two approaches, McMahon reports that in both cases, students’ critical thinking capacities increased. For example, students began to think about “bigger issues” in ways that connected their study of scripture and theology with the daily sufferings and struggles that people face every day. These connections were more difficult to elicit in the previous iterations of the theology courses. The instructors also noted that students integrated spirituality and life, as well as a greater appreciation for theology in both thinking and acting, and consequently theology is perceived as a living reality. These efforts at Saint Vincent provide fruitful and helpful insights for theology and religious studies departments at other Catholic institutions.

In 1986, Harvard University celebrated its 350th anniversary with a four-day convocation. At the final event, then-President Derek Bok addressed calls for the university to divest its portfolio of stocks of companies doing business in South Africa. This occurred at the height of anti-apartheid activism on college and university campuses, and Bok responded by saying, “In all such cases, the problem is not that people seek the university’s help to solve a social problem, but that they urge it to act in ways that contradict its proper nature and threaten its most essential functions.” This sentiment may still ring true in many quarters of higher education, but over the past three decades, activism has become a much more common theme on Catholic campuses, and in fact some institutions highlight student activism as a hallmark.

Scott Kelley has studied the apparel industry (which some estimate to be a four-billion-dollar business annually among colleges and universities) and makes the case for active involvement by Catholic colleges and universities with manufacturers that contract with apparel makers. The industry has seen its share of headlines in recent years, from the factory collapse at Rana Plaza in Bangladesh to suppression of workers' rights in Cambodia and Honduras. What, if anything, should Catholic institutions do in light of Catholic Social Teaching, which stands in stark contrast to what often happens in the apparel industry?

While boycotts may be one part of the solution, Kelley shows that the true shared responsibility is much more complex and many-layered than simply walking away. He argues that a many and varied approach to engagement with the industry is needed, and he lays out four strategies to consider. The first strategy, protest, brings public attention to severe problems in the apparel industry, and this certainly was the case with Nike and student protests during the late 1990s. Nike responded to the adverse publicity created by the United Students Against Sweatshops and other activist groups, and since has become much more attentive and at times proactive in dealing with its supply chain. The second approach is to join forces with other groups and institutions to boycott certain products and companies because of unfair labor practices or shameful working conditions. In this regard, several colleges and universities have joined other stakeholders in organizations like the Fair Labor Association to monitor industry practices and hold companies' feet to the fire, with the threat of boycotts.

The third strategy involves the "opt-in" approach, using purchasing power in an effort to support and encourage good labor practices. Included here would be a "shared preferred vendor model" in which buyers and suppliers interact in a way that addresses issues of human rights, environmental degradation, and worker safety and security. In this approach, institutions develop criteria and standards based on Catholic Social Teaching and that reflect best practices in the industry, as well as engaging in dialogue with manufacturers about implementing these criteria. The fourth approach is to develop management capacity. Here, Catholic Social Teaching can help discern the extent to which a manufacturer such as Nike is responsible for activities up and down its supply chain, and assist in thinking about proper interventions in this complex industry. Finally, Catholic institutions can serve the industry by helping business leaders connect the "vision of a just society to business strategy."

Each of these approaches can be leveraged at Catholic colleges and universities through student protest, investment strategies that avoid certain companies and actively engage with others to work on changes in the industry, and especially in the education and development of the next generation of business leaders who graduate from Catholic business schools. This is a far cry from Derek Bok's approach, but one that Catholic institutions ought to seriously consider.

The publication of *Ex corde Ecclesiae* in 1990 created heightened awareness among Catholic colleges and universities about the need to reflect again on their mission and identity. In many institutions, people in every area of college and university life began to discuss the vision and implications of Saint John Paul II's proclamation. Among those interested in learning more about *Ex Corde*, as well as exploring how institutions were imbedding the pope's vision, were the leaders of student affairs units at Catholic universities. Sandra Estanek, a veteran of student affairs at the national level, provides the first detailed history of the Association for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities (ASACCU). To be sure, *Ex corde* provided the initial impetus for student affairs personnel at Catholic colleges and universities coming together, but participation in various conferences and institutes brought participants to realize the value of forming a national organization dedicated to serving student affairs personnel at Catholic institutions. Thus, in 1999 ASACCU was born and now celebrates fifteen years of activities and programs that "promote an understanding and application of the rich Catholic tradition for student affairs professionals who work at Catholic colleges and universities."

Catholic higher education understands the importance of integrated learning that moves across curricular and co-curricular programs, while maintaining the distinctive roles of each. In both arenas, leadership development programs have come into higher relief since the 1990s as academics and administrators began to see the value of student engagement in the overall process of learning. Virtually all higher education institutions have some form of leadership programs, but at Catholic colleges and universities a central goal of some leadership programs involves enhancing capacities for socially responsible leadership. Rich Whitney and Ellen Meents-DeCaigny at DePaul University studied campus leadership programs at their institution in order to measure the extent to which programs managed by student affairs resulted in increased leadership efficacy and socially responsible leadership. The authors looked at fourteen programs using socially responsible leadership and leadership efficacy scales from the

Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership. They compared the results between students “involved” and students “uninvolved” in these programs. Because DePaul had instituted a Socially Responsible Leadership Framework in 2007 that included both curricular and co-curricular programs, the authors were especially interested in learning how well some co-curricular programs were faring with regard to the stated outcomes of the university.

This preliminary study indicates that involvement in one or more of these fourteen programs does enhance leadership efficacy and thus appears to fulfill the institution’s goal of developing socially responsible leaders. Additionally, students involved in these programs deepened their own beliefs in their ability to lead, and enhanced their commitment to social responsibility. The authors acknowledge that one may not be able to clearly distinguish whether involvement in leadership or simply maturing over time explain some of the positive outcomes. They also found that when students are involved in multiple programs, their leadership efficacy and socially responsible leadership scales were reduced. Because many students were involved in more than one program, the authors could not determine with great accuracy if increased scores were due to involvement in one or another program. Thus, more research is indicated, but these first steps do signal the positive effect that DePaul’s Socially Responsible Framework is having on its students.

Another distinguishing feature of all Catholic institutions of higher education is the active presence of campus ministry offices, with dedicated staffs of lay, religious, and clergy who promote the mission of the Church through the religious and spiritual formation of students. To further this mission, many campus ministry offices have developed peer ministry programs that provide leadership opportunities for students in assisting the formation of their peers. In turn, as peer ministers become companions on the journey of faith with other students, the hope is that their own faith is strengthened and integrated into their daily lives. But the literature is thin regarding the effectiveness of peer ministry programs, and some are left to wonder what the short-term and longer-term outcomes might be.

Helen Wolf, who directs the Office of Campus Ministry at The College of New Rochelle, New York, conducted a study to determine “how peer ministry programs can contribute to a student’s faith development, as well as her or his abilities to integrate faith intentionally and reflectively into everyday life.” She first explores the concept of peer ministry and how it is used and understood on Catholic campuses.

With little surprise, she found that institutions use different monikers to describe their programs, as well as a wide variety of activities and opportunities that peer ministers share. Next, she surveyed both students (designated as peer ministers by their institutions) and administrators of these programs on two separate occasions. The administrators provided information on such questions as training, spiritual practices, types of responsibilities given to peer ministers, and requirements for participation in the programs. The students were asked to assess the effectiveness of their training, how they continued to nourish their own faith, and how they understood their own responsibilities to share their faith.

Administrators use different methods to determine the effectiveness of their programs, some more robust than others: some quantitative (e.g., how many students attend or participate in prayer services) and some qualitative (e.g., peer ministers' own perceptions of their growth in faith, and whether they feel they are making a difference). There is no doubt that these programs do contribute to a student's faith development and abilities to integrate faith and life. However, Wolf lays out some areas of concern that administrators of peer ministry programs should heed. First, better systems of qualitative and quantitative assessments would give administrators a better sense of program effectiveness and ways to improve and develop action plans. Second, the lack of consistency and diligence in monitoring the work and faith development of peer ministers leads to very different perceptions of what is actually happening. Third, more robust training and formation for peer ministers would strengthen students' abilities and give them a better sense of direction. Fourth, the sense that administrators are often disengaged from students' self-understanding of faith and religion indicates that better communication and dialogue with peer ministers would lead to greater understanding of which practices are, in fact, helpful to students in their faith journeys. The overall picture is a positive one, and shows that peer ministry programs can and do help transform students' lives of faith, and deepen their mentors' relationship with God. The next steps call for closer and more detailed explorations of peer ministry programs on Catholic campuses.

The final article in this issue also looks at the effectiveness of Catholic colleges and universities in communicating and instilling their mission and identity among students. Where do students perceive Catholicism in the context of their everyday encounters on our campuses? How strongly is this felt in the classroom, in the residence halls, in co-curricular activities, in the way administrators

speak about the institution, and in the messages they receive from faculty and staff? Jason King at Saint Vincent College researched student perceptions of Catholic identity at several institutions because enhancing Catholic identity is a “valuable enterprise” at all Catholic institutions, and he was curious about how that was happening at his and other institutions.

One thousand students at twenty colleges and universities were polled. Besides the basic demographic information, including religious self-identification, he studied the students’ religious commitments (e.g., frequency of spiritual practices, commitment to tenets of the faith), and student perceptions about Catholic identity at their college or university. The results showed that students overwhelmingly identified a “Catholic culture” at their institutions. Students cited co-curricular activities and programs as the primary locus for experiencing Catholic identity, but this was followed closely by their experiences in the academic programs. Student perceptions of Catholicism begin to diminish when they were asked about the enforcement of policies related to residence life—visitation and alcohol policies, for example. “Very Catholic” institutions were perceived to have higher enforcement and compliance rates than institutions deemed “somewhat Catholic.” Campuses with higher numbers of Catholic students and those where students had a larger number of Catholic friends were perceived to be “more Catholic” than colleges and universities with fewer numbers of Catholic students. Sharing faith and beliefs is important to how students experience the culture of Catholic institutions.

King suggests several ways that Catholic institutions might enhance student experience and perceptions of Catholic identity. He focuses on a collaborative rather than a top-down approach. This would involve all constituents on campus—faculty, staff, students, and administrators—to develop initiatives and support for increasing a sense of a Catholic culture on campuses. Students need to feel that initiatives are responding to their needs and desires; faculty should invite conversations more frequently in their classrooms and individual meetings with students; policies for residence halls should be developed collaboratively; and structures should be in place that support Catholic students who desire to share their faith and their relationships with other students.

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Editor's Note:

The following corrections concern the Winter 2014 (33.1) issue of the *Journal of Catholic Higher Education*:

An editing error resulted in the misspelling of the name of Dr. Judy Arzt in the article "Mercy Mission and Transformative Change." In addition, the authors cited an incorrect date in reference to when the institution began to call for a School of Pharmacy. The correct date is 2008.

