

# THEMES OF JESUIT HIGHER EDUCATION

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*Key ideas contained in two addresses by the Superior General of the Society of Jesus delivered June 7, 1989, at Georgetown University and Georgetown Prep are summarized and edited here by John J. Callahan, S.J. Items in brackets are additions by the editor. For a more complete explanation of the "Ignatian world view", please refer to the chapter "Discovering a Sacred World"*

## JESUIT MISSION IN EDUCATION

The Society of Jesus proclaims that **the service of faith through the promotion of justice** is the mission that must be integrated as a priority into each Jesuit work.

**Our purpose in education, then, is to form men and women "for others."** The Society of Jesus has always sought to imbue students with values that transcend the goals of money, fame and success. We want graduates who will be e4 3.75 0 TD 0.3059 Tc (service) Tj 36 0 TD /F0 11.25 Tf -0.1218 Tc and beauty of all things also leads a person to be a responsible steward of creation.]

- **is comprehensive:** [There is a call to a genuinely humanistic education -- literature, history, arts, science, philosophy and theology -- in addition to professional studies. In the Ignatian view, to become more fully human is to become more fully divine.]

- **faces up to sin, personal and social, but points to God's love as more powerful than human weakness and evil,**

- **places emphasis on freedom:** [Liberated from the constraints of ignorance, prejudice,

- **stresses the essential need for discernment:** [A person must know the world, examine attitudes, challenge assumptions, and analyze motives. In this way, one may discern God's loving desire and select values which become the basis for principled decision-making.]

- **is altruistic:** [Adopting the mind and heart of Christ, a person is called to compassion, to concern for others, and to the work of justice.]

- **gives ample scope to intellect and affectivity in forming leaders:** [Ignatius calls for the development of the whole person, head and heart, intellect and feelings. The purpose, however, is not centered on the development of the self alone. Rather, the purpose is to develop leaders who are committed to ideals and values to such an extent that they will work to change society.]

## **VALUE ORIENTED EDUCATION**

Jesuit education is value oriented. There is no aspect of education, not even the so-called hard sciences, which is neutral. **All teaching imparts values.**

forming habits of critical reflection needs to be worked on by teachers in all subjects in ways appropriate to the maturity of students at different levels.

This habitual reflection should be applied to the human sciences students learn, the technology being developed, and the whole spectrum of social and political programs suggested by both prophets and politicians.

A value-oriented educational goal like ours -- **forming men and women for others** -- will not be realized unless it is infused within our educational programs at every level. **The goal is to challenge our students to reflect upon the value implications of what they study, to assess values and their consequences for human beings.**

## PROMOTION OF JUSTICE

**The service of faith through the promotion of justice** remains the Society's major apostolic focus. That is why it is urgent that this mission be operative in our lives and in our institutions. Words have meaning; if a college or university describes itself as "Jesuit" or "in the Jesuit tradition," the thrust and practice of the institution should correspond to the description.

It should be operative in a variety of ways. The recruitment of students must include **special efforts to make a Jesuit education possible for the disadvantaged.**

But let it be noted, and let there be no misunderstanding: The "option for the poor" is not an exclusive option; it is not a classist option.

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theological perspectives if the solutions proposed are to demonstrate moral responsibility and sensitivity.

Continually developing capacities to control human choices present us with moral questions of the highest order. These questions are not solved in an unidisciplinary manner, for they embrace human, and not simply technical, values. Are we preparing our students to know that just because some technological advance is possible for us, we are not thereby justified in its development and use?

Do we **challenge the leaders of tomorrow to reflect critically** on the assumptions and consequences of "progress?" Do we challenge them to ponder both the wonderful possibilities and the limits of science? Do we help them to see that often significant civil financial decisions are not merely political manifestos but also moral statements?

This concern for a more holistic inquiry should be true of any college or university. But it ought to be the case that in a Jesuit educational institution teaching and research are not even conceivable without the integration of different forms of knowledge with human values and with theology.

Our universities, of course, must do this precisely as universities, following our heritage and tradition. This heritage and tradition promotes a culture that **emphasizes the values of human dignity and the good life in its fullest sense**. This heritage is made real today by fostering academic freedom, by demanding excellence of schools and students, and by treating religious experience and questions as central to human culture and life.

Concrete means to achieve such an integrated program might be sought in the substance and methodologies employed in the core curriculum or in significant capstone courses for senior students on social, cultural, and ethical responsibilities -- and in that contemplative capacity for

God and the world which lies at the very center of human existence.

## INTERNATIONALIZATION

Our mission is global. Our interdependence on this planet is becoming more evident every day in realities across a broad spectrum from economics to ecology. In response to this rapidly shrinking world, we seek **education for responsible citizenship in the global village**.

Will we really help to form men and women for others in the world community of the twenty-first century if we do not **adapt to the changing international culture**? This is a corporate responsibility, with all of us participating in some way according to resources and interests, and with a genuine desire to help all others.

In the recent past education has sometimes focused exclusively on self-actualization of the individual. Today it must be the world community that forms the context for growth and learning. Curricula must be broadened to include major world cultures. Especially encouraged is **diversity of cultural backgrounds** in our student bodies and **more international exchanges** of both teachers and students.

Efforts at internationalization are signs of the impulse to **incorporate a global dimension into our educational programs** -- not as occasional special events, but as part of the fiber of what it means to be Jesuit colleges or universities. I ask you to intensify these efforts.

## MISSION AND STAFFING

The mission of forming men and women for others has implications, too, for staffing. It is obvious, and has been obvious for many years, that our educational institutions cannot survive without the presence and assistance and partnership of many dedicated people who are not Jesuits. Jesuits have been blessed by working with many colleagues who have shared our



**not power, but authority.** Its role, with and for all the members of the educational community, is that of **guaranteeing the transmission of the values which are the distinctive mark of Jesuit education.** So we are speaking of a process, a permanent process. We are speaking of **a way of life.** The alternative is clear: an institution, of whatever academic quality, slowly or rapidly drifting aimlessly.

But collaboration is not an end in itself. It exists precisely so that we can **offer more effective**

**service to those who need us.** If educational institutions are not finally **instruments of hope**, for the Good News, then their identity is in crisis as Jesuit apostolates. From freshmen in high school to the researchers in laboratories of our best graduate departments, no one can be excused from **our final purpose: to enable the human person and the human community to be the loved ones God calls them to be.** It is the task of the Jesuit education family to work together to incarnate this vision in our troubled world.