

Regis University Justice Examen
May 21, 2012
Revision, December 3, 2012

PREAMBLE

Regis University welcomed the process of Institutional Examen, an inquiry that occurred over nine months and examined the justice work we do in our mission of educating students. We focused on why we do this and what we wish to do in the future with our justice initiatives. Our guiding definitions of justice were informed by Catholic social thought:

- Justice is relational and promotes respect for the dignity of humans and the earth by allowing all life to flourish according to its nature and ability.
- Justice reflects solidarity in reciprocal relationships with those who are vulnerable, marginalized, or oppressed.

We defined justice as social justice, and sought examples of courses, partnerships, faculty development, centers, and community engagement near and far that fit this definition. Our examples involved an array of approaches and methodologies that advance social justice in communities served and/or created learning contexts where students engaged their hands, minds and hearts with social injustices in and out of the classroom. We are cognizant of the differences between direct service and structural change and are aware that many times direct service does not result in structural change. But when enhanced with justice-oriented teaching and learning strategies, the combination of service and community-based learning provides critical experience, knowledge and tools for students to more effectively work toward structural change in their communities. In keeping with our Jesuit values and mission, the various justice initiatives highlighted in this document therefore illuminate a multiplicity of approaches to engage students and impel them to become active, participatory, and justice-seeking members of the global community.

Charity – Social Service	Social Justice – Social Change
Responds to immediate need	Responds to long-term need and seeks solidarity and reciprocity
Provides direct service	Promotes advocacy and social change
Requires repeated actions	Resolves structural injustice through political and social advocacy

Justice initiatives that we believe to be distinctive to Regis University include:

- Recognition “with distinction” in the 2012 U.S. President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll.
- Academic Service Learning with two professional staff in each of the three colleges offering a customized approach for the development of curriculum and service engagement for faculty and students.
- An integrative core program for traditional undergraduates in which students are required to take each of four courses which emphasize Jesuit and Catholic values: Diversity, Global Environmental Awareness, Search for Meaning, and Justice and the Common Good.

- An undergraduate major in Peace and Justice Studies.
- The Engaged-Scholar Activist Program, inspired by the “Student as Colleague” Campus Compact model, where students work directly with faculty to help plan and integrate justice into the curriculum.
- Romero House, an off-campus student community for commitment to Spirituality, Service, Simplicity, Leadership, and Justice.
- The Ignatian Faculty Scholars Program, a two year program of rigorous study for faculty in the College for Professional Studies and Rueckert-Hartman College for Health Professions.
- Sizeable nontraditional and online learning populations where service learning is integrated into a variety of courses and learning formats.
- A required undergraduate course titled “Leading Lives That Matter” in the College for Professional Studies (adult learning programs) that integrates Jesuit values.
- Significant leadership in the Jesuit Commons collaboration of Jesuit universities providing online education to refugees in Kenya, Malawi, and Syria.
- A Master of Nonprofit Management program educating leaders in nonprofit and justice initiatives.
- The Institute on the Common Good, which provides a safe and effective space for community dialogue, communal discernment, and public deliberation.
- A University policy supporting three days of paid mission leave for all faculty and staff through the generous contribution of the Regis Jesuit Community.
- A \$2 million Jesuit community endowment that seeds justice and mission initiatives.
- Partnerships that fund and empower first-generation students through college preparatory initiatives, with one organization achieving a 99% college acceptance rate.
- An online scholarly, peer reviewed journal, *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal*, focused on the development, advancement, and critique of higher education in the Jesuit tradition.
- A requirement in all of the health care programs that students participate in clinical placements in rural and medically underserved areas.

FORMATION AND LEARNING

Foundational to the teaching enterprise, the University’s core philosophy statements for undergraduate and graduate degree programs include leadership, social justice, global awareness, and development of the whole person. These educational philosophies are expressed in curriculum, faculty development, service learning with justice reflection, and experiences as near as Project Homeless Connect in urban Denver and as far away as Project Mercy in Ethiopia.

It is the commitment of our service learning staff and of many faculty to engage students in social justice reflection and action. In the 2010-2011 academic year, 4,500 Regis students across the three colleges contributed 139,000 hours of community service. Ongoing service learning partnerships include inner city student tutoring, volunteering with children experiencing homelessness at the Crossing Temporary Housing program, helping feed and clothe homeless adults at the Fr. Woody Haven of Hope, staffing the 9 Health Fair which for 15 years has been providing health screenings for 450 clients from the local community near Regis annually, and working in a collaboration with Mt. St. Vincent Home for Children that has spanned 100 years. In having students work on these projects, we are also mindful that students have different levels of awareness of injustice, and that

justice appreciation often begins with charitable paradigms. Many a student's anger or heartbreak has led to deeper reflection, knowledge of systemic injustice, and action for social change.

Students address justice issues in extracurricular associations such as the Peace and Justice Student Club; the Student Government Committee on Spirituality and Justice; and Student Affinity Groups including the Gay/Straight Alliance. Most of the departments in each of the three colleges offer courses that cover justice issues, including courses such as: "Justice and the Common Good," "EcoPsychology," "Social Justice, Community Organizing, and Activism," "Cultural Issues and Social Justice," "Social Justice Through Film," "Justice and Peace," "Food Justice," "Social Justice and the Nonprofit Sector;" and "Health Care Ethics." In addition, many majors are infused with social justice reflection.

RESEARCH AND TEACHING

Because educators are entitled to academic freedom in research and publication, no one is required to teach justice or publish on justice-related topics. However, because the Jesuit Catholic values attract faculty and administrators who resonate with the Regis University mission, the natural interest and commitment lead faculty to teach and research in these areas. One example of this research is that being conducted by faculty on the 9 Health Fair benefits to community participants. In fact, faculty members across the university have publications on a wide range of justice concerns. All faculty and staff search processes require candidates to reflect on the Jesuit Catholic mission and ways they see themselves contributing to it. Thus the search process is self-selective and the Regis community reaps the benefits.

In 2011, Regis received a \$250,000 grant from the W.M. Keck Foundation to conduct extensive integrative teaching effort that involves half of the Regis College faculty. New integrative courses include: Eco-theology, Freedom Movements and Human Rights, Black Women in Literature and Society, Diversity and Women's Health Issues.

The University sponsors the following centers that are justice related: the Porter-Billups Leadership Academy, which since 1996 has offered free summer programs to help motivate students to master academics and set sights on college entrance; and the Institute on the Common Good, which for 15 years has served communities to help bridge polarization and divisiveness, also has co-sponsored Nobel Laureates to the Regis University campus, including the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The University also has numerous partnerships with local organizations to provide access to higher education to first-generation, low-income students.

Regis University alumni are evidence of justice teaching and learning. A 2010 issue of "Regis University Magazine" featured alumni in service: a teacher in rural South Africa; a banking officer with a commitment to servant leadership; a venture capitalist who is creating a socially responsible investment firm; founding director of a nonprofit agency serving Vietnamese immigrants in Denver; Executive Director of "I Have a Dream Foundation;" Executive Director of the Center for African American Health; a Peace Corps volunteer in Mexico; general manager of a hospital in Palestine; volunteer with the Catholic Medical Mission Board of Peru; founder of a nonprofit organization serving children in Guatemala; and founder of a bereavement counseling program in Tanzania. The lens of service and justice influences the work of many alumni as well as the ranks of the Alpha Sigma Nu Honor Society students from all three colleges.

Faculty and staff volunteer their time outside of the learning enterprise and beyond service learning experiences with students. Examples include faculty who travel to Vietnam to teach nursing students with Friendship Bridge; another chairs the Leadership Committee of the Colorado Hispanic Institute's Visiones multi-cultural leadership training program. A number of Regis faculty offer their teaching time pro bono in the Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins program which is a collaboration of Jesuit universities offering online education to refugees in camps in Kenya, Malawi, and Syria.

Over the years, there have been awareness campaigns within the University that are integrated into coursework. A recent example is the Regis University immigration campaign which emerged as a direct response to the experience of undocumented students at the University and to sizeable Latin American and African immigrant populations in Colorado. As an example of University-level advocacy, the University President sent an open letter to the Colorado State House members supporting the Colorado Asset Bill that would have charged undocumented students near in-state tuition.

WAY OF PROCEEDING

The Way of Proceeding was found to be the weakest area of Regis University's findings and where the greatest intention could be addressed for the future. The University-wide Strategic Plan is light on specific initiatives in diversity and justice, with a stronger focus on globalization. Goal II of the plan is titled "Engage the World: Equip all graduates with the knowledge, skills, and habits needed to engage in the world for the common good." Initiatives identify inclusion of social justice in the curriculum, community engagement, service learning, cross-cultural competence, study abroad, support for international students, and learning communities that integrate global perspectives.

Through the University's last fund-raising campaign \$15 million was raised for scholarships for first-generation and low-income students in the local community. This year, a \$250,000 gift was donated to fund the Sheeran Endowed Scholarship to ensure that students, particularly graduates of Arrupe Jesuit High School, have access to a Regis University education.

Since 2003, the Regis University Diversity Program has advanced cross-cultural understanding at the University, now through the work of two full-time staff. The program has addressed internal injustices such as cases of abuse against gay and lesbian students, and serving as a constant voice "of invitation" for Regis to consider that it is a predominately white institution that does not mirror the world we live in. Through the collaborative efforts of this office and other departments, the University has seen a steady increase in the racial diversity of its students, in 2011-12 reaching a high of approximately 26%. Regis continues to grow in the understanding that diversity is more than numbers, and that Regis can be a community where human differences are respected and can thrive. The new diversity strategic plan, *Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence for Regis University*, emphasizes the work of diversity as a multilayered process through which we achieve excellence in learning; research and teaching; student development; local and global community engagement; workforce development; and more.

The University has had to reflect on the nature of business partnerships, with a preference for those who best share Regis' mission and values. These conversations include what it means to have

custodial contractors who offer a less attractive benefit structure for those employees who often work behind the scenes as peripheral members of the Regis community. The recent choice of Bon Appetit as the University's caterer is the result of strong social justice priorities expressed by students, faculty, and staff. Lively discussion occurred when Regis was asked to be a preferred education provider to Wal-Mart employees (Regis submitted its proposal but was declined). This goes, too, with education programs for members of the armed forces. Many have learned that the Jesuit Catholic mission does not equate to any political agenda. However, these conversations have deepened the community's dialogue around what it means to be in the world and to find God in all things and people.

DISCERNMENT AND RECOMENDATIONS

- Develop a better database of justice initiatives: what people and programs are doing, where, how many individuals/units are involved, and what outcomes have been achieved.
- Develop criteria to determine commitment to particular initiatives in order to prevent individual burden and to build more effective partnerships.
- Gather data on what justice-related activities alumni are doing after they graduate.
- Clarify and focus our goals in order to integrate and prioritize the various service and justice initiatives on campus.
- Look into developing justice-related criteria that can be used for faculty promotion, course release for scholarship and research, and grant allocation.
- Intentionally work for greater racial diversity among upper administration and faculty.
- Consider how we should recognize people for being involved with service and justice activities.
- Examine ways in which the *University* (and not merely individuals or units) could enter into advocacy such as support of legislative issues.
- Integrate more fully the support we give to underserved (namely first-generation college) students from grade school to high school through college.
- Examine contracts with staff to ensure that they are just in a way that supports the mission.
- Address ways in which vendors, partners, and military constituents are included in the Ignatian experience.
- Address how the Board of Trustees and the President's Cabinet proceed in its decision-making, and in particular whether there is a process that makes Regis distinctive from a non-Jesuit university.
- Invite increased diversity among the Regis University trustees to reflect a broader lived experience representing an increasingly diverse student, faculty, and staff population within the University.
- Continue to expand diversity conversations to include sensitivity, illumination, and advocacy for under-served or marginalized populations, including women, people living with disabilities, people of diverse cultures and sexual orientations, and others.
- Identify justice-related faculty research and encourage growth in this work.
- Reflect more on how to connect justice with faith.
- Initiate conversations with faculty and staff in Fall 2012 to review this document's findings and its recommendations for the future.