

MEMO

Date: Friday, April 28th, 2017
From: Nancy Dallavalle, VP Mission and Identity
To: College of Arts and Sciences Faculty (3:30 pm meeting of the College)
Re: Mission Visible in the Core Curriculum (1 page overview, 3 pages supplementary material)

You have received the CAS Core Curriculum Committee Report. I am grateful for the committee's work. I disagree with one conclusion.

With regard to Major Issue #3/Recommendation #3 (proposal, pp.4-5). The committee laudably supported "an initiative to make the Jesuit and Catholic identity of Fairfield University more visible in the Core." I have suggested the use of "RATIO," in specific ways, to do this. The Committee, however, suggests using the term "magis" as an umbrella term to describe the three requirements of WAC, SJ, and the Interdisciplinary Seminar. Their explanation for this is that "magis" is recognizably Jesuit and that it means "more." This is better than "RATIO," according to the report, because "ratio" implies rationality, with which our students are over-burdened. I ask that the College adopt the RATIO approach instead.

I have proposed (see attached) that we use RATIO at two specific points in the curriculum that will be visible to our students, and that will highlight the central role that the life of the mind plays in our mission and identity:

1. In the opening first year "convocation/assembly" (on the lawn behind Bellarmine, first day of class), at which they will receive a RATIO rock as a gift. The faculty lecture at this event will be, in a variety of ways, about the core as central to a Fairfield education. Both the program for the event and the spoken introduction to the event will connect the core to the *Ratio Studiorum*, the plan of studies that has animated Jesuit education since 1599.
2. As the title for the Interdisciplinary Seminar, which will be re-titled the Ratio Seminar, titled thus because interdisciplinarity queries the life of the mind as it is understood today (the curricular goals for this seminar would not have to be revised, they already identify the key points of interdisciplinarity – in other words, to evoke ratio here isn't an "add-on," it makes visible the way in which this proposed element is in dialogue with the past already.)

Ratio will thus be connected, in a way that is visible to our students, to both the venerable history of Jesuit education AND to the kind of integrative thinking we are asking them to do as a result of their intellectual formation in the core.

Magis, on the other hand, is a relatively recent term in Jesuit-speak, referring to excellence oriented to the glory of God. As proposed, it would appear only in core curriculum glossy materials -- and never on our students' radar. The only support the committee offers for it is that it refers to the fact that students have "more" requirements. Nothing about the curricular goals of the 3 elements refer to anything specifically mission-related. Magis will be seen as an empty "mission-y" term, ad-speak for "Jesuit."

The use of RATIO, as I propose, will be genuinely visible and will make sense to our students, appearing both in the interdisciplinary course titles (see 4-17 email, attached) and made concrete (!) by the rock. RATIO refers to the life of the mind as an integrated whole, a "whole" which is (appropriately, interestingly) understood today in a very different fashion than it was in Ignatius' time. It certainly should not be understood in a reductionist sense (the claim that it simply means rationality) – in fact, this limited reading illustrates the very problem we need to address. At Fairfield, our students receive a strong introduction to the vision of Jesuit education as this drives the programming in student affairs – *cura personalis*, men and women for others and yes, *magis*. But we also need to re-claim the contribution of academics to our mission – by highlighting RATIO to demonstrate the role of the intellect in the "whole persons" we claim to form.

From: <Dallavalle>, "Nancy A." <NDallavalle@fairfield.edu>

Date: Monday, April 17, 2017 at 4:30 PM

To: Shannon Harding <sharding@fairfield.edu>, "Boquet, Elizabeth H." <EBoquet@fairfield.edu>, "Garvey, Johanna" <JKGarvey@fairfield.edu>, "Keenan, Dennis K." <DKKeenan@fairfield.edu>

Subject: RATIO Seminar

Dear Shannon,

As a follow up to my visit to the core committee, I attach two things.

1. The proposal to integrate our Jesuit, Catholic mission into the core curriculum, and
2. A "Mission on Monday" column that will appear in Today at Fairfield tomorrow (that would be Mission on Tuesday, I guess!)

Recap: The only intervention I am asking you to make a part of your proposal about the core curriculum is to label the Interdisciplinary Experience "RATIO Seminar" – courses would be something like **PH 2xx RATIO Seminar: Time in Philosophy and Physics** listed in the book as **PH 2xx RS: Time in Philosophy and Physics**. The "RATIO Seminar" designation would have to appear on the syllabus, everything else (course goals, etc.) would be the same.

The idea that "RATIO" would identify our core curriculum as "Jesuit" would play on many levels. Having a distinctive way of naming the core curriculum as "Jesuit" is common among the AJCU schools, whether this is the Manresa seminar for first year students at some schools or, as I found visiting Fordham last week, naming their writing/speaking/communication component as "Eloquentia Perfecta" – a term that the students our team interviewed used with ease and facility, without our prompting. While all these terms name elements that characterize Jesuit education, it is my sense that the multiple senses of "Ratio" may speak particularly to the Fairfield way of appropriating Jesuit, Catholic identity -- we are not as "tribal-confessional" as some of our AJCU colleagues, this is who we are. (At the same time, it is interesting to note that many of these schools are now highlighting these same three elements – social justice, WAC in some form, and interdisciplinarity. This may inform the shape of an upcoming conference on mission in AJCU core programs, TBA.)

To complement this move, I am also suggesting that the First Year Assembly be understood to be an introduction to the idea of a core curriculum/the value of the liberal arts. It should be seen as the kick-off to the core curriculum, not an add-on, and thus a faculty member who can make this case, in an interesting way, from their disciplinary perspective (note, this could be someone from a professional school) should be the speaker. Part of the program, perhaps in a formulaic graph introducing the speaker and topic, should also be an introduction to the Ratio frame for the core, setting this in the trajectory of Jesuit education.

This email is not private, feel free to share it as appropriate.

And many thanks for allowing me to put this issue before the core committee. I appreciated your genuine sense of collegiality and thoughtful consideration for what I was proposing.

My best to you all, and thanks, as you bring this to a conclusion.

Nancy

Nancy Dallavalle, Ph.D.
Vice President for Mission and Identity
Associate Professor of Religious Studies

Mission on Monday: Interdisciplinarity and Jesuit Education

An Update from Nancy Dallavalle, Vice President for Mission and Identity

17 April 2017. In a March 27th lecture titled “‘Schools of Heavenly Exercises:’ the Late Medieval Roots of Jesuit Education and Why They Matter for [INTERDISCIPLINARY] Teaching and Learning Today,” Fordham University historian Dr. J. Patrick Hornbeck offered a presentation on the roots of some key themes that emerge in the work of Ignatius of Loyola, painting a picture of a wonderfully complex period. As happens in scholarly inquiry, Professor Hornbeck was researching another question when he stumbled onto a fruitful path, finding many thematic similarities between the late medieval movement known as the “Devotio Moderna” (the Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life), which preceded the time of Ignatius, and the central tenets of Jesuit education.

The Common Life existed, over-all, in a state of “in-between-ness,” Hornbeck observed, these groups were attached to, but not a part of, existing religious orders. They included both men and women, lay and ordained. They did not have the usual hierarchy, opting instead for a pattern that developed virtue through “exertion” – before Ignatius, they were familiar with the notion of “growth in the spiritual life through the practices of exercises.” They utilized “fraternal correction,” the notion that each person in the community should speak to those, whether “above” or “below” them, to encourage their progress. And, like the Society of Jesus to come, they valued education, and used their “in between” status to advance their vision.

All of which, he suggested, highlights the complex, integrative, worldly and pragmatic “way of proceeding” that is the hallmark of Jesuit education. Our core curriculum, therefore, should exhibit a similar sensibility, leading to the kind of integrative scholarly work, creative course foci and teaching methods (particularly Ignatian pedagogy) that take advantage of the “in-between-ness” of the intellectual life. Ignatius, Hornbeck said, “is explicit that undergoing spiritual exercises involves all of our senses and capacities – not just our mind...but indeed also our emotions, our personal history, our creativity, our sense of the wider world. [They] require us to work at the level of integration, and to do so in real time. That is an inherently interdisciplinary task.”

Jesuit education today, in its insistence that the liberal arts inform every undergraduate degree, is based on the Society’s 1599 “Ratio Studiorum,” a comprehensive “plan of studies.” While we no longer march in lock-step through that prescribed curriculum, we value its basic affirmation that a curated and tiered set of courses provides the basis for a genuinely integrative approach to knowing. These discipline-based courses make possible the conversation across disciplines that can follow. Indeed, courses that foster interdisciplinarity, while time-intensive to develop, bring forward both the depth of inquiry and the restless integrating vision that has characterized the Ignatian tradition, that “finds God in all things,” from the start. To do so in the interdisciplinary modes of scholarly inquiry today – not only cross-disciplinary, but also holistic, data-driven, intersectional, multi-platformed, global – is to perform the Ratio anew, an “exercise” that is deeply appropriate to those who call themselves #JesuitEducated. AMDG

MEMO

Date: 20 March 2017
From: Nancy Dallavalle, VP Mission and Identity
To: Christine Siegel, Interim Provost and Senior VP for Academic Affairs
Re: Mission and the Core Curriculum

In the report of the AJCU visiting team in November 2016, we received strong support for mission priority #2. We now need to strategize ways to enact this, so as to report progress on this front by 2020. Our progress will be reported to, and tracked by, the Mission Leadership Council. Here is mission priority #2:

3. **Academics: we will design initiatives to make mission visible in academics.** The Academics self-study team called for Fairfield to ensure, going forward, *that the Catholic Jesuit tradition remains an integral part of our academic mission and identity.* This “integral part,” the self-study team suggested, would be best introduced through the following objective: *Identify and prioritize a common intellectual experience that articulates our Catholic Jesuit mission to our undergraduate students.*

I emphasize that this priority is not addressed by

- a. the implementation of a “common” core. Simply having a pattern of courses in common is not “an intellectual experience that articulates our Catholic Jesuit mission.”
- b. the addition of “social justice” requirements to the core curriculum. Justice is an important theme for Jesuit education, but this is as an expression of religious faith – the claim, from GC 32, that we embrace “the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement.”

As we are currently revising the core curriculum, I have reached out to Shannon Harding, chair of that effort, asking to present the following scenarios that would address mission priority #2, these efforts would complement one another, although only “D.” would require action by the core curriculum revision team.

A. Have the First Year Assembly talk have, as its permanent theme, the Jesuit Catholic intellectual tradition – which includes critical analysis, the wider context of other traditions, historical questions, etc. – with coordinating readings. Introduce the concept of the *Ratio Studiorum* as an anchoring theme, each first year student would receive a RATIO rock.

B. Provide optional annual *Eloquentia Perfecta* faculty lectures/workshops, to enhance WAC.

C. Provide optional annual Catholic Social Teaching faculty lectures/workshops, to enhance SJ.

D. Re-label the Interdisciplinary Experience as “the Ratio Seminar,” as this element will function as the de facto capstone of the core curriculum. Each of these would articulate how they engage (as expression or query) the notion of interdisciplinary thinking grounded in the holistic intellectual narrative that animated Jesuit education from the start. This would link these seminars to the opening First Year Assembly.

There are certainly other possible strategies for accomplishing this mission priority. The goal is that our students would understand that there is an intellectual narrative (a set of commitments, a genealogy, and historical context) that grounds Jesuit Catholic education. “Faith alone” (*let Campus Ministry handle it*) and/or “justice alone” (*add a service learning or diversity requirement*) do not adequately convey what it means to be #JesuitEducated.