The Identity and Mission of Saint Louis University

In Perspective

An overview of the intellectual, ethical and religious foundations of Saint Louis University
PART ONE:
The University’s Mission and Values

"...the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity...

Saint Louis University Mission Statement

In 1991, after broad consultation among University administrators, faculty and staff, SLU’s Faculty Senate proposed, and its board of trustees formally approved, the following articulation of the University’s mission:

The mission of Saint Louis University is the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity. The University seeks excellence in the fulfillment of its corporate purposes of teaching, research and community service. It is dedicated to leadership in the continuing quest for understanding of God’s creation, and for the discovery, dissemination and integration of the values, knowledge and skills required to transform society in the spirit of the Gospels. As a Catholic, Jesuit university, the pursuit is motivated by the inspiration and values of the Judeo-Christian tradition and guided by the spiritual and intellectual ideals of the Society of Jesus.

In conjunction with the mission statement, the University committed itself to several broad categories of action that constitute a bridge to the more specific goals, objectives and actions of its subsequent strategic planning.

In Support of its Mission, the University:

- Encourages and supports innovative scholarship and effective teaching in all fields of the arts; humanities; the natural, health and medical sciences; the social sciences; the law; business; aviation; and technology.
- Creates an academic environment that values and promotes free, active and original intellectual inquiry among faculty and students.
- Maintains and encourages programs that link the University and its resources to local, national and international communities to combat ignorance, poverty, injustice and hunger; to extend compassionate care to the ill and needy; and to maintain and improve the quality of life for all persons.
“Every discipline, beyond its necessary specialization, must engage with human society, human life and the environment in appropriate ways, cultivating moral concern about how people ought to live together.” — Peter Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.

“The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Higher Education,”
October 6, 2000

- Welcomes students, faculty and staff from all racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds and beliefs and creates a sense of community that facilitates their development as men and women for others.

- Nurtures within its community an understanding of and commitment to the promotion of faith and justice in the spirit of the Gospels.

At the same time that the University formally defined its mission, it also articulated its values and ideals in a statement of philosophy, inspired by SIU’s Catholic, Jesuit heritage. In this statement, the University makes clear its commitment to academic excellence, student-centered learning, academic freedom, research, community service and diversity.

Saint Louis University is a Catholic university sponsored by the Society of Jesus and dedicated to the Society’s ideal of striving for academic excellence under the inspiration of the Christian faith. The University also recognizes the critical role of academic freedom to its life as a community committed to the discovery and sharing of truth. In keeping with its Christian vision of the dignity of persons as created in the image of God and as united under the Creator’s loving Providence, the University seeks to establish a college environment in which those of diverse cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs can participate in this community in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect.

Academic excellence has been a value of the Jesuit educational tradition since the time of its Renaissance origins. A cornerstone of this humanistic tradition is that a good education contributes to making good persons. The University’s undergraduate curriculum embraces the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and technology in a unified effort. The curriculum challenges students to understand themselves, their world and their relation to God; to make critically informed moral judgments; and to prepare intellectually and professionally for careers of their choosing.

Student-centered learning was institutionalized as an ideal of Jesuit education in a 1599 foundational document (the Ratio Studiorum) and found its specific expression in terms of showing students “personal care” (cura personalis) and educating the “whole person.” The SIU community strives to help students develop as critically reflective and socially responsible persons capable of exercising leadership in advancing the common good, and it pursues this goal by providing an environment that nurtures and strengthens students’ intellectual, emotional, imaginative, technical, social, religious and spiritual abilities.

Academic freedom is formally recognized and embraced by the University as a basic principle of its mission. The University imposes no personal, religious requirement on either its students or its employees. Though it disallows the use of the classroom or University-sponsored events to denigrate or attack the Catholic faith, it acknowledges the right of faculty, staff and students to express and explain their own beliefs, even when those do not accord with Catholic church teachings.

Research and scholarship have been integral to the Jesuit educational tradition from its inception. One need only point to the 55 linear craters named after early Jesuit scientists. The University’s graduate programs and professional schools seek to advance the frontiers of knowledge and technical expertise in their respective disciplines and to prepare students to make their own contributions to such advances. In 2000, the Carnegie Foundation ranked SIU as a Doctoral/Research-Extensive university, one of only eight Catholic universities in the United States to achieve this designation.

Community service is also a hallmark of Jesuit education, rooted in an Ignatian spirituality that values action over words and sees the “greater glory of God” as being achieved by helping people in the greatest need. Articulated in recent years as educating “men and women for and with others,” this ideal is based on the concept that a person is free, responsible and capable of making a difference. The curriculum seeks to prepare students for the responsibilities they will bear as citizens and leaders to work for peace and justice in their own communities, as well as in our interdependent world order.

Diversity as a value and respect for persons of all races, religions, political affiliations and cultural backgrounds derive from the humanistic roots of Ignatian spirituality and the Jesuit educational tradition. Ignatian spirituality sees God laboring in all things and in all persons. Jesuit tradition has historically seen the education of underprivileged persons as an indispensable means for creating a more just and equitable society. Saint Louis University welcomes into its community persons of all creeds and no formal creed. Its 2001 strategic plan made “advancing community with diversity” an institutional priority.

In its mission statement, Saint Louis University declares itself to be a Catholic, Jesuit university motivated by the inspiration and values of the Judeo-Christian tradition and guided by the spiritual and intellectual ideals of the Society of Jesus. Because the terms Catholic and Jesuit have often been misrepresented, they are easily misunderstood. What exactly they mean in the context of higher education requires some explanation.
PART TWO:

The Catholic Character of Saint Louis University

"Every Catholic University, as a university, is an academic community which, in a rigorous and critical fashion, assists in the protection and advancement of human dignity and of a cultural heritage through research, teaching and various services offered to the local, national and international communities."

Pope John Paul II
Ex Corde Ecclesiae

The Origins of U.S. Catholic Universities

Saint Louis University has its origins in the universities of medieval Europe, which were either founded by or closely associated with the Catholic Church. Even after the 16th-century Protestant Reformation, European universities were religiously oriented, as were the oldest and what are today the most prestigious Ivy League universities in the United States. Secular universities did not appear in significant numbers until the early 1800s.

The Catholic Church was formally established on U.S. shores in 1789 when John Carroll, cousin of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, was consecrated the first bishop of Baltimore. Bishop Carroll had been a member of the Society of Jesus until 1773, when, under political pressure from several European monarchs, the Pope suppressed the order. In 1805, the order was restored in the United States, and in 1814, worldwide.

In 1789, the year of his consecration, Bishop Carroll founded Georgetown College on the banks of the Potomac. At the time, Catholics numbered scarcely 1 percent of the country’s population. In 1805, when the Society of Jesus was restored in Maryland, Bishop Carroll placed Georgetown under Jesuit direction. Saint Louis College followed as the nation’s second Catholic college (1818). The Jesuits assumed its direction in 1828, and the school became Saint Louis University in 1832 when it was chartered by the State of Missouri as the first university west of the Mississippi.

The Meaning of Catholicism

Whether through ignorance of history or mean-spiritedness, the idea of a Catholic university has sometimes been labeled as an oxymoron. The adjective Catholic has come to be identified with nouns like dogma, hierarchy and inquisition. Ferdinand and Isabella, called “their Catholic Majesties” in Spain, are remembered for having expelled first Jews and then Muslims from their realms. The late Pope John Paul II offered regrets and apologies for the Crusades, the trial of Galileo and the anti-Semitism that morphed so easily into racism and anti-Semitism. All of these frighten the history of the Church have caused the word Catholic to be identified in certain quarters with authoritarianism, narrowness and intolerance, not humanism.

Yet, there is another side. The word Katholikon is Greek for “universal.” It was first used around the year 100 to refer not to any one local church, but to the entire network of Christian churches which, already at that time, were to be found throughout the far-flung Roman Empire. Thus, from the very beginning, the word Catholic denoted diversity, the very antithesis of paracholism, narrowness or sectarianism.

The fact that Katholikon comes from the Greek is a useful reminder in that it refers to events that occurred to Jewish Christianity when it moved into the Hellenistic culture of the Roman Empire. Instead of retreating or rejecting Greco-Roman culture as irredeemably pagan, the fathers of the Church engaged it, disproportionately embraced parts of it and eventually baptized it. Catholic is what happened when Jewish Christianity became Latin and Greek.
The Church fathers did not repudiate pre-Christian culture when they embraced the faith. Instead they wondered if Plato had read Moses. They developed the idea that the Wisdom of God, incarnate in Jesus and revealed in Scripture, was to be found seminally in reason as well as revelation. God’s wisdom and truth, they argued, could be found in creation and culture, in nature and the insights of philosophers and teachers. In other words, truth was universal and could be found outside the Bible and outside the Church.

From virtually the beginning, the Catholic Church read the Bible with more than one way of interpretation, and quite differently from the literalist interpretation given Scripture today by biblical fundamentalists. From the varieties of biblical interpretation derived varieties of spirituality and theology. With good reason, Cardinal Nicolas de Cusa in the 14th century spoke of Catholicism as a complex opposition.

In the name of a biblical exclusiveness, the 16th-century Protestant reformers criticized the extraneous pre-Christian elements that the Catholic Church had allowed to enter Christian tradition. In the name of grace, faith and Scripture “alone,” Protestants criticized Catholicism for its “and” — faith and works, Scripture and tradition. The 16th-century reformers also looked askance at the Catholic engagement with pre-Christian culture — for example, at the Catholic celebration of Christmas and Mardi Gras, both of which arose out of the Catholic attempt to baptize what were formerly pagan festivals.

The Catholic Church in its origins had a tradition of engaging pre-Christian culture and adapting it, trying, not always successfully, to eliminate the excesses. Catholicism expresses an attitude of openness and breadth in the Catholic Church that bespeaks the celebrated humanistic dictum of the Roman playwright Terence: “I am human, and nothing human is foreign to me.” Because of this openness and breadth, even so stout a critic as James Joyce had to describe the Catholic Church as “here comes everybody.”

With its commitment to cultural diversity, the universality of truth and the engagement with non-Christian and secular culture, Saint Louis University certainly espouses the Catholic heritage described above. If the foregoing can be said to focus exclusively on Catholic with a small “c,” the University no less espouses Catholicism with a capital “C.” In 1990, Pope John Paul II issued the most recent authoritative statement on Catholic universities in his Apostolic Constitution Ex Corde Ecclesiae (From the Heart of the Church). Saint Louis University, along with other Jesuit colleges and universities, finds the principles of this document inherently consonant with its mission and heritage.

**The Meaning and Identity of a Catholic University**

The following are some of the more salient principles enunciated by Pope John Paul II on the meaning and identity of a Catholic university:

- **Catholic Heritage** Ex Corde Ecclesiae challenges Catholic colleges and universities to focus attention and energy on their Catholic heritage and the responsibilities that follow from it. Among these responsibilities are preserving the heritage, interpreting it and transmitting it to future generations of young people. From Augustine and Aquinas to Dante, Giotto and Palestrina, Saint Louis University strives to enrich its students’ lives by introducing them to the rich Catholic intellectual and cultural history and tradition in philosophy, theology, history and the arts.

- **Institutional Autonomy** In challenging Catholic colleges and universities to focus attention and energy on their Catholic heritage and the responsibilities that ensue from it, Ex Corde also acknowledges the colleges’ and universities’ rightful autonomy. Saint Louis University, along with the other U.S. Jesuit colleges and universities, is incorporated as an autonomous institution of higher learning. Its highest level of governance resides in its independent board of trustees. The University has no legal or juridical ties to the Vatican, the Archdiocese of St. Louis, its archbishop or the Society of Jesus. While Jesuits constitute the University’s highest governing body for most of its history, in 1967 the Society of Jesus transferred ultimate authority for the University to a predominantly lay board of trustees.

“We must also determine the character of the type of men and women we want to form, the type of persons into which we must be changed, and the type of persons which the generations succeeding us must be encouraged to develop. . . . Only by being a man or woman for others does a person become fully human.”

Pedro Arrupe, S.J.
“Address to the Tenth International Congress of Jesuit Alumni of Europe,” 1973
• Human Dignity: Ex Conra, like virtually all the documents promulgated by Pope John Paul II, gives central importance to promoting respect for the dignity of the human person. It calls for Catholic colleges and universities to assist in the protection and advancement of human dignity through teaching, research and service to the local, national and international communities. True to its Catholic identity, Saint Louis University works to assure a Christian presence in the world of higher education.

• Institutional Fidelity: Ex Conra calls for Catholic institutions to respect and value those members of the academic community who are not Catholic, but at the same time calls for institutional fidelity to the schools’ particular mission. This includes continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research and an institutional commitment to service of the people of God and of the human family. Saint Louis University’s own mission statement fully accords with this challenge.

• Faith and Reason: Ex Conra challenges Catholic colleges and universities, in their pursuit of truth, to search as well for an integration of knowledge by fostering a dialogue between faith and reason. Faculty not only in theological studies but in all fields of study are called to examine the moral and ethical implications of their respective disciplines so as to contribute to their students’ total development. Saint Louis University requires courses in theology and philosophy in its core curriculum and pursues a program of fostering ethics across its curriculum.

• Academic Freedom: Ex Conra acknowledges academic freedom to be a part of any university’s identity. Those engaged in research have a right to the conclusions and analysis that may lead them toward. They may teach and publish the results of their research with the expectation that the rights of the individual person and the common good are also taken into consideration. Saint Louis University’s Faculty Manual explicitly recognizes that the pursuit of truth requires freedom from coercion by any source and guarantees protection from all inappropriate pressure and harassment.

In light of the foregoing principles put forth by an official document of the Catholic Church, one can understand why, almost without exception, U.S. Catholic institutions of higher education include within their ranks administrators, faculty and staff who claim religious traditions other than Catholic, or who profess no religious affiliation at all. Non-Catholics are able to make, and in many instances are found to make, significant contributions to fulfilling the Catholic identity and mission of their institutions.

What does a Catholic college or university like Saint Louis University ask of these colleagues? They are expected to recognize and respect the institution’s Catholic identity and its responsibility as a Catholic institution to be faithful to the teachings of the Church. This does not require agreement with or acceptance of the Church and its various doctrines, nor does it prevent the statement of personal views which may differ from those held by the Catholic Church. As pointed out above, precisely in virtue of its Catholic character, it is incumbent upon a Catholic institution of higher learning to respect the freedom of conscience and religious liberty of each member of its academic community.

But the question remains: why have so many administrators, faculty members and staff from a different or from no religious background taken positions in Catholic colleges and universities and remained in those positions, some for their entire careers? It is unlikely that they would do so if they were dissatisfied, or in substantial disagreement, with the Catholic educational environment. Many find support and are comfortable in such an environment. They share some or all of the colleges’ and universities’ intellectual, moral and humanitarian values, and they feel they can contribute to the achievement of the objectives of Catholic higher education.

Certainly, not all of the values and objectives of Catholic higher education are uniquely Catholic. Those members of the academic community whose cultural roots are in the Abrahamic traditions find areas of emphasis that are familiar to them and with which they agree. Those who profess other religions, or no particular faith, also have found areas of agreement. Experience has shown that, in a Catholic college or university, people can and do share educational ideals and values without necessarily sharing religious beliefs.

"The greater glory of God... was the reason for the Society's persistence in education. For the Society there is no such thing as an either-or approach between God or the world, however dangerous the latter may look. The meeting with God always takes place in the world."

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.
PART THREE: The Jesuit Character of Saint Louis University

Saint Louis University — a learning community in the Jesuit tradition where knowledge touches lives, faith inspires justice and service forms tomorrow’s leaders.

Ignatius Loyola

Ignatius’ spirituality arose primarily out of his own life experience. Born in 1491 to a family of lower nobility in the Basque region of northern Spain, he spent his youth as a courtier in the household of Spain’s Royal Treasurer. At the age of 30, while in the service of the Duke of Navarre, he was severely wounded during a minor skirmish defending the city of Pamplona. His shattered leg brought him near death but also initiated a spiritual journey that would result in his becoming one of the most influential religious and educational leaders of the 16th century.

Ignatius spent a year gradually recovering his strength in the family castle at Loyola. During that year of convalescence, he found himself at a crossroads in his life. With nothing to read but a life of Christ and a book on the lives of the saints, he found that thoughts of returning to court dissatisfied him. But the idea of imitating the saints and doing great things for God excited him. Discerning the difference between these two “spirits” within himself, Ignatius decided to commit his life and service to a greater sovereign than any to be found in Spain’s royal courts.

Once well enough to travel, Ignatius set his sights on making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. On his way to the port city of Barcelona, however, he stopped off at the little town of Manresa, where his intended brief stay extended for some 10 months. There he experienced a series of mystical illuminations and came to a number of seminal spiritual convictions. He came to believe that God was teaching him and calling him to perform a particular task. He became convinced that God was present and at work in all things, in all creation, and that he could find God’s will for him in his deepest desires.

One of the first projects Ignatius undertook at Manresa was to begin compiling a set of directives and a series of meditations that would help others to experience a spiritual transformation similar to his own. These notes eventually became the Spiritual Exercises, a small book in which he describes the basic vision and the spiritual principles that characterize Ignatian spirituality. He also began conversations with whomever would listen about how they too, could experience God in their lives as he had. If God spoke to him, God would speak to anyone.

During the early years of this journey, Ignatius was not a priest, nor does it seem that he intended to become one. This, however, proved highly problematic in 16th-century Spain, where it was questioned how an unordained layman could presume to give others spiritual instruction. On two different occasions, Ignatius found himself imprisoned and questioned by the inquisition. The judges found no fault with his spiritual teachings but silenced him for lack of the proper credentials. Ignatius decided to get his credentials at the University of Paris, considered at the time the finest university in Europe. Ignatius’ spirituality of service would always be characterized by his respect for learning and this sense of pragmatic realism.

Ignatius had realized for some time that his mission of service required co-workers if it were to have a lasting effect. He shared his vision with some of his fellow students at the University of Paris and persuaded them to become his companions. Each of them made the Spiritual Exercises under his direction. In August of 1534, on Montmartre hill outside the city, these seven “friends in the Lord,” as they called themselves, made their vow to stay together and do whatever they could for the “glory of God and the good of souls.”

This vow took them to Venice, where they waited in vain for a ship that would take them to Jerusalem. Ultimately, they made it to Rome, where they became a religious order in 1540 and put themselves at the disposal of the Pope. He would instruct them where, in the words of the Jesuit Constitutions, they should go for the sake of “the greater glory of God our Lord and the greater aid of others.” This statement, as much as any, encapsulates the mission of the Society of Jesus.

Jesuit Education

Elected Superior General by his fellow Jesuits, Ignatius remained in Rome until his death in 1556. He would come to direct a worldwide network of more than 1,000 Jesuits working in
Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. While still in Venice, the Jesuits had begun their ministries on behalf of others, not only preaching in the streets but also nursing patients in hospitals, cleaning beadspans and burying the dead. Their first winter in Rome was an especially severe one. Famine drove hundreds of people from the countryside into the streets of the city. The Jesuits appealed to those with resources, on behalf of those who had none. They housed and fed the homeless, thus creating an archetype for their future activities.

Jesuits gave the Spiritual Exercises, worked in prisons, and even opened halfway houses for women caught in the net of prostitution. Opening and staffing schools was not a dedicated purpose for the order. They had been educating their own young Jesuits, however, and lecturing at other institutions on a temporary basis. When the Spanish Viceroy of Sicily asked Ignatius to establish a college or secondary school for boys in Messina, he agreed. In 1548, Ignatius sent 10 of the best men he had in what was still a very small order to begin the first Jesuit college.

Ignatius and his fellow Jesuits were all products of their Renaissance culture and its humanistic faith in the power of education. They believed that good literature could influence young people to civic virtue and that schools could produce effective leaders for society and good priests for the Church. Education soon became the dominant activity of the Fledgling Society of Jesus. By the time Ignatius died in 1556, the Jesuits had established 30 colleges from Portugal to Poland, as well as in India.

One hundred years after the Society was founded, a network of more than 300 Jesuit schools comprised the first worldwide educational system. By developing a pedagogy of graded stages, the Jesuits were responsible for creating the semester system. Their interest in teaching the art of public speaking led them to introduce drama into their curriculum, and with it, one of the more enduring fruits of their contributions to Western civilization, the school pageant. With time and increasingly larger audiences, school performances evolved into spectacular productions incorporating music and even dance. Jesuits began seeing their spiritual mission as having a cultural component.

By 1773, the year that the Jesuits were suppressed, there were 620 Jesuit schools and colleges and 15 universities. They were seen by several of Europe’s monarchs as having altogether too much influence over European society. After the restoration of the Society in 1816, the Jesuits moved back into education. By that time, they had already been invited by Bishop John Carroll to take over the direction of a school in Georgetown, on the outskirts of Washington, D.C.

Today, of some 800 Jesuit educational institutions worldwide, more than 180 are postsecondary, including universities, colleges and faculties of philosophy and theology. In the United States, there are 28 Jesuit colleges and universities and two graduate schools of theology. While legally separate and independent from one another, they cooperate and share best practices in a national organization called the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities. Together they carry on the educational legacy of Ignatius and his vision of serving God by helping people.

The Qualities of Jesuit Education

Because of their Renaissance culture and humanist upbringing, the early Jesuits believed in the power of education. Since patronage, it had been a humanist commonplace that good literature produces good persons. Studying the pre-Christian Latin classics, such as Cicero, provided a model not only for eloquence but for moral inspiration as well. The early Jesuits, themselves the products of humanist education, became its purveyors in a network of schools that spanned the globe.

Sharing success stories and leaning from one another’s mistakes, Jesuit teachers eventually put together a detailed course of study that would be codified in 1599 in an official document entitled the Ratio Studiorum (Plan of Study). This document, together with the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and even the Spiritual Exercises, contains principles from which derive the qualities that have come to characterize Jesuit education. The following are some of the more significant:

• Excellence. Latin was the common language of educated Europeans at the time the Jesuits were themselves educated and began staffing schools. Humanism, the dominant constituent of Renaissance culture, prized the literary elegance, neatness and clarity of the Latin classics. For Renaissance humanists, learning to speak and write well required studying and imitating the ancient authors, above all Cicero, since they were regarded as the best. The writings of the classical authors, Latin and Greek, became the gold standard for any aspiring orator or writer. Becoming a skilled orator able to persuade an audience to one’s point of view was the ideal of a Renaissance education.

Today, neither the Latin classics nor oratory are required subjects in Jesuit universities. (Being able to accommodate to one’s audience and to changing circumstances was a skill also prized by Renaissance humanists and one the Jesuits learned and applied early.) The ideal of exposing students to the highest achievements of human creativity and thought, however, remains — the best minds, the latest science, the finest examples. Ignatius went to Paris to get the best education he could receive at the time. The Society has a tradition of sending its young Jesuits to the best universities. Jesuit schools have a tradition of selecting excellent scholars as faculty so as to provide their students with the same kind of excellence.

• Universality of Truth. The Renaissance humanists turned to the classical authors not only for their literary elegance but also for the insight and value of their ideas. This meant quoting Plato as well as St. Paul, Cicero and even Mohammed as well as Moses. The Renaissance humanists confronted the same problem that the Church fathers did in the first centuries of Christianity — that of reconciling
Part Three: The Jesuit Character of Saint Louis University

The Jesuit character of these institutions is vital that attention be given to the selection of professors, administrative staff and members of boards, and to the ongoing formation of both Jesuits and lay people, to create an educational community united in mission. Academic or other professional credentials taken by themselves are not sufficient grounds for being hired at a Jesuit institution.

Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, succinctly put the challenge facing all Jesuit institutions today: Unless there is prior clarity concerning a statement of the mission of the institution, and prior acceptance and commitment to foster this mission, it seems unrealistic to expect that there is hope for an institution to continue “in the Ignatian tradition.”

In a 2004 address on Jesuit/Lay partnership, Kolvenbach cited:

- the need for ongoing formation in the Ignatian charism,
- a capacity for listening to and learning from each other to face the challenges and the cry of the poor “us,” and
- the fact that the Jesuit mission is enhanced and extended by celebrating every form of partnering in being women and men for and with others.

In response to this challenge, Saint Louis University, like other U.S. Jesuit colleges and universities, has created programs and activities designed to explain its Jesuit identity. Along with this booklet, orientations for new faculty and staff include a section on the Jesuit character of the University. Academic seminars and colloquia on issues related to Jesuit education are offered for faculty and professional staff. Institutional policies and procedures are reviewed for their consistency with the University’s Catholic, Jesuit identity. Policies for both hiring and promotion include issues of fitting in with and contributing to the University’s mission and values.

Educating the Whole Person

The Renaissance humanists faulted medieval education for being too cerebral. They criticized Aristotle’s ethics for ignoring the mind without setting the heart on fire. In our own day, some pundits in the field have located a value-free or value-neutral education as an ideal. Jesuit education has never been valuenutral. One of the slogans that has come to encapsulate the Ignatian ideal is “educating the whole person.” This means speaking to hearts as well as to minds, honing students’ skills but also addressing their spirituality.

St. Ignatius wrote in the Constitutions of the Society that Jesuit educators (and by extension, all faculty at Jesuit universities) were to show cura personalis (personal concern) for their students, being concerned about their development as total human beings. This means, inseparable as possible, not just learning students’ names but showing an interest in their lives. It also means, when the occasion arises, letting students know what lifts the professors’ heart and animates them, what gets them up in the morning, what holds them together. These are all questions of spirituality. Faculty at Saint Louis University, and at other Jesuit schools, are not simply relegated to address these questions, nor are they simply relegated to the theology department or campus ministry. Unlike secular universities, SLU has a campus culture that is not embarrassed to speak about God.

Educating Tomorrow’s Leaders

Studying classical authors such as Cicero and Seneca, who were statesmen, led to the humanist ideal of cultivating a life characterized by civic virtue. The ideal product of a humanist education was someone whose rhetorical skills were able to shape public opinion and make a positive difference in society. Renaissance culture was predominantly the product of urban culture. There is a reason that Jesuits have always situated their institutions in the center of cities.

The now-classic expression for this Jesuit ideal is educating “men and women for others.” In recent years this descriptive phrase has been modified to avoid any suggestion of condescension. Educating “men and women for and with others” makes more explicit the need for solidarity with the marginalized in society and in the global economy. Jesuit education is anything but ivory tower. Rather, to use a phrase that has become part of the very self-definition of the Society of Jesus and its institutions, Jesuit education is imbued with the “faith that does justice.” Jesuit education strives to equip students with the vision and skills to become good citizens and leaders in their local communities and in the global community.

Jesuit Identity and Lay Partnership

Until the 1970s, most of the administrators and faculty in Jesuit colleges and universities were Jesuits. Preserving Jesuit identity was not an issue. Today, however, it is clear that Jesuit educational institutions will only survive through Jesuits joining in partnership with dedicated lay people who share their vision and commitment. To preserve the Jesuit character of these institutions, it is vital that attention be given to the selection of professors, administrative staff and members of boards, and to the ongoing formation of both Jesuits and lay people, to create an educational community united in mission. Academic or other professional credentials taken by themselves are not sufficient grounds for being hired at a Jesuit institution.
PART FOUR:
Saint Louis University: Its History and Heritage

“My vision is to establish and maintain Saint Louis University as the finest Catholic university in the United States . . .”

Lawrence Biondi, S.J.
Saint Louis University President

Early Years

Saint Louis University’s origins can be traced to November 16, 1818, when Saint Louis Academy was opened by Louis DiBourg, the newly-arrived bishop of Louisiana and the Floridas. He had chosen St. Louis to be the seat of what was then the largest geographical diocese in the history of the American Catholic Church. Shortly after his arrival in St. Louis, he founded an “academy for young gentlemen.”

The academy was intended to be a high school but almost immediately became Saint Louis College. The objectives of the school were defined by Father Francois Niel, the director of the academy, as “the moral and literary improvement of the pupils [and] a due sense of religion, the foundation of all morality.” Niel went on to assure parents that there would be no interference with the religious beliefs of students from other denominations, a remarkably ecumenical outlook for that day and age. From its very inception, what became Saint Louis University was open to people of all religious backgrounds.

When the U.S. government offered subsidies to any religious or philanthropic group that would work for the improvement of the Indian tribes, Bishop DiBourg submitted a plan for an Indian school near the junction of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. The plan was approved by President James Monroe, and a group of Belgian Jesuits, newly arrived in Maryland, made a seven-week trip by foot and flatboat to St. Louis in 1823. They were given a farm near Florissant, Missouri, where they began organizing the school.

Five years later, in 1828, DiBourg’s successor, Bishop Joseph Rosati, turned the direction of Saint Louis College over to the Florissant Jesuits. Shortly thereafter, the Jesuits petitioned the General Assembly of Missouri for a university charter, and on December 28, 1832, it was granted, making Saint Louis University the first university west of the Mississippi.

The early years of Saint Louis University comprise any number of firsts. The University was the first institution west of Missouri to grant a graduate degree and the first to confer a doctor of medicine degree. It was the first to begin schools of philosophy, divinity, medicine, law and business. In 1836, it began cataloguing its library of some 5,000 books, a remarkable collection for a frontier college. In 1843, the University began the Saint Louis Medical Journal, the sole medical journal west of the Alleghenies. In that same decade, the University’s Philharmonic Society was formed, the first musical society in St. Louis.

Visitors to Saint Louis University in the 19th century included President Martin Van Buren, Senator Daniel Webster and novelist Charles Dickens. University alumni and professor Pierre Jean De Smet, S.J., worked with Native Americans in the Northwest, wrote bestselling books about his mission trips on the frontier and became a renowned peacemaker between the western tribes and the American government.

During the 1840s and 1850s, as growing numbers of Catholic immigrants arrived in the United States, the nativist Know Nothing movement included anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic hostility and riots in various areas across the nation. St. Louis was not immune to the violence, and one of the first casualties of this religious bigotry was the University’s medical school. In 1844, a mob broke into the building and destroyed all of the equipment. In 1854, facing the threat of another mob assault, the Jesuits decided to separate the medical school from the University.

Such hostility eventually forced the University to withdraw within its own walls. The University continued its work unabated but quietly, and with considerably less recognition within the community. In the last years of the 19th century, the University moved from its original downtown location to its present site in what is now the Grand Center area of the city. In 1898, the towering white spire of Saint Francis Xavier (College) Church at Lindell and Lindell Boulevards became a landmark for the University.

The 20th Century

During the first decade of the 20th century, the University, along with the city, underwent a major burst of energy and expansion. As pioneers had once passed through the city on their treks westward, transatlantic steamers and railroads brought visitors from all over the world to the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair. The City of St. Louis
achieved a new national prominence, and the University, under the presidency of William Banks Rogers, S.J., capitalized on it.

Sometimes called the "second founder" of Saint Louis University, Rogers moved easily among civic leaders and turned the University outward toward the city. He transformed the undergraduate program from a continental European model (six years of high school and junior college) to what had become the standard American program (four years of high school, four years of college). In 1903, under Rogers' leadership, the University regained a medical school, 60 years after losing the original. This proved to be a turning point in the University's history.

In the course of the 20th century, as in its early years, Saint Louis University began accumulating an impressive list of firsts. The University became home to the first national network of seismographic stations [1909]. It opened the first school of business in Missouri (1910) and trained the first African-American surgeons in St. Louis (1919). It began operating the first radio station west of the Mississippi River (1925), Edward A. Downy, who chaired the department of biochemistry, received the Nobel Prize in physiology and medicine for his work in the isolation of Vitamin K (1943). In the summer of 1944, Saint Louis University became the first school in Missouri to formally admit African-Americans.

In 1946 the University acquired Parks College of Engineering, Aviation and Technology, the first federally licensed school of aviation (1927), making it the first aerospace engineering school affiliated with a major university. Though women had been admitted to the law school in 1908 and had been receiving University degrees since the 1920s, in 1948, women were formally admitted to the College of Arts and Sciences. In 1953, the University opened the Vatican Film Library, a microfilm collection of more than 14 million pages of manuscripts from the Vatican Library, the only such collection outside Rome and the result of the largest microfilming project to have been undertaken to date. With a campus in Madrid, Spain, Saint Louis University became the first U.S. university to have its own freestanding campus in Europe (1969). The first human heart transplant in Missouri was performed at Saint Louis University Hospital (1973), and in 1991, the University opened the first School of Public Health in Missouri.

Of all its famous firsts, none was more far-reaching than the University's 1967 decision to reconstitute its board of trustees as a lay board. Under the leadership of Father Paul C. Reinhart, S.J., its 27th president, the University's authority, government and corporate powers passed from an all-clergy board of trustees to a newly constituted board of trustees composed of a majority of lay people and chaired by a lay person. While no revision of the original charter was necessary for this restructuring, new bylaws were formulated to ensure at once both lay control and the Jesuit character of the University. Reinhart understood that lay boards were necessary for U.S. Catholic colleges and universities to both survive and flourish in contemporary American society. His position prevailed and is commonly accepted in U.S. Catholic academic circles today.

The University Today

At the dawn of the 21st century, one experiences an almost palpable excitement on campus. Under the leadership of the University's current president, Father Lawrence Biondi, S.J., the face of the University, its stature and its culture have all been transformed. Saint Louis University's growth and investment have reversed the decline of the neighborhood surrounding it, putting the University in the vanguard of the renaissance of Midtown St. Louis.

The University opened the Vatican Film Library, a microfilm collection of more than 14 million pages of manuscripts from the Vatican Library, the only such collection outside Rome and the result of the largest microfilming project to have been undertaken to date. With a campus in Madrid, Spain, Saint Louis University became the first U.S. university to have its own freestanding campus in Europe (1969). The first human heart transplant in Missouri was performed at Saint Louis University Hospital (1973), and in 1991, the University opened the first School of Public Health in Missouri.

On all of these fronts, none was more far-reaching than the University's 1967 decision to reconstitute its board of trustees as a lay board. Under the leadership of Father Paul C. Reinhart, S.J., its 27th president, the University's authority, government and corporate powers passed from an all-clergy board of trustees to a newly constituted board of trustees composed of a majority of lay people and chaired by a lay person. While no revision of the original charter was necessary for this restructuring, new bylaws were formulated to ensure at once both lay control and the Jesuit character of the University. Reinhart understood that lay boards were necessary for U.S. Catholic colleges and universities to both survive and flourish in contemporary American society. His position prevailed and is commonly accepted in U.S. Catholic academic circles today.

The University Today

At the dawn of the 21st century, one experiences an almost palpable excitement on campus. Under the leadership of the University's current president, Father Lawrence Biondi, S.J., the face of the University, its stature and its culture have all been transformed. Saint Louis University's growth and investment have reversed the decline of the neighborhood surrounding it, putting the University in the vanguard of the renaissance of Midtown St. Louis.

The University Today

At the dawn of the 21st century, one experiences an almost palpable excitement on campus. Under the leadership of the University's current president, Father Lawrence Biondi, S.J., the face of the University, its stature and its culture have all been transformed. Saint Louis University's growth and investment have reversed the decline of the neighborhood surrounding it, putting the University in the vanguard of the renaissance of Midtown St. Louis.

Today, newcomers to SLU are immediately struck by the beauty of its well-defined campus, replete with gardens, green space and malls. Buildings have been restored or renovated, and new buildings have been constructed. SLU now has its own Water Tower Inn for visitors and the traveling public, and will soon have an arena on campus for its basketball team, the Billikens. The largest building project in the University's history — renovation of existing laboratory space and construction of a new, 10-story biomedical research building — will provide researchers with new opportunities.

This is also a time for more than buildings and beautification. Discovery, new technology and the creation of new knowledge characterize the academic environment. The Carnegie Foundation has classified Saint Louis University as a Research-Extensive University, making it one of the few Catholic universities so recognized. The designation has had its impact on the University culture. Achievements by researchers in the Schools of Medicine and Public Health in the prevention of cardiovascular disease, cancer, obesity, biotechnology, HIV/AIDS and other maladies have been at the forefront of leading the University to be ranked among the top research institutions in the nation.

SLU has grown from being a primarily local and regional university to achieving a national profile, drawing more than half of its undergraduate students from outside Missouri and the metropolitan St. Louis area. First-year classes enter SLU today in higher numbers (1,553) and with higher ACT scores (an average of 26.4 in 2005) than ever before. U.S. News and World Report's 2006 edition of "America's Best Colleges" ranked SLU among the top five Catholic institutions on its list and annually ranks SLU in the top 50 national universities offering a "best value." Each year, the University awards more than $70 million in academic, leadership and mission-related scholarships.
A Heritage of Religious and Cultural Diversity

From its first days, Saint Louis University has welcomed students and faculty from diverse religious denominations and respected their religious beliefs. In 1820, at least one professor of the college was Protestant. In 1831, one-third of the 150 students in the college were Protestant. In 1883, the graduate program awarded the first Ph.D. in the University’s history to a Protestant clergyman. By that time, the graduate program had enrolled 108 students, including one student who was Jewish and 19 who were Protestant. Since the restructuring of the University in 1967, the membership of the board of trustees has been religiously diverse, with members of various faiths and denominations.

The University is committed to religious, racial and cultural diversity. The University’s Jesuit tradition has historically seen the education of underprivileged persons as an indispensable means for creating a more just and equitable society. This commitment continues today, as evidenced by the University’s 2001 strategic plan which makes “advancing community with diversity” an institutional priority. Along with teaching and research skills, hiring for diversity as part of the University’s mission is one of the considerations that departments are expected to undertake in their recruiting and search processes for new faculty.

The Final Word is Students

The final word in any publication on Saint Louis University is also among its first: Students make the difference. Through service learning opportunities, students learn that knowledge helps one to teach lives, to make a difference and to make life better. Through this faith-filled community, students grow in their desire for justice and solidarity with the least of society. Through their involvement in numerous campus outreach programs, students are formed into tomorrow’s leaders, men and women with and for others. The difference these graduates make will fill the annals of SLU history in the decades to come.

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.
“The Jesuit University in Light of the Ignatian Charism” 2001

"Worldwide, our universities are addressing questions such as ethnic minorities, cultural pluralism, diversity, inter-religious dialogue, migrants, refugees, injustice, poverty, exclusion, unemployment, the crisis of democracy. It is not enough to denounce. It is necessary to also pronounce and propose. To commit to this for a Jesuit university is a consequence of the vision of St. Ignatius and the mission of the Society to strive for the service of faith and the promotion of justice."

On the Web

The Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU), the service organization representing the 28 U.S. Jesuit colleges and universities, provides valuable information about Jesuit higher education and highlights the activities and programs at AJCU member institutions: www.ajcnet.edu

The International Web site of the Jesuit Curia in Rome, a rich site of material on the Jesuits past and present: www.jsweb.info

The Society of Jesus USA Web site offers an American perspective on things Jesuit: www.jsusa.org

SU’s Web site related to mission: http://jesuitmission slu.edu

Suggested Readings

Spiritual Exercises and The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, both by Ignatius Loyola.

The idea of a University, by John Cardinal Newman.


The First Jesuits, by John W. O’Malley, S.J.

Saint Louis University: 150 Years [a pictorial history published by SLU on the occasion of its sesquicentennial].

Charters and Minutes of Saint Louis University (in the St. Louis Room of SLU’s Pius XI Library).

Adapting to America: Catholic, Jesuit, and Higher Education in the Twentieth Century, by William Leahy.

From the Heart of the American Church, by David J. O’Brien.

Memorial Volume of the Diamond Jubilee of Saint Louis University (in the St. Louis Room, Pius XI Library).

Bibliography


John Paul II. The Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities: From the Heart of the Church. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990. (This work may be found also in Origins, 20:17 [4 Oct. 1990]).


Original text for In Perspective written by Louis A. Barth, S.J., Richard W. Dumpey, S.J., and Richard D. Roberts. This fourth (2005) edition has been substantially edited and expanded by Ronald Motifan and John Calihan, S.J.
SLU’s St. Francis Xavier College Church dominates the Midtown St. Louis skyline.