

## **Fordham University – Mission Priority Examen Self-Study**

### ***AJCU Visiting Team Report***

The recently-elected Superior General of the Society of Jesus, the Rev. Arturo Sosa, SJ, identifies the intellectual life as an important apostolate of the Society. For the Society, Sosa argues, the “way of proceeding” that embraces the cultivation of the life of the mind is central to the Jesuit vision, proceeding as it does from the understanding that God is at work in the world. This claim binds the intellectual life to the world in all its diversity, making reality itself the proper locus of the University’s careful attention. Fordham University, a Jesuit and Catholic institution of higher education, lives this intellectual apostolate fully, with a generous and world-embracing spirit, one that was fully on display as it undertook the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities *Mission Examen* process.

This report, prepared by the members of the AJCU Visiting Team (identified at the end of this document), represents a reflection on Fordham’s mission and identity self-study text, a text that was further illuminated, for the Team, by a series of on-campus conversations with Fordham University faculty, staff, students, senior administration and trustees over a three-day period (2-4 April 2017). Our task was to ask about Fordham’s own assessment of its status as a Jesuit, Catholic institution of higher education, and to do so in the light of the guiding document prepared by the AJCU, “Some Characteristics of Jesuit Colleges and Universities: An Assessment.”

The self-study text prepared for the Visit represents a genuine commitment to the integrity of the *Mission Examen*, both in letter and spirit. Carefully designed by the Vice President for Mission Integration and Planning, the process undertaken at Fordham engaged a significant cross-section of the community, while the focused approach to the questions posed by “Some Characteristics” allowed the hopes of the community – and the lights and shadows of its experience – to emerge and be given voice.

The Visiting Team finds that, in many significant and admirable ways, Fordham already has achieved its goal: “to be the model urban Jesuit University of the 21st century.” Through innovative courses and a vibrant campus culture, a strong spirit of common purpose, turned outward, characterized students, faculty, and staff alike. This was palpable. The following observations of the Visiting Team happily recognize what has already been achieved, and are intended to support the sophisticated level of critical self-assessment the self-study text represents. We believe that the “status quo” for each characteristic – what is working and what is wanting – is quite accurately stated at the beginning and end of each section of the report. In many ways, the authors of the self-study have done our work for us, we thus are happy to accompany a journey already undertaken, sharing our observations in a collegial spirit.

#### ***Characteristic 1: Leadership’s Commitment to the Mission***

The Visiting Team was impressed with the strong mission leadership in place at Fordham. It is led by several members of the Society of Jesus – the president, the vice president for mission integration and planning, the executive director of campus ministry, and the rector of the Jesuit community – with President McShane, SJ, clearly standing as a charismatic, intellectually insightful, visible and deeply pastoral articulator of Fordham University’s mission and identity. Each of these leaders, the Visiting Team noted, are genuinely embraced by the community at large. While several lay members of the University leadership have experience with Catholic and or Jesuit education, the Visiting Team noted that “mission” is understood to be best articulated by Jesuit members of the leadership.

Nevertheless, throughout our conversations, the Visiting Team found a wide-spread sense of ownership of the mission, with students, faculty and staff broadly conversant with Jesuit values, and engaged by a sense that they were bound in the work of Jesuit education. As a strong foundation for this, Fordham's mission statement is clear and concise, with a four-part rendering that notably employs its New York setting to inform its direction.

Yet the self-study text rightly asks whether this appropriation is "deep enough" to inform the enterprise going forward. While Fordham is actively managing its future on several fronts, the changing patterns of Jesuit staffing, coupled with an evolving understanding of the cultural role of religion and belief, institutions of all kinds, and higher education as an enterprise requires a much more intentional and strategic approach – thus the broad call for such in Mission Priority #1. Encouraging a starting point in the carefully considered analysis of the *Mission Examen* self-study text, the Visiting Team is united in urging this project forward.

This strategic approach will depend, to a greater extent than in earlier days, on the effective use of "lay collaborators" in mission. Fordham is generously blessed with a strong group of these, faculty and staff who have a deep appropriation of Jesuit education and can speak about it with authority. The strategic plan will certainly find a way to more clearly deploy this group, as well as offering a strong mission-centered rationale for the new leadership position for diversity initiatives and the developments planned for the Dorothy Day Center. The Visiting Team suggests that Fordham take seriously how those already formed in mission received that formation. Perhaps they undertook the Spiritual Exercises, or attended AJCU Conferences in their professional area (e.g., JASPA). Perhaps an area of scholarship opened this door, or a service opportunity also offered an Ignatian reflection on service. The Arrupe Seminar, for example, provides an important opportunity for faculty and staff to deepen their understanding of the Jesuit, Catholic identity. The Visiting Team wondered, however, if these efforts had as strong an institutional impact as they might – for example, what expectations follow from participation in the year-long Arrupe Seminar? Could these programs be expanded and interlaced, so as to track their institutional effects? This would yield a sense of purpose, an integrity, to the experience of formation that may pay dividends in the future.

In terms of academic leadership, Fordham's strong group of academic deans (who already serve in an intensely scrutinized role) are uniformly committed to justice and practices of hiring for diversity. Are there mission formation opportunities, the Visiting Team wondered, that would bring these commitments more clearly into dialogue with the Jesuit, Catholic mission? And would that dialogue, perhaps, yield a more a capacious understanding of the Jesuit, Catholic mission as an academic animator? The active participation of the academic deans will be key to the success of the strategic plan for mission, as they set the tone for their schools and departments. This academic engagement will have to be sustained and active, using a long-range, multi-layered approach.

Similarly, the Board of Trustees, with its deep investment in Fordham as a Jesuit, Catholic institution, offers important opportunities for a more comprehensive engagement with the way in which that mission is lived on campus. The Visiting Team found those members with whom they met to be intensely engaged with the question of Fordham's future. This focus should be the springboard to a much more robust presentation of how the mission impacts Fordham today, a presentation that would find a clear echo in the Trustees' own strong desires to safeguard Fordham's trajectory. Further, the Visiting Team urges the Board to take advantage of the experience of other AJCU Boards as they consider this fresh and more comprehensive approach to mission. In return, the Team can imagine Fordham taking leadership in Board development for mission among the AJCU schools, poised as they are to not only engage mission,

but to do so in new and innovative ways, under the strategic plan for mission that is the goal of Mission Priority #1.

### *Characteristic 2: The Academic Life*

Fordham is justly proud of its excellent faculty, who impressed the visiting team with their scholarly energy, innovative curricular initiatives, and dedication to high-quality teaching. In particular, the core curriculum for undergraduate students stands out as a privileged component of the Fordham education. This curriculum, particularly though not exclusively through its introduction to philosophical and theological inquiry, engenders habits of mind that support thoughtful discussion, self-awareness in the face of cultural difference and an appreciation for the breadth and surprise of the natural world.

Throughout, this core curriculum encourages the development of critical thinking and writing skills. The *Eloquentia Perfecta* component of the core curriculum offers an especially important opportunity for students to progressively develop their communication skills and sharpen their thinking. The three-course sequence allows for considerable development over their undergraduate careers; importantly, the faculty charged with overseeing the core see even further opportunities to integrate issues of diversity, and perhaps service-learning, into this curriculum. The Visiting Team was surprised, however, that few faculty or students connected the *Eloquentia Perfecta* component to Jesuit, Catholic mission, even though the phrase is drawn from the *Ratio Studiorum*. There thus may be opportunities to use this component of the core to better introduce the Catholic intellectual tradition to faculty and students alike.

Faculty present a wide range of perspectives on Fordham's mission, and especially its Jesuit, Catholic character. A significant number of faculty members feels very much at home in Fordham's Jesuit, Catholic mission, and indeed they chose to come to the school or have stayed because they find that mission compelling and essential to their own work. Another significant portion of the faculty feels quite at home with elements of Fordham's mission, especially its embrace of social justice and inclusion, but they are less certain about their relationship to Fordham's Catholic institutional identity. Many chose to come to Fordham because of its social mission; others came without a strong sense of the school's mission. Finally, there are faculty members for whom Fordham's mission is a matter of confusion or suspicion. They raise questions about its content and how this fits with contemporary American understandings of tolerance and inclusion, and they may raise issues about Catholic doctrine on issues of sexuality, gender, etc. Perhaps the New Faculty Seminar on Mission will address some of these concerns.

On the other hand, many members of the faculty and administration expressed a desire for the question of mission to be more meaningfully integrated into the hiring process, as well as offered along the career path, of faculty members. For example, reducing "mission" to a single question in the hiring process obscures the fact that faculty might mature in their sense of mission through a long association with a mission-driven institution, one in which mission is lived in a variety of ways. Some proposed the addition of a more meaningful discussion at the time of hire, through prompts for reflection, or a conversation post-tenure in which faculty are invited to consider mission as they choose future scholarly directions. At present, however, the Visiting Team found broad agreement on this: mission does not "count" in the reward structure for faculty at Fordham. (There is also a parallel perception that service learning is neither integrated into the academic division, nor is it incentivized.)

"Mission" is invoked freely, however, when debates arise about contentious issues, and the term can quickly become a one-issue trump card in times of division. The Visiting Team observes that it is the administration's job to be proactive about the Jesuit, Catholic identity of Fordham, so that in times of



conflict, Fordham's mission has already been presented with a broad enough context that it is not used – or dismissed – because of one-dimensional renderings.

The University has an impressive set of centers and institutes, located throughout schools and campuses, dedicated to mission-driven topics. These centers conduct cutting-edge research, and convoke important seminars and conferences, on issues of pressing concern, positioning Fordham as a resource for important conversations that impact the city of New York, the nation, and the world. Fordham's professional schools seek to imbue their programs with a sense of Jesuit-grounded social responsibility and inclusion. Graduate students from a variety of schools told the Visiting Team that they had found not only excellent academic preparation at Fordham, but also a care for their personal development and discernment. Citing formation in Ignatian spirituality, as well as experiences in clinics for skilled service, they appreciated the way that Fordham provided opportunities for a holistic approach to their professional lives. For doctoral students, the Ignatian pedagogy seminar allows a select group of students to learn about the distinctive character of teaching in the Jesuit tradition. It has become a highly competitive program, with students seeing it as a “differentiating” factor as they apply for faculty positions. This program seems worthy of further expansion.

### **Characteristic 3: A Catholic, Jesuit Campus Culture**

Fordham nurtures two distinct, but related, cultures on its Rose Hill and Lincoln Center campuses. Rose Hill is a more traditional college campus, while Lincoln Center is decidedly urban and cosmopolitan. Although the Jesuit mission is a lived reality on both campuses, each campus expresses the mission in a manner appropriate to its particular culture. Such an internal yet “worldly” diversity is a powerful basis for Jesuit education. “Our intellectual work,” Father Sosa, SJ, observes, “is an apostolate if it is carried out with depth, openness to the world and an orientation towards social justice and reconciliation between people and creation, always in dialogue with other believers and non-believers, by accepting with joy the richness of cultural diversity.” Fordham's own setting is a living experiment in diversity, one that might well be profitably studied by other AJCU schools.

With 60 percent of its student body identifying as Catholic, Campus Ministry at Rose Hill takes on the characteristics of a vibrant local parish with robust liturgical, music, and service ministries. Campus Ministry's faith formation programs at Rose Hill are appropriate for the traditional-aged, young adult college student and include the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, Theology on Tap, Faith in Film, and approximately 20 retreats annually, most of which are based on the Spiritual Exercises. Rose Hill's interfaith ministry embraces and celebrates the religious diversity of Fordham, observing that “to be religious in the modern world is to be interreligious.”

Campus Ministry at Lincoln Center takes on a more missionary attitude. The majority of students at Lincoln Center are not looking for a spiritual home and likely do not adhere to a specific faith tradition. Catholic students attend Mass at the parish next door, St. Paul the Apostle, which has a robust young adult ministry that draws attendees from all over Manhattan. Accordingly, Lincoln Center's Campus Ministry extends itself by creatively meeting students “where they are,” through partnerships with the Residence Life staff, an imaginative and accessible approach to the Spiritual Exercises for graduate students, and a willingness to use the language of service and social justice to engage students from all faith traditions, and those of no faith, in their deep desire for authenticity and meaning. Finally, Lincoln Center campus ministers are proactive in a visible and vulnerable ministry of presence such that their very lives become the vehicle for exploring questions of faith.

These innovative approaches, that focus on, as one campus minister observed, the development of “a robust catholicity” that reflects “an intellectual and trinitarian understanding of diversity,” are a promising work in progress. Their effects – in particular, how these support a diversity of thought on campus, not only with regards to the many interfaith efforts already in place – will offer opportunities for further reflection and refinement in the future. In these efforts, and in the profoundly insightful self-understanding of the Campus Ministry staff, the Visiting Team found a resource that should inform University discussions much more broadly.

The Division of Student Affairs is responsible for setting and administering expectations for student conduct, including respectful engagement with self and others. Professionals in this division participate in an intensive onboarding orientation and regular professional development in order to place their work with Fordham’s changing student population within the context of the university’s Jesuit, Catholic mission. The orientation acclimates staff to Fordham’s mission, while divisional in-services help staff improve their knowledge of and skills for addressing the needs of specific student sub-populations. Student Affairs departments weave Jesuit ideals throughout co-curricular programs and services with the intention of personal growth and transformation as an outcome of students’ co-curricular engagement.

The Visiting Team was impressed with the ability of Fordham students – both undergraduate and graduate – to articulate Fordham’s Jesuit, Catholic mission as experienced in their classes, internships, co-curricular involvement, and multiple opportunities for reflection. Statements about “seeing God in reality,” “setting the world on fire,” and the importance of *magis* as an intangible desire to care for others and the community and work toward improvement were common. Students at all levels reported a personal transformation resulting from their Fordham experience and acknowledged that their Fordham education imparted to them the responsibility to use their education in service of others.

Fordham’s athletic program understands its primary goal to be the development of student-athletes and their successful graduation. Although competitive success is valued, the program puts equal emphasis on student-athletes’ citizenship and academic progress as well as on NCAA compliance. Fordham’s 500-600 student-athletes graduate at a rate two-percent higher than the average student body, and 69 percent have a cumulative GPA above 3.0. The program’s success begins with hiring and onboarding coaches and athletic staff who believe in the mission and are committed to recruiting academically qualified student-athletes. These student-athletes are supported by an external program, the Leadership Academy, which provides mentoring and personal development, although the connection of this intensive development program with the rich language of mission was not clear. Still, the coaching staff speaks with one voice about the mission-centered need to recruit mature students who will succeed at Fordham, and several of the programs actively collaborate with Campus Ministry and the Dorothy Day Center.

The Division of Student Affairs acknowledges its role to set a tone for student engagement that is sometimes counter-cultural. At times the university’s policies and positions about sexuality and gender appear to some community members as antiquated. Some faculty expressed concern about the manner in which Student Affairs staff approach student behavior and expression. Nevertheless, students indicated to the Visiting Team that they are encouraged to explore their passions and to enact the change they wish to see in the world, which, they offered, enables diversity of thought among them. Students involved in advocating for diversity on campus suggested that they appreciate the awareness of social issues and the ability to have “genuine conversations with people about real issues.”

Attending to the diversity of the student population is a value for the staff of the Division of Student Affairs, thus these professionals have a desire to collaborate more effectively with the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) as they address the needs of low-income students. Citing HEOP’s location in Academic Affairs, Student Affairs staff expressed concern that HEOP participants do not always know

they have access to programs and services offered throughout the university and questioned whether HEOP participants feel as much ownership of Fordham as other students do. An unintended consequence of HEOP's success may be that psychologically the campus is reduced to the HEOP program and its staff, thereby communicating limits to which aspects of the Fordham experience participating students may access. Overall, however, the Visiting Team wishes to emphasize that it found Fordham's continued commitment to this program to be a commendable example of mission in action.

Across campus, Faculty, staff, and students expressed a desire for Fordham to align its resources to attract and retain a racially diverse student body. Given Fordham's location in New York City, several wondered about the opportunities to increase undergraduate racial diversity at Rose Hill and within graduate programs located at Lincoln Center. Graduate students, in particular, seemed to expect greater racial diversity among their classmates. Members of Fordham's leadership affirmed the university's "commitment to diversity not in spite of being Jesuit and Catholic but *because* Fordham is Jesuit and Catholic." Nevertheless, the Visiting Team was surprised to hear comments that indicated a perceived tension between the goals of diversity and excellence, indicating the need for sustained cross-cultural engagement, and programs of intentional support post-hire (e.g., Santa Clara's Inclusive Excellence Postdoctoral Fellowships). The Diversity Task Force Report and the President's Response are thus welcome developments as these propose not only a Chief Diversity Officer but also a broad attention to diversity across faculty, staff, students, and administration, efforts that will provide a mutually supportive context for the attention to diversity that is the focus of Mission Priority #2.

#### **Characteristic 4: Service**

The Visiting Team commends Fordham's "long tradition of reaching out to be a good neighbor." This was palpable, in the first place, in the many interactions the Team had with faculty, staff and students, all of whom referenced their urban setting with an appreciation for its vibrant offerings as well a sober recognition of its challenges, including the claim these challenges made on the "project" of Fordham University. The Visiting Team found Fordham's commitment to solidarity – at home, in the city of New York, and as a member of the global community – to be clearly articulated, widely held and viewed as an institutional hallmark both *ad intra* and *ad extra*. This is a significant accomplishment.

Specific structural pieces make that solidarity more than a slogan. The Institute of International Humanitarian Affairs reaches beyond Fordham's walls to prepare aid workers for humanitarian crises, and serves as a resource for the best practices for this work. The program in International Political Economy and Development reaches out through a collaborative effort among campus academic departments. The Gabelli School of Business actively supports community engagement, including work with the New York City Service Learning Program. Indeed, Fordham was listed on the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll, in FY15, in recognition that "8,000 University students completed 1.14 million hours of community service." Fordham is justly proud of these efforts.

The Global Outreach (GO) program is a signature accomplishment, one that the Visiting Team found to associate community living, global awareness and justice with the identity of a Fordham education. As is true with all successful initiatives, its impact is even broader than simply the participants, as we heard about this initiative with pride from many with whom we spoke.

The Visiting Team recognized that Fordham, like the other AJCU schools, struggles, outside of Campus Ministry and some pockets of theological reflection, to articulate in a systematic manner the way in which faith might be a resource for these initiatives. The self-study's recognition that the life of faith and the



pursuit of justice too often are found in separate social pockets of the student body seemed to be an accurate assessment.

This “faith versus justice” divide is also true for the struggling service learning initiatives, which requires a stronger overall position, integrated into the academic program and incentivized for faculty. We repeatedly heard comments that both service learning as an initiative, and the Dorothy Day Center, were perceived to be under-resourced and under-utilized. Thus the Visiting Team supports Mission Priority #4, which identifies the need to make “significant advancement in strategic programming around community based learning,” but it warns that this advancement needs to be based on the recognition of social justice as an exemplary – but not exhaustive! – facet of Fordham’s Jesuit, Catholic mission. Moreover, as service learning and community based learning inevitably overlap with issues of privilege and inclusion, the campus leadership for diversity initiatives should be part of this strategic initiative.

The Visiting Team recognizes that service learning is already part of the curriculum, with a limited but successful engagement by faculty – in the 2014-2015 data we were offered, only 7 courses were available. As Fordham plans to implement this priority, then, it may need to ask how faculty and students understand the place of service learning in the academic curriculum. Faculty may need to hear how these initiatives animate learning and drive scholarship. Students may need to encounter a positive culture of service learning early in the undergraduate curriculum, allowing one experience to lead to another. Imagine, the Team thought, if Fordham aimed to have as many students participate in service learning as in athletics! The Team also wondered if synergies could be developed between service learning and the GO program, leading to a particularly “Fordham” strategy for service learning initiatives.

The logic of such synergies might be energized through a broader use of the very successful – though scattered – work in forming faculty in Ignatian pedagogy, work that is already in place at Fordham. The Visiting Team, then, while urging Fordham to engage Mission Priority #4, emphasizes the deep commitment we saw to the concrete practice of solidarity at Fordham, a strong and pervasive sensibility we commend.

#### **Characteristic 5: Service to the Local Church**

Fordham makes an important contribution to the local church of New York, both through its engagement with Church leadership and parishes and apostolates and through its mission of scholarship and formation. This contribution is understood by many constituencies – Board of Trustees, Administration, and several segments of the faculty and staff – as a central, defining priority of the University. That this should be so widely shared is a testament to the vitality of the mission at Fordham. Moreover, this observation would not be complete without acknowledging the strong presence of Fordham in the broader conversation about religion in New York, including admiration for its vibrant Orthodox Christian Studies Center.

For the Church, Fordham offers important programs for the life of the mind, shaping leaders who have a deep familiarity with the Catholic intellectual tradition, whether these are its numerous majors and minors in Theology, the active Catholics who attend the programming offered by the Francis and Ann Curran Center for American Catholic Studies or the Center on Religion and Culture Center, or the graduate students – some to become the Church theologians of tomorrow -- in the School of Religion and Religious Education or the Department of Theology. This array of academically-focused initiatives represents a remarkable investment in the U.S. Church as a “thinking Church,” an investment that is complemented by the administrative skills developed by the Center for Catholic School Leadership and Faith-Based Education.

In several settings, the Visiting Team observed, it seemed that Fordham is addressing two distinct realities in the Catholic Church, and American culture, today. First, there is a traditional Catholicism, focused on the sacraments, parish life, the Catholic intellectual tradition, and Church structures of governance. These are addressed through the formal centers and initiatives that are part of Fordham's fabric, and indeed, Fordham makes an outstanding contribution to this aspect of Church, offering training and formation for priests, religious, and lay ministers, and by offering excellent lectures, dialogues, and classes on crucial theological issues. This largely serves people who have found a "home" in the Catholic Church, either by birth or conversion or intellectual or spiritual development.

But there is also the phenomenon of an evolving – "emerging?" – "missionary" Church. Indeed, the adjective "missionary" came up many times in our conversations. This Church is, as Pope Francis says, "on the margins." It reaches out to people who never had a home in the Church; they were not brought up in the Church, or they received only a very preliminary introduction to it, or they are among the group of "nones" that feel no affiliation to a religious community or tradition.

While Fordham has historically concentrated most of its attention on the traditional Catholic community, in the future it may find itself increasingly wanting to be in conversation with those outside of this community, people of all ages who are "spiritual but not religious" or who identify with other traditions or no tradition. Providing this population with an inviting, intellectually grounded and humanly meaningful experience of Catholicism – and religious practice in general – is likely to continue to grow in importance in the future.

As noted above, the model of Campus Ministry is clearly illustrative here, as it reaches both "traditional Catholic students" as well as seekers and those of other traditions. The visiting team sees this as a helpful "in-bound" template for the many centers that keep the Catholic intellectual tradition in the forefront, as those efforts address the desire, voiced by the Deans, "for more strategic opportunities for faculty from across the disciplines to engage critically with the Catholic intellectual tradition," particularly given the increasing diversity of the Fordham faculty. By also turning their energies to the "homefront," the University's initiatives for the local church could provide a more bridge-building and dialogical understanding of Catholicism – including not just doctrinal matters, but the Catholic worldview, its intellectual tradition and love of learning, and its openness to discovery and wonder. Such efforts will serve not just the Church but also help foster deeper understanding of Fordham's Jesuit, Catholic mission.

### **Characteristic 6: Jesuit Presence**

The Visiting Team noticed with gratitude the large number of Jesuits visible and active on the campus, a living witness of the Society of Jesus' commitment to Fordham. The President's institution-shaping charismatic leadership is noted above; his efforts are complemented by several additional Jesuits in the senior administration, and, laudably, "over a dozen tenured members of the faculty." It is crucial to the integrity of the intellectual apostolate that Fordham students find themselves accompanied by Jesuits in the classroom and in quiet mentoring conversations.

Jesuits teaching at Fordham were represented to the Visiting Team by scholars from three departments, men who were deeply committed to their academic lives even when those lives were complicated by their dual roles as faculty members and Jesuits. These academic roles are indeed complicated: Jesuits need to be received by their departments as scholars, they need to function with an eye to the whole, as members of the Society, and they also have numerous other roles on campus – sacramental, residential – that are not well-understood, even as they are hyper-visible. The Visiting Team found this apostolate well-served



by the Executive Director of Campus Ministry and the Rector of the Jesuit Community, both of whom generously articulated the vision of Fordham in different formats over several meetings.

The Visiting Team noted that the reception of the Jesuit presence on campus, particularly when it comes to long-time employees of the school, is shaped by memories of the Jesuit presence of the past, a time when their numbers made a different kind of hospitality possible. Sometimes these memories are nostalgic, perhaps expecting permanency about the campus Jesuits in ways not expected elsewhere. This nostalgia may not recognize that all members of the community engage in Fordham in new ways over time – fewer faculty might live close to campus, for example, just as many processes and structures of Fordham life have changed to fit new academic and program needs.

Across the AJCU, Jesuit communities at colleges and universities, aware that their numbers are decreasing, have asked themselves what effect they, as a body, intend to have on the institutions they serve. Do they have a corporate presence, and if so, how is it realized, what effect does or should it have? The Visiting Team recognizes that this question of a corporate presence is important to the Fordham Jesuits, thus its identification as Mission Priority #3. Given the factors of fewer Jesuits and the increasing complexity of university life, however, the Team wonders if a more episodic, targeted sense of presence – one that establishes specific and resonant times or spaces in the community’s imagination – might be a more effective, and satisfying, approach for the pattern of Jesuit presence now. This approach would build upon and amplify the variety of gifts brought by each Jesuit, allowing each to flourish according to his own appropriation of the Jesuit charism, deploying these gifts, perhaps, in strategic alliances of 2-5 Jesuits through a project/event-based approach. Such a coordinated but de-centered sense of “corporate presence” may simply be a more explicit recognition of the many ways in which Jesuit presence is already enacted at Fordham.

That more visible presence might also extend to the dynamic nature of the Society as a regional, national and international force. Does the Fordham community at large know that the local Jesuits serve on Boards of Trustees and in advisory capacities across the AJCU, and as well as with a variety of Society apostolates, national and global? Are they aware of the series of General Congregations, through which the Society reflects on its structure and mission – offering along the way a cogent appraisal of the world? More directly, does the Fordham community have a sense of the contours of the Jesuit charism itself, apart from its current exercise in colleges and universities, and the way in which this charism animates the intellectual apostolate?

Fordham has, of course, a vibrant record of success in this regard, illustrated by the success of its vocation promotion efforts. It boasts, in the best sense, the fact that, since 1996, 16 men have joined the Society, a desire that was awakened in some way by the witness of the lives of service, prayer and intellect that marked the Jesuits at Fordham. These are not sixteen individual “victories,” rather, the Visiting Team sees these as evidence of a broad and compelling sense of Jesuit presence, evidence that speaks to a strong history of proposing the gospel to the entire Fordham community.

### **Characteristic 7: Integrity**

Situated in New York City, Fordham University faces not only the economic stresses characteristic of higher education nationally, but it couples these with its commitment to serving the community around it, to making access to a Fordham education affordable, and to attracting and retaining an excellent faculty and staff. This leads to several tensions, tensions which are candidly addressed in the *Mission Examen*. Hiring for mission, as noted above, is challenging on many fronts. In addition to these, however, Fordham, in line with national trends, has a significant proportion of adjunct faculty members, a hiring

practice that is under scrutiny. Overall, wages and benefits are of concern, particularly given the expense of living in Fordham's market. These economic tensions, with their sense of scarcity, heighten the anxiety around the call for hiring for mission and diversity, with some faculty only open to mission and diversity hires if these are "add-ons." These tensions, the Visiting Team observes, cry out for a much more sophisticated engagement of the Catholic and Jesuit mission, one that is systemic, nuanced, and broadly owned. This vision would undergird the administration's goals of transparency, honesty and respect during times of stress.

Specific programs are in place for formation for mission, though these -- orientation programs, the Arrupe Seminar and programs in student affairs -- are not far-reaching, in terms of the entire workforce. A more thorough series may emerge with the hiring of a new Human Resources officer, however, while such a person will certainly be aware of best practices for hiring for diversity, she or he may need support in developing University-wide practices for hiring for mission. While Fordham has only recently begun participation in the Ignatian Colleagues Program, it has sent faculty and staff to the Jesuit Leadership Seminar for many years. These are wonderful formation programs, but they lack on-campus follow up -- as mentioned above, Fordham should capitalize on these experiential investments.

In terms of financial commitments, the Visiting Team noted that Fordham's investment policy has been scrutinized in the light of Catholic Social Teaching, and that it takes care to choose local vendors of integrity.

The Visiting Team found numerous markers of its Jesuit and Catholic story on the Fordham campus, both inscribed and free-standing, along with a generous attention to public art and public spaces. We found the University Church on the Rose Hill Campus to be a beautiful sign of Fordham's mission, and a powerful presence. We also heard of a commitment to sustainability, including the use of solar power. On-campus, places for reflection and prayer have been identified, though there is a need for better accommodation for non-Christians, a goal the Visiting Team supports.

With this pride, we also heard some concern, particularly on the Rose Hill Campus, about the contrast between the Fordham grounds and the surrounding community. Some observed that the prominent gates through which students, faculty, staff, and visitors enter the Rose Hill campus send contradictory messages. On the one hand, the gates visibly mark the entrance to the university and establish its presence. On the other hand, they represent a physical, and possibly psychological, barrier between the university and the neighborhood in which it is situated. The gates thus symbolize both welcome and exclusion. This attention to context, offered by members of the community in a spirit of solidarity and critical self-awareness, is itself as sign that the question of Fordham's mission is healthy and operative.

### **Mission Priorities: A Reflection**

The Visiting Team applauds the four proposed mission priorities. The formation of a strategic plan for mission, Mission Priority #1, will be critical for the realization of the other three priorities, as these seek structural support for greater diversity, an articulation of the corporate sense of the Jesuit community and a stronger approach to service learning.

The Team observes that this strategic plan will be effective only to the extent that it lays a foundation for its own renewal. Thoughtful attention to hiring for mission, orienting and onboarding newcomers, and cultivating a cadre of lay standard-bearers is necessary for ensuring mission coherence into the future. Those lay leaders are emerging at a delicate time. For example, with the declining numbers of Jesuits, a re-emphasis on mission and identity at AJCU schools sometimes is received, as "Catholic" and "Jesuit"

are suddenly heard more often, as an attempt to “turn the clock back” to an earlier and more parochial day. Also, changes in higher education, as our institutions respond to a variety of financial and regulatory pressures, are often received as changes that favor a more “corporate” and less “academic” institutional model. Taken together, these complicate the lay mission leader’s work, as her or his invitation to mission engagement can sometimes be received as an attempt to exert administrative control, a top-down effort by a new group of “insiders.” These dynamics present an even higher hurdle for emerging lay collaborators in mission, who will need time and support for their particular charism to blossom – and to be effectively received.

To be clear, there is a vast reservoir of good will at Fordham, staff, faculty and administrators who take pride in its identity as a Jesuit, Catholic University. Many find this vision to be a life-giving resource for their work with students, their administrative tasks, their scholarship, and their personal and professional growth. The Visiting Team encourages Fordham to address clearly the ambiguities that emerge when the specific identity of “Jesuit, Catholic” meets the contemporary sensibility of modernist universality, and to do so recognizing that the demurrals, while seeming to represent a distancing from the mission of Fordham, in fact represent a shared investment in its project. Fordham’s challenge, therefore, is to create an understanding of “Jesuit, Catholic University” that is welcoming and inclusive without diluting its purpose.

With regard to diversity, the Visiting Team applauds Mission Priority #2, particularly the call for the leadership of a position such as a Chief Diversity Officer. The recently completed Task Force on Diversity has fostered important, University-wide discussions, raising expectations for a far-reaching response at the administrative level. Fordham’s sense, found in its own report, supported by the *Mission Examen* self-study, and confirmed by the various experiences of the Team, that such a position needs careful preparation, should be highlighted. What kind of support will this effort have? How will its initiatives be embedded in the deep structure of Fordham’s “way of proceeding?” What kind of assessment of these efforts would be constructive? The Team encourages this priority to be embedded in the overall strategic plan for mission, which in turn should be thoroughly integrated into the CUSP process.

In addressing Mission Priority #3, the Jesuit community needs to hear that they are valued members, setting a tone of broad social and intellectual hospitality on the campus. There needs to be a context for their work, so that they are not perceived as “docents in the museum,” “connecting us to our history.” Finding ways (of their own choosing) for the Jesuit community members to interact with the Fordham community, in targeted and even existential conversations, reflecting thoughtfully (as Jesuits do so well!) on their individual and corporate witness, might open doors to more sustained public reflection. A “corporate response” might emerge from these encounters, rather than being created in isolation from the Fordham community. At the same time, the Team recognizes that there are pressing structural questions – how and where members of the Society will be deployed on the Fordham campus cannot be left to serendipity. These conversations, moreover, should engage the Board of Trustees and the senior leadership sooner rather than later.

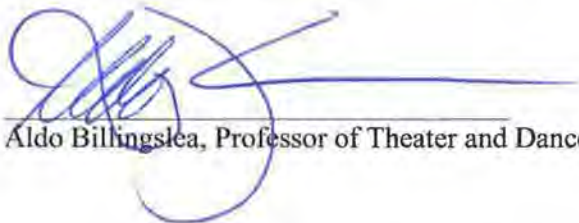
Finally, Mission Priority #4’s focus on service learning could function as an inner key to the above. The vocation to lives of service and justice is well established at Fordham, as is the profound desire of the faculty to deliver courses that are intellectually rigorous while grounded in the realities of our day. Perhaps this initiative, while yielding prime of place to the strategic planning process, might serve as a touchstone, a rudder, for Fordham’s efforts.



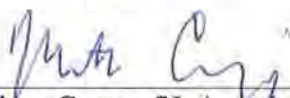
**In Closing**

In closing, the Visiting Team recognizes the way in which this self-study illuminates the current challenges to Jesuit education found in all the AJCU schools. Laudably, the preamble to the self-study text articulates a vision that is modest, tolerant of ambiguity, and cognizant of the desires, fears and hope of the Fordham community. Yet, further in, as the self-study responds to the thoughtfully but also classically-framed questions about the specific characteristics of Jesuit education posed by the “Some Characteristics” text, the challenges of seemingly competing narratives become evident. The Visiting Team suggests that this disjoints should not be papered over too quickly, nor should it be received by the Fordham community as a disingenuous presentation of a “friendly face” that conceals an overly-prescriptive and narrow agenda. Rather, it should be read as an honest account of a situation that straddles past and future, a conversation that will require an engagement with the imagination, vision, intellect and passion of the Fordham community, qualities with which Fordham is generously blessed.

We, the Visiting Team, found the experience of speaking to the members of the Fordham community to be enriching and humbling. We are proud to be your colleagues in Jesuit education, and are happy to affirm Fordham University’s character as a Catholic and Jesuit institution of higher education, one which deserves to be called the Jesuit University of New York, and one which is clearly a leader among Catholic colleges and universities in the United States.

***5 May 2017, the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities Visiting Team:***


Aldo Billingslea, Professor of Theater and Dance, Santa Clara University



Matthew Carnes, SJ, Associate Professor, Department of Government & Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Director, Center for Latin American Studies, Georgetown University



Nancy Dallavalle, Vice President for Mission and Identity and Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Fairfield University



Michele Murray, Ph.D., Vice President for Student Development, Seattle University