



FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

THE JESUIT UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

## EDUCATING FOR JUSTICE

### Fordham University's Vision and Strategic Plan for 2021–2026

**As the Jesuit university of New York, Fordham is uniquely called to educate for justice. We bring together the intellectual excellence and care for the whole person that have long distinguished Jesuit education with our passion for promoting the dignity and worth of every person and our commitment to faith that does justice.**

Firmly rooted in the complex life of New York City, Fordham is a Jesuit research university that advances knowledge and forms students who are eager and able to shape a just and hope-filled future for everyone. At a time when the world needs leaders capable of addressing multifaceted problems with insight, empathy, and expertise, we offer programs that hone students' capacities for critical thinking, embolden them to shape and embrace their values, and prepare them for lives and careers of meaning. Our faculty and staff invite students to join them in research projects that create new knowledge and support the thriving of the human family. In the next five years, Fordham pledges to contribute to the just renewal of the city, the nation, and the planet through education and research for the common good. We seek to engage deeply and authentically with our local communities to promote mutual learning and solidarity. We commit to making the pursuit of racial, economic, and social justice an inextricable and interdependent part of our academic excellence.

Positioning Fordham as the New York City university indelibly committed to working for justice and student success, the goals and initiatives in this strategic plan define a unique, necessary, and compelling role for Fordham in this fractured world. We seek to engage individuals from racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds currently underrepresented at the University in a purpose-driven and values-based education addressing the debilitating challenges that plague nations and individuals. Fordham is poised to become the institution of choice for students seeking impact in the natural and applied sciences; international students; and students who, like the majority of members of Generation Z, see racism, climate change, economic inequality, and other societal challenges as the defining issues of their lifetime. Achieving our goals positions Fordham as a magnet for these students, for faculty who share their concerns, and for philanthropies and funding agencies; this in turn enables the University to thrive at a time when U.S. higher education is preparing for a significant demographic decline in traditional-age undergraduates. Success with this plan will enable students and colleagues to develop new capacities and deeper relationships that offer personal fulfillment, advance Fordham's mission, and attract the students and supporters of tomorrow.

# 1. EDUCATE STUDENTS AS GLOBAL CITIZENS AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERS FOR JUSTICE IN THE INNOVATION AGE

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“Tomorrow’s ‘whole person’ cannot be whole without an educated awareness of society and culture with which to contribute socially, generously, in the real world. Tomorrow’s whole person must have, in brief, a well-educated solidarity.”

—Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., “The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Education”

Jesuit Catholic education is grounded in perennial questions about truth, meaning, character, faith, and justice—questions that arise in the humanities and permeate all that we teach. Today, Fordham’s mission calls us to prepare students who will flourish as ethical citizens in a moment fraught with uncertainty. From our home location in New York City, where the global and the local meet as in few other places, the University’s commitment to educate for justice compels us to form leaders of conscience who are prepared to engage across lines of difference and contention in order to transform a world torn by inequality and polarization. The pressing challenges facing humankind cannot be solved in isolation, so we will enable our faculty to create new programs that catalyze collaboration across the arts and humanities, social sciences, natural and applied sciences, and professions. Grappling with our institution’s history and striving to become an anchor institution in the Bronx and Manhattan, we will offer students opportunities to learn by becoming allies in the city’s renewal in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. And so that every Fordham student can develop as a person of well-educated solidarity, we will empower faculty and staff to help dismantle racism and other forms of oppression and discrimination; enable research that promotes racial, economic, and social justice; and ensure that all employees engage in an ongoing process of personal and professional development in support of our mission.

## a. Renew and develop academic programs to attract and flexibly serve the needs of tomorrow’s students

Fordham’s motto, *Sapientia et Doctrina* (“Wisdom and Learning”), boldly declares that education and scholarly inquiry strengthen each other. Fordham will invite our faculty, scholars deeply committed to carrying out research at the frontiers of knowledge, to ask what it means to reimagine our academic programs through the lens of justice. At the graduate, professional, and undergraduate levels, we will examine what we teach and how we teach it. We will encourage faculty to design and renew degree programs that deploy high-impact practices such as collaborative projects and student-faculty research, that promote students’ cultural competence and cultural humility, and that prepare them to participate in searching, lifelong conversations about racism, inequality, and diversity.

- i. Engage the faculty in reviewing the foundational curricula of all degree programs, including the undergraduate Core Curriculum, and making revisions, when appropriate, to place questions of justice at the center
- ii. Create and strengthen interdisciplinary programs to attract new students and fuse ethical and humanistic concerns in the study of the city’s, nation’s, and world’s most critical challenges
- iii. Re-envision the technological and built environments that support the academic enterprise in order to facilitate inclusive, student-centered pedagogy, promote student success, and increase Fordham’s reach locally and globally, on campus and online

## b. Develop our students’ capacity for ethical leadership by promoting socioeconomic advancement, renewal, and justice in New York City and globally

There is no better location than New York City to challenge the creative capacities of those who seek what St. Ignatius Loyola called the *magis*—the greater good and the deeper realization of a just human family. New York attracts diverse and intrepid students and faculty to Fordham. Our city is breathtaking in its complexity and restlessness, inspiring in its identity as a harbor for immigrants and a catalyst for social mobility, profoundly moving in its capacity to galvanize solidarity in the face of catastrophe, and yet also marked by inequality. Fordham’s proclamation that “New York is my campus” underscores that we seek to learn from and contribute to the well-being of the communities where we are situated. Building on existing strengths, we will develop new partnerships with the city’s institutions and industries and their counterparts around the globe. These alliances will connect students to an increasingly networked world that seeks socially responsible and humanistically oriented leadership for a sustainable future.

- i. Inaugurate the Urban Justice Scholars program, bringing to Fordham a cohort of highly promising, low- to moderate-income students who are committed to addressing social and economic inequality
- ii. Foster community-engaged learning and career exploration by deepening Fordham’s partnerships with key sectors, organizations, and companies in New York
- iii. Foster collaborative research projects that enable faculty and staff to connect graduate, professional, and undergraduate students with local communities and their leaders
- iv. Create opportunities to connect students and faculty with international partners and developing communities

**c. Enhance the educational experience by providing faculty, administrators, and staff with ongoing professional development consistent with Fordham’s mission as a Jesuit research university**

Fordham’s commitment to offer contemporary education rooted in Ignatian pedagogy demands that we invest in the formation of our most valuable resources—our dedicated faculty, administrators, and staff. A new center will equip those who teach with tools to connect with diverse students whose learning modes are hands-on, problem-driven, inherently multidisciplinary, and team oriented. Honoring the intellectual curiosity of our faculty, we will better support investigators as they conduct research that helps shape more equitable and inclusive societies. A suite of professional development programs tailored to the needs of all categories of employees will help the University live out more holistically our mission and commitment to education for justice.

- i. Support pedagogy by establishing a center for multi-modal teaching, learning, and educational innovation with distinctive attention to Ignatian, relational, community-based, and justice-oriented approaches
- ii. Enhance programs to better enable faculty members to compete successfully for government, foundation, and corporate funding, especially for high-impact research advancing racial, economic, and social justice
- iii. Provide ample programs for mission-inspired professional development for all employees, particularly in order to develop employees’ capacity to discern and disrupt racism and other forms of oppression

## **2. EXCEL ACROSS THE NATURAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES AND ALLIED FIELDS TO PROMOTE SOCIAL CHANGE AND EQUITY**

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“A flourishing humanity on a thriving planet rich with species in an evolving universe, all together filled with the glory of God: such is the vision that must guide us at this critical time of Earth’s distress, to practical and critical effect.”

—Elizabeth A. Johnson, C.S.J., *Ask the Beasts*

The moral and ethical stakes of scientific and technological development have never been higher, and at Fordham as across the U.S., soaring numbers of students are seeking careers in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Fordham will invest in future-oriented STEM programs to serve such students and strategically expand enrollment. Building on areas in which Fordham is already robust and distinctive, the University will continue to integrate ethics, spirituality, aesthetics, and social responsibility into the study and application of science. To help care for the planet and serve preferentially those who have experienced racism and other forms of marginalization and discrimination, Fordham will develop and strengthen academic programs and interdisciplinary research projects that involve students and join with New York City communities in promoting environmental justice, prosperity, and well-being. We will discerningly invest in infrastructure, both physical and virtual, to bring Fordham’s facilities for STEM teaching and research into the 21st century.

**a. Leverage Fordham’s academic strengths to educate scientists for others**

Science and technology are increasingly inseparable from the ways in which we experience and understand human relationships, society, and government. Fordham will recommit to forming scientists of purpose, who appreciate that far-reaching humanistic questions are integral to the conduct of science. We will integrate cutting-edge scientific developments into new and existing interdisciplinary programs. At the undergraduate level, a new STEM honors track will enable us to recruit, retain, and challenge students as leaders in this arena.

- i. Develop and expand interdisciplinary degree programs at the graduate, professional, and undergraduate levels that advance scientific understanding and build on Fordham’s existing strengths in the arts, business, education, humanities, law, and social sciences
- ii. Create an undergraduate STEM honors program that incorporates elements of justice, sustainability, and community engagement

**b. Invest in select areas of research and scholarship that increase knowledge relevant to the health, well-being, and resilience of urban communities, as well as the protection of the planet**

Both around the world and in the city Fordham calls home, inequalities abound in the impact of such phenomena as climate change, environmental degradation, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Communities of color and those living in poverty have disproportionately borne the brunt of these and other disasters. Fordham will place special emphasis on scholarly projects that deploy academic expertise to help make the city and environment more sustainable. Fordham currently benefits from existing partnerships with scientific institutions and community organizations, including the members of the Bronx Science Consortium, Columbia University, New York University, and IBM. We will expand our network of partners in order to catalyze research collaborations that cross disciplines and professions, invite students and neighbors into the process of creating knowledge, and attract new sources of funding.

- i. Expand opportunities for students at all levels to join faculty in research, including projects that connect STEM fields with other disciplines and professions
- ii. Help faculty compete successfully for external grants to support fundamental and applied STEM research, including through collaborative partnerships with New York City organizations and industries of all kinds

**c. Build adaptable infrastructure for STEM education at the frontiers of technology, particularly in areas where Fordham can distinctively excel**

Students and faculty deserve the infrastructure necessary for collaborative, interdisciplinary research and teaching in the natural and applied sciences. It is no secret that Fordham’s current facilities lag behind our peers’ and threaten our ability to recruit and retain diverse, outstanding students in STEM and allied fields. Complementing our curriculum and pedagogy, then, must be revitalized facilities for teaching and carrying out research in the sciences. Even as we implement cutting-edge virtual tools to promote student learning and faculty research, we will employ designers and architects to develop a phased, realistic strategy for enhancing Fordham’s STEM infrastructure.

- i. Develop and commence a detailed timetable for upgrading scientific instrumentation, supporting high-performance cloud-based computing, and renovating facilities
- ii. Deploy virtual and simulation-based learning technologies to complement the necessary physical infrastructure for novel STEM educational programs and research

### 3. CULTIVATE A DIVERSE, EQUITABLE, INCLUSIVE, CARING, AND CONNECTED COMMUNITY THAT PROMOTES EACH MEMBER'S DEVELOPMENT AS A WHOLE PERSON

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“As a community, we have an obligation to ensure that every person lives with dignity and has sufficient opportunities for his or her integral development.”

—Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti*

Educating for justice means ensuring that all students, regardless of degree level or individual identity, feel welcome, included, and supported at each step of the journey. Jesuit educators have long championed the principle of *cura personalis*—that we educate whole persons, not merely disembodied intellects. That principle is all the more imperative today, when students are experiencing unprecedented stressors threatening their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Fordham's community is known for empathy, compassion, and mutual care, and we will accentuate these values. We will integrate and expand resources to facilitate the development of our students' whole selves and enable the successful completion of their academic programs, with particular concern for students of color and other groups of students who feel excluded. These commitments begin even before students matriculate. We will work to make a Fordham education as affordable as possible, build a student and employee community that reflects the diversity of the city and the nation, help students transfer to Fordham with ease, and communicate clearly and inclusively as an institution. Once students are on campus, we will honor each student's dignity by providing individualized resources and coordinated care to support well-being, health, and success.

#### a. Foreground holistic well-being and care for mental, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual health as central characteristics of the student experience

Fordham promises a purpose-driven education, one that meets and cares for all of our students in their individual life circumstances. But we cannot realize this aspiration without attending to students' mental, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual health and well-being. We will redouble our efforts to overcome the many obstacles that compromise students' engagement, flourishing, and academic success. Recognizing that underrepresented and international students in all the University's schools face distinctive challenges, we will place a sustained focus on their needs and, through professional development programs, prepare our faculty and staff to support them. And because holistic well-being includes students' physical health as well, we will enhance our recreational fitness and intercollegiate athletics programs, seeking to maximize the success of all our student-athletes.

- i. Establish appropriate virtual and physical spaces to coordinate and deliver evidence-informed, wraparound support for student success and well-being in all the University's schools
- ii. Offer opportunities for mentorship and personal formation that meet the needs of particular populations of students
- iii. Support athletic and recreational activities at every level of competition, developing innovative programs to promote fitness and pride in Fordham

#### b. Make a Fordham education more affordable and accessible

Fordham's value proposition is strong. At the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels, Fordham degrees signal that graduates are critical thinkers, persons of character, and leaders of conscience. Supported by a global network of alumni, our graduates thrive in careers that span all fields of human endeavor. Yet nationally, skepticism about the value of higher education is rising, and to many students and families Fordham appears to be out of reach. Beyond cost, prospective transfer students, students of color, and members of other historically marginalized groups continue to report that they find it difficult to imagine Fordham as their home. Fostering integral development and holistic well-being demands that Fordham become an even more student-centered institution, a community that offers an authentic welcome to everyone.

- i. Enhance Fordham's value proposition and develop innovative approaches to address the escalating cost of a Fordham education, consistent with the University's mission and values, by identifying and pursuing new sources of revenue, modifying workflows and processes to better support our priorities, and fostering a culture of collaborative, data-driven and transparent decision-making

- ii. Enhance the recruitment of students from underrepresented groups and provide academic support, alumni mentorship, experiential education, career placement, and financial aid programs to remedy historic disparities and increase the success and diversity of the student body
- iii. Diversify all employee ranks with special focus on the faculty, student-facing positions, and senior leadership roles
- iv. Promote retention and graduation by redesigning policies and practices concerning academic advising, student support, and cocurricular engagement from the perspective of student success
- v. Transform policies and practices to increase transfer student enrollment and retention, especially to enable those studying at New York City institutions to enroll and succeed at Fordham

**c. Redesign the University's built environment, communications, policies, and practices to facilitate student success and ensure that all members of the community feel valued and included on a timely basis**

Building a campus culture that is anti-racist, accessible, and connected requires that Fordham reassess all the ways we communicate. From the physical appearance of our campuses to the design of our websites, every facet of the Fordham experience is an opportunity for the University to live out and reinforce our institutional identity, Jesuit mission, and commitment to inclusion. We will examine how students, faculty, staff, and surrounding communities encounter the University, paying particular attention to the experiences of marginalized groups, including students of color and international students. To the extent that how we act and what we communicate fail to align with our values and do not promote the thriving of our students and employees, we commit to reforming our ways of proceeding.

- i. Eradicate manifestations of racism and other forms of discrimination and oppression in Fordham's policies, practices, and cultural norms
- ii. Adjust how Fordham communicates and relates to students and surrounding communities, in order to become more inclusive and to promote lifelong engagement with the University
- iii. Implement an effective infrastructure to facilitate communication, information sharing, and collaboration among University employees