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A Vision for Catholic Higher Education in the 21st Century: Reflecting on the Boston College Roundtable

Patrick McQuillan

Boston College, mcquilpa@bc.edu

Michael J. James

Boston College, michael.james@bc.edu

Timothy P. Muldoon

Boston College, timothy.p.muldoon@bc.edu

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Patrick McQuillan, Michael J. James, & Timothy P. Muldoon
Boston College

The nucleus of any university is the intellectual life that unfolds among faculty and students. Inevitably, that intellectual life is shaped by the broader university context. Examining that process—in particular, its connection to a Catholic understanding of university mission—offers insight into pressing issues. For instance, what shifting social and academic conditions—both opportunities and challenges—set a context for campus conversations? How might Catholic institutions respond to these conditions? Can Catholic institutions provide a hospitable place for integrating faith and reason at the institutional and personal levels? Can the Catholic intellectual tradition serve as a constructive and creative lens for transforming Catholic higher education? And drawing on ideas that emerged during the Boston College Roundtable seminars, how might change occur?

Keywords

Catholic, higher education, Catholic intellectual tradition, Ignatian pedagogy, institutional change, Catholic university mission, mission

In Spring 2013, the Division of Mission and Ministry at Boston College undertook a new initiative: The Boston College Roundtable, designed to draw scholars from varied disciplines into a conversation about the distinctiveness of a Catholic approach to higher education in the 21st Century. This initiative grew out of conversations sponsored by the Division involving Boston College administrators and faculty members. Their conversations were focused on the formation of students during the college years, and led ultimately to the publication of “The Journey Into Adulthood” (Boston College, 2007), a pamphlet which reflected the University’s working model for student formation. Still, there remained important questions about the role of faculty members in the process of student formation. Eventually, the Division sponsored

the Roundtable so that it could learn more from faculty members themselves about how they perceived the distinctiveness of Catholic higher education.

The Roundtable convened scholars from 13 Catholic colleges and universities: Institutions from across the United States, representing different types of institutions as well as different founding religious orders, dioceses, and bishops. Participants asked how institutions rooted in the Catholic tradition stand to enrich academic freedom and scholarly inquiry, student learning, and social development, ultimately leading to the formation of the wholly integrated human person and a better world.

Meeting twice a year over two years, the first cohort addressed themes determined in advance of each meeting—the first chosen by the hosts; subsequently, by suggestions from participants. Participants prepared papers and offered critical responses to each theme through the lens of their particular disciplinary approaches, epistemological frameworks, and professional experiences. Representatives from the Boston College Division of Mission and Ministry participated in all discussions. Each paper, response, and summary of collective discussions was published in the first four volumes of the journal *Integritas*.¹

After the first series of Roundtables, the organizers had a sense that synthesizing the understandings and insights generated through the Roundtable papers and related conversations could prove beneficial. Inviting faculty to consider mission questions seemed logical. The nucleus of any university is the intellectual life that unfolds among faculty and students. Inevitably, that intellectual life is shaped by the broader university context. Examining that process—in particular, its connection to a Catholic understanding of university mission—offered insight into pressing issues. For instance, what shifting social and academic conditions—both opportunities and challenges—set a context for Roundtable conversations? How might Catholic institutions respond to these conditions? Can Catholic institutions provide a hospitable place for integrating faith and reason at the institutional and personal levels? Can the Catholic intellectual tradition serve as a constructive and creative lens for transforming Catholic higher education? Drawing on ideas that emerged during Roundtable seminars, how might change occur?

1 *Integritas: Advancing the Mission of Catholic Higher Education* is an open access publication of the Boston College Roundtable sponsored by the Boston College Office of Mission and Ministry. <https://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/integritas/index>

Analytic Frameworks for Understanding the Roundtable

The Shifting Context of Catholic Higher Education & Disequilibrium Conditions

In deliberations that occurred during the Boston College Roundtables there was a clear sense that the social and academic contexts surrounding Catholic universities and colleges in the 21st century has changed, that some external turbulence (Beabout, 2012) has created an environment where longstanding trends, practices, and beliefs are now being enacted in new contexts. The first Roundtable, for instance, considered the role of hospitality for Catholic institutions in large part because so many non-Catholics currently comprise their school communities. Ironically, there was also concern that Catholic schools might be too welcoming to their increasingly affluent student population. The second session assessed the traditional liberal arts curriculum, especially in light of current questions about economic value of education. Science and the Human Person, the third session theme, offered ways to think about the philosophical and theological implications of scientific research, especially relevant foci in a STEM-preoccupied world that seems to welcome any scientific advance almost unthinkingly. And the final session's grandiose scope, the Role of the Academy in the World, adopted a wide-angle lens to envision priorities for Catholic colleges and universities in the 21st century. In turn, these developments, concerns, and potential opportunities suggest a sense of unease, uncertainty or disequilibrium (Nadler, 1993) that has emerged for Catholic higher education.

Transformation: The Roundtable Common Denominator

Though each Roundtable adopted a different focus, one theme held constant across every session: transformation. Roundtables were not an endorsement of the status quo. Every session conveyed some sense that Catholic colleges and universities might think anew about mission, with wide-ranging questions about what those changes might entail and how they would come about. As with any effort at institutional transformation, a fundamental question arises: Is this about technical change or adaptive change (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002)? Is the aim to help a "system" intensify existing efforts, to do more effectively what it already does? Or is the goal to transform the system—including fundamental values and beliefs as well as routine practices and policies through "exploration, new discoveries, and adjustments" (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McElvey, 2007, p. 300)? From the outset, Roundtable

conversations pointed toward adaptive change, with allusions in the initial volume of *Integritas* to “explor[ing] the value and meaning of Catholic higher education in the contemporary context” (*Integritas*, 2013, p. iii). The reference to a “contemporary context” suggesting changes have occurred which might warrant new ways to understand Catholic higher education.

As the Roundtables progressed, their purpose seemed to increasingly embrace adaptive practices and ideals. In the introduction to the second *Integritas* volume, the director, Lisa Hastings (2013), noted that the goal was for “these essays to work their way into broader conversations among deans and faculty, senior administrators, and mission officers at our respective institutions” (p. iii). Enacting a “new model for conversation,” there was hope the essays would “provide a springboard for further conversations and broader engagement” (p. iii). The third volume, “Science and the Human Person,” targeted “the dynamic interplay between faith and science” (p. iii), which as Hastings wrote, led to conversations which “raise[d] important considerations about the ways in which Catholic institutions can chart a future course for science education and research” (Hastings, 2014, p. iii). By the fourth volume and with the election of Pope Francis, the commitment to transformational change seemed unequivocal:

Palpable in this issue is a distinct call among members of the Roundtable that Catholic colleges and universities dare to live out their ideals. . . . Any focus on limitations of the enterprise of Catholic higher education has given way to the excitement and desire for Catholic institutions to inspire, lead, and develop in our undergraduate and graduate students the passion, will, and understanding to engage deeply as global citizens educated in the Catholic tradition. (Hastings, 2014, p. iii)

Such statements—and comparable remarks from participants in their papers, rejoinders, and group conversations—revealed a commitment to adaptive change, to transforming a system and its related outcomes as a means to address a shifting context. This then raises a second question, “How might this occur?”

Systems Change

To create systemic change—be it revising a university core or restructuring the study abroad experience—something must disrupt the routine, so elements within that system interact differently. There must be motivation to

act. Often, some manifestation of disequilibrium or dissonance, either internal or external, serves this purpose (Nadler, 1993), creating a state where “the system is ripe for transformation. . . experiencing new opportunities, new challenges, and new ways to understand the world” (Reigeluth, 2004, p. 27). This is how one might understand Roundtable foci, all representing potential “opportunities. . . challenges. . . and new ways to understand the world,” serving as impetus for change, for doing something differently, for modifying a system’s actions. To poise a system for adaptive change, considerable scholarship points to the strategic potential of decentralized networks (Daly, 2010; Davis & Sumara, 2006; Lewin, 1991; Wheatley, 1999). So as systems experience disequilibrium, their reactions are likely to be adaptive if decentralized networks somehow emerge.

Beyond the experience of disequilibrium and emergent networks, a third element in systems change involves culture—the values, beliefs, and symbols that draw ideals into action, a framework through which individuals interpret and act on the world (Geertz, 1973). In this view, all social practices, including Catholic higher education, are informed by some set of cultural ideals, beliefs, principles, and values (Gee, 1996). Accordingly, culture possesses causal power; shaping how people think and act (George & Bennett, 2005). Though culture does not determine social action, it typically defines the possible and logical, generating norms that “regulate not through fear of consequences but through the belief that some actions are right and others wrong” (Axelrod & Cohen, 2000, p. 150). Understanding these values—where they could originate and how they might shape university life—are key to this study. In assessing the Roundtable we draw on these three dimensions of systemic change, considering how various strategies might perturb the status quo, generate new relationships through forming emergent networks, and promote a cultural vision that guides system actions.

Method

Participants

The Roundtable brought together 13 scholars from Catholic colleges and universities across the United States, representing different types of institutions as well as different founding religious orders, dioceses, and bishops. The cohort included mid- to late-career, tenured faculty from varied disciplines who in some cases also held administrative appointments. Nine were men and four were women; all were active scholars in their respective fields. Three

were members of religious communities and/or ordained clergy; ten were laypersons. (See Appendix 1.) Participants asked how institutions rooted in the Catholic tradition stand to enrich academic freedom and scholarly inquiry, student learning, and social development, ultimately leading to the formation of the wholly integrated human person and a better world. In deciding who to invite those organizing the Roundtables sought to recruit persons deeply involved with thinking about Catholic higher education—where it has been, where it needs to go in the 21st century, and how it might get there. Participants were contacted by Boston College faculty and staff and personally invited to join the sessions.

Data Collection

All Roundtable discussions were recorded and transcribed, and every article was subject to textual analysis by our research team. At the conclusion of the Roundtables, each participant completed an online survey intended to assess whether this curricular exploration impacted their scholarly work and/or influenced the intellectual culture of their school. Complementing these data sources, all participants were interviewed about their experience and related outcomes. Two principal researchers for this article acted as participant-observers during each of the four weekend seminars.

Data Analysis

To generate our concepts and categories, and later to identify patterns and themes derived from qualitative data, we employed a constant comparative analytic method, investigating and corroborating our findings in a recursive and iterative fashion (Spradley, 1979). Coding and analysis were driven by our research questions, as the conceptual categories we focused on offered insight into these questions (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). After generating within-case themes from each participant's survey responses, interviews, and session papers, we conducted cross-case analyses using an iterative process to uncover broader trends and patterns, highlighting those beliefs, values and practices that were consistent across participants (Yin, 2014). We analyze these themes, using direct quotations from interviews, published proceedings and discussions to generate up close, in-depth understandings of our data. Doing so allows us to highlight specific data related to broader findings (Yin, 2014).

Two Dynamic Forces in Catholic Higher Education

To conceptualize the work of the Roundtables, we employ two epistemological frames: the Catholic intellectual tradition and Ignatian pedagogy. Though across four weekends none of the Roundtable participants specifically identified Ignatian pedagogy, we believe related ideas and practices were implicit in and intertwined throughout their remarks. We utilize these analytic frameworks to draw into focus particular Roundtable themes—with the ultimate goal of promoting adaptive change, thereby helping Catholic colleges and universities reconceptualize and modify how they operate in the 21st century.

The Catholic Intellectual Tradition

One of the underlying premises of the Roundtable initiative was an interest in reaffirming and revitalizing Catholic colleges and universities engagement with the Catholic intellectual tradition. Further, the invited Roundtable participants held a common conviction that to be authentically Catholic, Catholic colleges and universities must integrate a rich intellectual legacy into the academic life of their campuses. Admittedly, getting hold of the Catholic intellectual tradition is a challenge. It contains a vast repository of theological thought; philosophizing; devotional practices; works of literature, visual art, music, and drama; styles of architecture; jurisprudential principles; social and political theorizing; and other forms of cultural expression that have emerged in vastly different parts of the world in the course of 2,000 years of Christian religious experience.

For Christians, the dialogue between faith and culture is as old as their earliest efforts to articulate what it means to be a distinctive faith community. As the Christian way moved beyond its original Jewish communities, attracted Gentile converts, and spread across the Roman world and beyond, a Christian intellectual tradition developed, which was the product of a continuous dialogue between faith and cultures. This dialogue reflected two essential characteristics of the Christian, and especially the Catholic, understanding of human experience: that faith necessarily seeks understanding, and that all intellectual inquiry leads eventually to questions of ultimacy that invite faith responses. As a result, reason has been intrinsic to the life of the Catholic Church, which sees the search for truth as a manifestation of the Creator. The most probing questions in every discipline are never deemed to be in opposition to faith, but are welcomed into the conversation on the conviction that ongoing discovery of the intelligibility of the universe will reveal more of the truth about God.

The Roundtable experience is an effort to invite people to enter into this expansive dialogue in search of truth, meaning, and justice. The Roundtable participants gathered with the hope that the search for truth in all disciplines can be enriched by engagement with the tradition. Their hope is animated by an understanding that the Catholic intellectual tradition is at work whenever inquiry in any field is open to moving out of narrow disciplinary isolation and toward the horizon of human dignity, the common good, and the wholeness and fullness of life that the Christian tradition calls God's reign.

It is our observation that the Roundtable allowed participation in a living experience of Catholic intellectual life as an ongoing conversation, not a static traditionalism, which draws from the riches of the past to give life to the future. A simultaneous capacity for continuity and change gives it a growing edge, allowing it to develop in new ways even as it retains its firm roots in the foundational Catholic worldview. The experience of the Roundtable participants reflected an understanding of the ideal that in the Catholic university, wisdom accumulated in the past is handed on, criticized, reworked, and re-appropriated in response to new questions prompted by new experience, new evidence, new arguments, and new interlocutors. And as is our observation of the Roundtable experience, this way of proceeding not only reflects a fidelity to but also gives new life to the Catholic intellectual tradition.

Ignatian Pedagogy: The Interplay of Experience, Reflection & Action

While drawing on the Catholic intellectual tradition allows us to highlight *what* Catholic colleges and universities might prioritize to enrich students' lives academically and spiritually, we offer a complementary frame, Ignatian pedagogy, a practice developed and refined by Jesuits, to suggest *how* these changes might be enacted. For Father Peter Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Ignatian pedagogy rests upon solid theoretical grounding, "consistently maintain[ing] the importance and integrity of the interrelationship of teacher, learner, and subject matter within the real context in which they live" (1994, p. 71; cf. Dewey, 1963; Whitehead, 1967). Building on this curricular foundation, Ignatian pedagogy embraces three central tenets, "allow[ing] for a transformation of people's habitual patterns of thought through a constant interplay of experience, reflection, and action" (Kolvenbach, 1994, p. 22; cf. Arrupe 1980; Korth 2008; Mountin & Nowacek 2012; Traub 2008). Experience largely entails learning that is transformational, requiring active engagement in matters relevant to students' lives, (Arrupe 1973), ultimately forming "men and women for others" (Kolvenbach, 1994, p. 120). Reflection on and

discernment of experience offer a means to generate respectful, informed, and culturally competent relations with the others in our lives (Plante, 2013). Finally, drawing on the Ignatian assertion that “Love is shown in deeds, not words” (Ignatius of Loyola, 1991, p. 176), intertwining experience with reflection should lead to action.

Experience. In the context of Ignatian pedagogy, attention to experience begins with the individual, allowing students to “recollect the material of their own experience in order to distill what they understand already in terms of facts, feelings, values, insights and intuitions they bring to the subject matter at hand” (Kolvenbach, 1994, p. 28). Once established, instruction “moves beyond rote knowledge to the development of the more complex learning skills of understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation” (Kolvenbach, 1994, p. 31).

For experience to align with Ignatian ideals—to be transformational, active, and informed by a commitment to social justice—first-hand encounters offer a compelling learning strategy. In his classic exploration of Ignatian pedagogy, Fr. Kolvenbach spoke to the power of experiential learning:

It is one thing to read a newspaper account of a hurricane striking the coastal towns of Puerto Rico. . . . This cognitive knowing, however, can leave the reader distant and aloof of the human dimensions of the storm. It is quite different to be out where the wind is blowing, where one feels the force of the storm, senses the immediate danger to life, home, and all one’s possessions, and feels the fear in the pit of one’s stomach for one’s life and that of one’s neighbors. (Kolvenbach, 1994, p. 45)

Since human experience “never occurs in a vacuum,” Ignatian pedagogy also attends to

the actual context within which teaching and learning take place. . . . Understand[ing] the world of the student, including the ways in which family, friends, peers, youth culture and mores as well as social pressures, school life, politics, economics, religion, media, art, music, and other realities impact that world and affect the student for better or worse. (Kolvenbach, 1994, p. 35)

Whether learning a language in a foreign country, interacting with unfamiliar others, or undertaking a social justice project, productive experiences are often unsettling, helping people view the world differently, challenging assumptions and understandings, and generating a sense of dissonance or unease that readies a person for change (Nadler, 1993). Along these lines, Chester Gillis (2013) of Georgetown cited the Jesuit notion of “bothered excellence”:

When Jesuit education works, it bothers. It gets under your skin. It disquiets, and it challenges, even as it goads and encourages and inspires. . . . Jesuit education also beckons us into grappling with our world—the real world, as it exists today—and all the ways that it is bothered in its political, economic and social relations. (Carnes, 2014, p. 27, as cited in Gillis, 2013)

Reflection. To complement experience, Ignatian pedagogy envisions reflection as a means to understanding and moral insight. As Fr. Kolvenbach explained:

For Ignatius, to “discern” was to clarify his internal motivation, the reasons behind his judgments, to probe the causes and implications of what he experienced, to weigh possible options and evaluate them in the light of their likely consequences, to discover what best leads to the desired goal: to be a free person who seeks, finds, and carries out the will of God in each situation. (Kolvenbach, 1994, p. 47)

In essence, through focused thought reflection becomes “the process by which meaning surfaces in human experience” (Kolvenbach, 1994, p. 49). Some of that is academic: “understanding the truth being studied more clearly” (p. 50). Some is personal: “coming to some understanding of who I am (‘What moves me, and why?’)” (p. 54). Some is relational: “mov[ing] toward greater appreciation of the lives of others, and of the actions, policies or structures that help or hinder mutual growth and development as members of the human family” (p. 76).

For Aurelie Hagstrom (2013), to generate such understandings interpersonal “dialogue with the other is essential” (p. 14). Applying this precept to the college experience, Katarina Schuth (2014) wrote: “The more we know of the cultures of the ‘other’ the more likely we are to understand their hopes

and dreams, their joys and sorrows” (p. 1). Thus, Catholic higher education is challenged “to enable students to participate in opportunities that promote interaction with other cultures. . . . to foster appreciation of people from diverse backgrounds and locales and avoid the consequences of a narrow vision of humanity” (p. 13).

Ultimately, experience and reflection set a context for action:

The teacher lays the foundations for learning how to learn by engaging students in skills and techniques of reflection. . . . [This] should be a formative and liberating process that so shapes the consciousness of students—their habitual attitudes, values and beliefs as well as ways of thinking—that they are impelled to move beyond knowing to action. (Kolvenbach, 1994, 28)

Action. As embodied in perhaps its most notable aphorism, the aims of Ignatian pedagogy are inherently adaptive and transformative. In papers, rejoinders, and group conversations, Roundtable participants revealed a similar commitment to adaptive change, to transform Catholic higher education and its related outcomes. Kevin Hughes (2013) challenged participants to rethink the college experience:

We must aim together to change and broaden the conversation about what college is for, giving a more complex but more rewarding array of opportunities. . . . [S]o we must renew our efforts and be willing to break the molds of the conventional university. (p. 20)

Mark Muskavitch (2013) saw transformation as inherent to university life:

[A]s scholars and teachers, we’re actually called . . . to love inquiry and truth and dialogue, to love discovery, teaching, and learning, to enable change within others, to expect change within ourselves, and to work for beneficial change within our institutions. (p. 21)

William Werpehowski (2014) posed a critical question for Catholic institutions, many of which now feel themselves educating substantial numbers of the “relatively affluent”:

Catholic universities cannot simply be places where well-to-do students receive a good education in order to assume their place in the

next generation of corporate and professional elites. How does education of the relatively affluent . . . relate to concern for those on the other end of the social and economic spectrum? (p. 7)

In what could be seen as a response to this query, Thomas Plante (2013) portrayed liberal arts education as a means to generate adaptive change: “Catholic liberal arts education is not just about finding a high-paying job after graduation. . . . It is more about being ‘engaged, inspired, and ultimately transformed’” (Manuel, 2013, as cited in Plante, 2013, p. 6).

Institutional Transformation

Having outlined aspects of the Catholic intellectual tradition that might set a direction for institutional change and drawing together elements of Ignatian pedagogy to suggest how change might occur, we now synthesize features of both traditions with perspectives and insights that surfaced during Roundtable discussions.

Critiques of Liberal Arts Curricula: So What’s Wrong?

To appreciate how Catholic higher education might transform itself in the 21st century one can begin with the liberal arts curriculum, certainly a central feature of Catholic colleges and universities. Without question, Roundtable participants expressed concern that contemporary liberal arts curricula, including core programs, were not realizing their full transformational potential. Kevin Hughes (2013) set the nature of this challenge:

To renew our university’s commitment to the transcendent value of the liberal arts, we need to renew from within our very understanding of the work and the end of the liberal arts themselves. If we don’t believe, and argue, that we have in our liberal humanistic tradition something of substance worth preserving and engaging, we can hardly hope to persuade others of the viability or attractiveness of the project. (p. 19)

With a measure of criticism for liberal arts education, William Mattison (2014) largely endorsed Hughes’ assertion:

A liberal arts education is there not just to establish competencies, or train people in a major, or allow students unfettered (and consumeristic) choice to pursue whatever interests them. We have a responsibility

to educate students broadly. . . to inaugurate students into the quest for wisdom. (pp. 16-18)

Underlying these broad concerns, participants identified related tensions, beginning with faculty commitment to the academic core. In the words of one participant, “When we look at who teaches the core, we see graduate students, part-time faculty, the non-tenure track, at least at [my school], all too often.” Others noted that students become aware of faculty disinterest with the core when advised about getting “this or that requirement out of the way” *en route* to “more important” disciplinary courses, implying the core represents “little more than a *pro forma* exercise rather than a means to . . . greater wisdom” (Summary, *Integritas* 2.3, Fall 2013, p. 20). Another participant called for focused analysis:

I think there’s got to be more discussion about, “What is the purpose of the core? Is it breadth of knowledge, or is it somehow more transformational?” . . . [Faculty] need to flesh out who we want [students] to become and why the core is related to that. Unless we’re explicit about that, I don’t think people will know what they’re doing in the core, or why it’s important.

For Kevin Hughes (2013), “the solution to the crisis in the liberal arts . . . is really to double down, to reinvest in rather than divest from the liberal arts” (p. 17). In agreement, we offer three strategies derived from Roundtable dialogue that might both enrich and substantiate the value of a Catholic liberal arts education:

- Drawing upon the Catholic intellectual tradition to lend coherence to what can be an ill-defined entity by posing new questions, and joining disparate disciplines to reveal the power of a liberal arts curriculum;
- Embracing a more experiential orientation, making learning active and student-directed, asking students to reflect and learn in real life situations; and
- Creating a consortium of Catholic schools that aims to both enliven the liberal arts curriculum and assess its impact on students.

Enriching the Liberal Arts Curriculum

Discussing Ignatian pedagogy, Fr. Kolvenbach (1994) maintained that incorporating Ignatian practice into university teaching does not require

overhauling existing curricula, though “it does require the infusion of new approaches in the way we teach existing courses” (p. 72). To begin, one must ask: “What happens when you put the well-being of all persons at the heart of your curriculum?” as an overriding sense of global humanism should infuse all curricular thinking. In so doing, the Catholic intellectual tradition can serve an integrative purpose, enriching the curricular structure and coherence. Aurelia Hagstrom (2013) elaborated on this idea in a subsequent interview:

[T]heology is an architectonic discipline on a Catholic campus. . . . [N]ot that we take over all the disciplines. . . . But we should be able to be facilitators for other disciplines, for them to be able to think through questions in their own disciplines and how they fit into mission. . . . [I]s there a way to think about the discipline of mathematics, and the history of mathematics, and the search for the truth in mathematics that can be linked to the Catholic world view? I think there is. (Hagstrom interview)

Applying this notion to “scientific inquiry,” William Mattison (2014) wrote:

I take it that our implicit task here is to reflect on how scientific inquiry, in a manner attentive to the human person, is done well at a Catholic college or university. And by done well I do not simply mean on the terms of the discipline itself. . . . I mean done in a manner that is integrated with the institution’s Catholic mission. . . . done in a manner that constitutes an essential part of that mission, without which something would be missing. (p. 4)

Offering a sense for what being “attentive to the human person” might look like in practice, John Cunningham (2014) observed:

[T]he study of science at Catholic colleges and universities is vastly enriched by the parallel study of topics in philosophy, where the framework of scientific inquiry can be explored; or in ethics, where the motivations and consequences of scientific research can be discussed and judged; or in theology, where the spiritual dimension of science can be appreciated. . . . The list of how liberal arts courses can enrich the life of a student studying science can be quite extensive and powerful. (pp. 17-18)

Moreover, curricula attentive to the “well-being of all persons” necessarily surface issues of social justice, which can be addressed through various dimensions of university structures. In some cases, the enactment occurs in classrooms. In his literature class, Paul Mariani activates students’ moral reasoning. In his interview, Mariani recounted the following:

I’ll teach, say, Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*, and I will talk about social justice issues: What does it mean to go hungry? Who is your neighbor? How do you respond if you’ve only got so much food and your neighbor is hungry? How much do you give them? Some will say, ‘None. You’ve got to survive.’ Others will say, ‘I’ll try to break it half and half.’ You’re going to get different [responses]. But at least the question has been raised.

In an ambitious call to action for colleges of arts and sciences to promote global humanism through study abroad programs, Amata Miller in her interview (2014) asserted the necessity to “help [our graduates] develop the political will to eradicate extreme poverty in our world of great abundance.” This could also attend to Werpehowski’s (2014) concern with educating so many of the “relatively affluent,” many of whom engage in study abroad experiences. As Miller further noted in her interview:

The question of climate is calling out to us desperately . . . as well as these whole questions of war and peace. . . . And the young people are . . . much more open to other cultures because they travel the world. That’s why it’s important with these global studies experiences that they really are in situations where they see how people are living and learn what they can learn from those other cultures. And not just go to an American university or a comfortable place.

Social justice can also emerge at the university level. As a school committed to the ideals of global humanism, Loyola University Chicago’s latest fundraising effort prioritized social justice. In an interview, John Cunningham explained: “The campaign here is about, ‘How is the university being a vehicle for social justice? . . . [W]hat are we doing here, particularly on the academic side, to fulfill the mission of what social justice should be?’” Beyond the purely academic, Cunningham identified a related concern: “Who are these students that we’re sending out—this new generation? How are they going to see the world in a way that they can contribute to social justice?”

In a related vein, Roundtable participants had a sense that attending to issues of social justice could motivate a latent commitment to Catholic social teachings for faculty and students alike, spiritual enrichment brought to life through practical experience. Speaking to his experience, Thomas Plante (2014) characterized the process as rather intuitive:

[A]t Santa Clara, [faculty] who are not interested in Catholic stuff, they may get very excited about social justice, about solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, and so forth. And so they embrace the gospel when they don't even know they're embracing the gospel. (p. 26)

Gillis in an interview (2014) noted how a similar dynamic has emerged for students:

Sometimes the ecclesial themes and theological notions do not resonate as much with students today. But the social justice element resonates very, very much. And that's their kind of entrée into the Catholic world. And then the reflection on that: 'Why are you doing it? What's the value structure of that? What's the grounding for that?' Whether it's scriptural grounding or doctrinal grounding or tradition in the Catholic world.

In the 21st century, manifestations of social justice also involve hospitality, how schools welcome (or not) the "other" to their campuses. At one time, Catholic colleges and universities were staffed by and served a largely Catholic population. This is no longer the case. With this reality in mind, Paul Mariani (2013) characterized hospitality as essential element to the charism of a Catholic university:

[W]elcoming the other, while at the same time maintaining our own distinctive personhood as the host, would be our special charism, our mission as a Catholic university. In short, I am speaking of that respectful, vibrant, ongoing exchange which brings us greater clarity and understanding of each other as we pursue the larger truths at the heart of the matter. (pp. 2-3)

Hagstrom (2013) noted how hospitality sets a context for engagement and growth:

Intellectual hospitality involves welcoming others through openness in both sharing and receiving claims to knowledge and insight. . . . [I]t is marked by awareness that . . . the perspective of the other could easily supplement and perhaps correct one's own work or even transform one's self-understanding. (p. 11)

Ultimately, she maintained, "Academic freedom should flourish in this context" (p. 13). Moreover, part of "getting to know the other" could entail inter-religious dialogue. Hagstrom suggested how dialogue could generate adaptive change:

The atmosphere of invitation, welcome, and *communio* of persons is precisely what can give rise to sharing and storytelling. It also gives rise to healthy debate and disputation. Since there is a level of trust between the host and guest, both are empowered to tell their story of how they understand the world [and] . . . hostility can be transformed to hospitality and the stranger is welcomed as guest and, eventually, friend. (p. 13)

In his paper focused on hospitality, Gillis outlined a distinct feature of the Georgetown approach to the inevitability of religious diversity, "centered pluralism": "Catholicism anchors or centers that identity but that its religious identity as reflected in its students and faculty is pluralistic" (Gillis, 2013, p. 6). In essence, "without surrendering its Catholic identity, the university seeks to recognize and respect the religiously other" (p. 12), the goal being to "forge a relationship that benefits both parties without disenfranchising either" (p. 16). To make this happen, Gillis suggested that such efforts not begin with doctrinal differences but with practical, common concerns: the welfare of the environment, the hunger of masses of people, and the poverty of nations. In this manner, a dialogue among religions focusing on issues of human welfare might serve as a touchstone for collective actions.

Experiential education

Throughout the Roundtables participants alluded to the power of experiential learning. Gillis (2013) set a general parameter for experiential engagement with issues of global humanism: "[Students] have to learn how to understand the other by getting out of their comfort zone and encountering the other personally in productive conversation and activity." When successful, Schuth (2014) maintained that such interactions "foster appreciation of

people from diverse backgrounds and locales and . . . avoid the consequences of a narrow vision of humanity” (p. 13). Miller (2014) highlighted the power of having students understand first-hand the experience of those marginalized in society, rather than in purely theoretical manifestations, another means by which Catholic schools could “unsettle” their increasingly affluent populations:

The inherent connections [of all economic inequality] to all the other dimensions of life are obscured by the structures as well as the curricula of our universities. Thus, we have generations of students who are not only ignorant about the economic dimension of reality, but worse, are prey to errant myths and rigid ideologies that distort their views of individual and social life. Thus, it is incumbent on us to foster curricula and interdisciplinary experiences that include understandings of the experience of the “real world,” of the poor and marginalized. (p. 20)

In a Roundtable group discussion (2014), another participant voiced a similar concern:

I think a real struggle is how do we connect what’s going on overseas with the engagement with other cultures in the neighborhoods of Boston? There’s a separation in too many minds that you have to go overseas to engage suffering, poverty, other cultures, and leaving the city at arm’s length. . . . [I]t’s that world out there and not the world of Mattapan, Roxbury, other nearby neighborhoods. (p. 17, Roundtable discussion recording Transcript)

In her writing Marian Díaz (2013) promoted a related need for ongoing reflection throughout students’ university experience, the act by which experience becomes knowledge: “Contemplation occurs, yes, in the classrooms and the library and the church, but also in the dorm rooms, in the hallways, on the sidewalks, in the common areas, and in the dining hall” (p. 9). Accordingly, Quigley (2013) thought schools might consider extending the classroom experience into a “fourth hour” beyond the typical three-hour course where student-faculty barriers were lowered:

How can faculty, in authentic collaboration with partners in Student Affairs and University Mission & Ministry, help students to break

down the ever-deepening rift between students' classroom selves and the lives they live in dorms, in the evenings, and on weekends? (p. 12)

In terms of experiential learning, Roundtable participants had a good deal to say about what seems a rich opportunity for experiential learning and is now almost a form of core curriculum, "study abroad." As the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) reported, in 2010-11 the undergraduate study abroad participation rate for ACCU members was 28.7% (ACCU, 2016), statistics reflecting steady increases over the past decade (Center for Academic Mobility, 2016). With these trends in view, Katarina Schuth (2014) suggested integrating this popular experience with a commitment to global humanism:

Faculty need to make certain that international studies are not just occasions for tourist-like travels. . . . Experiences in the field must be designed to truly grapple with the situation existing at the destination. It means studying the entire background of the host country, its history and lifestyle, its values and religions, its economy and politics. . . . [A]ttitudes about "the other" must be shaped in a way that embraces Catholic values, especially respect for the dignity of each person. (p. 20)

In agreement, another participant noted:

The question really should be, "How much can we make [study abroad] more like a pilgrimage? Can we use a different way of thinking about encountering the other . . . that's going to take into account that there's going to be things that are tourism?" . . . But there's choices that they can make, too. And there's choices that we can make as educators on how we set these programs up. (Transcript of Roundtable Discussion, p. 29)

And one highly experiential dimension of the study abroad experience seemed almost inevitably transformational, learning a language. The process of "apprenticing themselves to native speakers in a host country in order to develop the cultural fluency that comes only with learning a new language" (Muldoon, 2014 p. 21) led to substantive interactions with others and a consequent appreciation for the broader culture.

A Catholic Consortium for Curricular Change

The second set of Roundtable papers focused specifically on the transcendent value of the liberal arts. Overall, presenters outlined various rationales for why a liberal arts curriculum remains relevant in the 21st century, though almost one-quarter of all students enrolled in U.S. colleges are business majors and the number arts and science majors has declined steadily over the past decade. Thomas Plante (2013) was perhaps most effusive in his conviction and support. Notably, the core at Santa Clara is experience-based, social justice-oriented, and has been validated through empirical research:

All students at Santa Clara now are required to participate in at least one community-based learning immersion class (called Experiential Learning for Social Justice) . . . as well as take the compassion inventory when they enter the university and when they graduate. . . . We have found students who participate in these programs not only improve their levels of compassion for others (assessed using a reliable and validated compassion inventory and evaluated before, immediately after, and several months following a campus-sponsored immersion trip compared to a matched comparison group), but coped with perceived stress and daily hassles much better too. (p. 9)

Though only Santa Clara University collected data on the impact core curricula and related experiences had on students, others endorsed the idea. In an interview, Díaz plainly stated, “When boards are implementing [curricular] plans, they want measurables. They want to be able to say at the end of these five years, ‘We have retained more students. We’ve formed them in terms of social justice.’” Quigley (2014) highlighted this need when reflecting on “the variousness of cores across our campuses . . . [which] demands that we question just what it is we mean when we talk about the core” (p. 12). If Catholic universities and colleges were to embrace a shared commitment to assessing the impact a liberal arts curriculum had on students and even faculty, they could generate a decentralized network, a key element linked to adaptive change and collaborate on myriad matters of importance and substance. Consider Capra’s (2005) remarks: “Wherever we see life, we see networks . . . [L]iving networks are not material structures. . . . They are functional networks of relationships between various processes” (p. 35). That is, enacting this strategy would allow schools to identify the transformative features of a liberal arts curriculum, rather than relying on compelling

but untested assumptions, as is current practice at many Catholic institutions. In concert, they could:

- Design, assess, and share effective experiential learning activities, such as Santa Clara's Learning for Social Justice Project and the impact of learning a new language;
- Generate research designs that assess students' compassion and competence before, during, and after experiencing some form of "bothered excellence";
- Draw upon faculty and graduate student expertise to conduct related research, work which well could be in demand given the number of Catholic colleges and universities that embrace both liberal arts and core curricula;
- Sponsor Roundtable-like symposia to discuss effective teaching strategies and research findings across Catholic colleges and universities, nationally and internationally;
- Bring students, a perspective so far absent from Roundtables, into the conversation;
- Address such questions as: What works? What doesn't? And how can this be adapted to your school context?

In addition, participants in any consortium would likely be teaching or designing sections of their schools' curricula, and as Joseph Raelin (2006) observed, "When people who have a stake in a venture are given every chance to participate in the venture . . . their commitment to the venture will be assured" (p. 155). The possibilities seem considerable and enticing. Moreover, one consistent response to the follow up Roundtable survey was participants' surprise at how much they enjoyed working across disciplines. At various points, participants characterized their professional work as isolated, fragmented, and even in competition over budget lines, majors, faculty, and students. In contrast, interdisciplinary conversation proved challenging and eye-opening. A number said they experienced conversations that otherwise do not happen on college campuses, with strong agreement that conversations with colleagues from different disciplinary backgrounds were beneficial, affording participants opportunities to consider important questions through new methodological lenses. One in particular noted that the conversations were "the most extensive academic interchanges [I have] ever had." The sense that emerged from considering the integration of disciplinary approaches to truth was that such integration naturally draws the scholar to consider questions of

mission: how hospitality, social justice, and a commitment to the liberal arts are central to the enterprise of Catholic higher education. One participant suggested that this approach invited intellectual risk-taking, to think beyond the normal protocols of one's disciplinary methodology. A similar dynamic could emerge in a Catholic consortium.

Now What?

In the landscape of contemporary higher education Catholic colleges and universities find themselves in a unique position, confronted by an emerging set of challenges with opportunities for institutional enrichment embedded throughout. Catholic schools have an opportunity to draw on their historic commitment to the liberal arts and core curricula to prepare students for life in a complex and complicated globalized world, to provide them with an intellectual foundation as well as a mean to discern their life paths driven by a clear vision, process, and moral purpose. The challenge is to substantiate the promise of a liberal arts education, to undertake a national or even international effort to reevaluate, revise, and rejuvenate foundational Catholic practices—and in doing so, to determine the impact a liberal arts curriculum has on student learning as well as their spiritual and emotional development. Schools and their faculties now have motivation to find a way to engage “the other” in a climate of welcoming hospitality that enriches the lives of both parties. Courses will need to systematically generate a sense of “bothered excellence” that unsettles and provokes student thinking, asking them to reassess the taken-for-granted in their beliefs and values. Curricular and pedagogical practices will be driven by an institutional culture that prioritizes the well-being of all persons and the world in which we live. It calls for an effort to clarify what matters in Catholic higher education and how this shapes both students and faculty. Indeed, Ignatian pedagogy, with its relentless focus on the interplay among experience, reflection and action provides a mechanism to do just this, to generate unease with the status quo while offering a way to systematically determine the courses of action that will promote equitable and empowering outcomes for all involved. Yet this undertaking will be only as convincing as the breadth of schools that choose to join the endeavor. Should Catholic colleges and universities embrace this mix of challenge and opportunity, including an overt commitment to global humanism, Catholic schools can say we aim to make the world a better place and, in so doing, to enrich our students' lives academically and spiritually, as well as the lives of others.

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Patrick McQuillan, Ph.D. is Associate Professor of Teacher Education at the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. Correspondence regarding this article can be directed to Dr. McQuillan at mcquilpa@bc.edu

Michael J. James, Ph.D. is Director of the Institute for Administrators in Catholic Higher Education at the Lynch School of Education at Boston College.

Timothy P. Muldoon, Ph.D. is Director of Mission Education for Catholic Extension and Adjunct Associate Professor at Boston College. He was the editor of Integritas, the journal of the Boston College Roundtable.

Appendix A Roundtable Participants

- John D. Cunningham, S.J., Associate Professor of Physics, Loyola University Chicago.
- Marian Díaz, Lecturer in Religious Studies. University of Dayton.
- Chester Gillis, Dean of Georgetown College and Professor of Theology, Georgetown University.
- Aurelia A. Hagstrom, Associate Professor and Chair of Theology, Providence College.
- Kevin Hughes, Associate Professor of Theology and Chair of Humanities and Classical Studies, Villanova University.
- Paul Mariani, University Professor of English, Boston College.
- William C. Mattison III, Associate Professor of Theology and Associate Dean, School of Theology and Religious Studies, Catholic University of America.
- Amata Miller, I. H. M., Professor of Economics, Saint Catherine's University.
- Marc Muskavitch, Professor of Biology, Boston College.
- Thomas G. Plante, Augustin Cardinal Bea, S.J., University Professor of Psychology, Santa Clara University.
- David Quigley, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Boston College.
- Katarina Schuth, O.S.F., Endowed Chair, Social Scientific Study of Religion, University of St. Thomas.
- William Werpehowski, Professor of Christian Ethics at Villanova University and Visiting McDevitt Professor of Catholic Theology at Georgetown University.