

## Three Crucial Topics in Jesuit Higher Education

It's become almost trite to type the phrase "the Catholic Church is in crisis." It seems, in recent years, that the Church is always in crisis, careening from one to another. When one fades away for a moment in one part of the world, another arises somewhere else. Though not all the crises are inter-related, the cumulative effect is a constant pressure on the worldwide Church.

That is what was on the minds of the members of the National Seminar on Jesuit Higher Education when they met at University of Detroit Mercy in April of last year to plan this edition of *Conversations*. The horror of the sexual abuse scandal and its coverup was once again in the news; Jesuit universities were facing tough financial decisions that put their missions at stake, and the rise of nationalism here and around the globe were seen not as separate issues, but as many parts of one. In Jesuit fashion, the discussion quickly changed from a litany of woes to a call for reflection and action. What can the nation's Jesuit colleges and universities do to address the crises?

This edition looks at ways Jesuit institutions can lead the discussion on how to address the sex abuse crisis, how they can shepherd their institutions through harsh financial realities yet remain true to their missions (and about what happens when they don't), and how the worldwide network of Jesuit institutions can work together to create global citizens who work for the common good.

These are challenges, no doubt, and they are not the only ones facing the Church. Jesuit institutions are in a strong position because of our clarity on a vigorous, healthy mission, and it is one we should take full advantage of to effect change. It's what we expect of our graduates, and we should expect it from our institutions as well.



Because this is my first edition as editor, I would like to introduce myself. For most of my career, I worked at small and large daily newspapers as a writer, editor, and copy editor. I left the field in 2000 and entered the more family-friendly field of public relations. Since 2015 I have been working in the Marketing & Communications department at University of Detroit Mercy, helping spread the good news about Jesuit (and Mercy) education.

I am a product of public schools and two state universities and, though raised Catholic, I had only a passing knowledge of what a Jesuit is and even less about what Jesuit education is. What I learned about Jesuit education came over time at dinner tables and picnics with my wife's large immediate and extended family, nearly all of whom are Jesuit educated. I listened to the way they discussed issues, analyzed books and movies and art, laughed, welcomed others, and found and explored connections others may have missed. While this makes for freewheeling—and sometimes tense—discussions, at the center of it all is a strong and unwavering faith discussed in a matter-of-fact way that can still surprise and move me. It's what inspired me to look into a position at Detroit Mercy where I have found a welcoming home. It is a place of deep commitment to the Jesuit mission and one that has deepened my own faith and commitment to the Jesuit values I first saw demonstrated over meals almost 30 years ago.

I am thrilled my three college-aged children are at Jesuit institutions because I see what they can become, and I can't wait to see what, as Jesuit-educated global citizens, they will bring to the world. And I thank the National Seminar for choosing me to help, in my own small way, shape the conversation on Jesuit higher education.

Ron Bernas, editor

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