

SOME CHARACTERISTICS  
OF JESUIT COLLEGES AND  
UNIVERSITIES:  
**A SELF-EVALUATION INSTRUMENT**



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# PREFACE

This document is intended to be used by Jesuit universities and colleges in the United States as a tool for self-improvement, particularly with regard to their fulfillment of their Jesuit and Catholic identity. It is the work of a task force created by the AJCU presidents and the Jesuit Conference USA Board (US Jesuit Provincials) when they met together in October 2010. The task force began with a document created at Loyola University Chicago which it then reworked and rewrote.

While this document focuses on the Catholic and Jesuit identity of our schools, it needs to be used in the context of the presupposition that an institution cannot be an excellent Catholic and Jesuit university unless it fulfills its mission to be an excellent university within the American academy, and therefore values highly academic freedom and peer review.

With that as a starting point, the document lists seven characteristics appropriate to Jesuit institutions and gives examples of ways in which each characteristic might be observed in concrete terms. It is understood that these 28 institutions vary considerably in size and scope, in the extent

of graduate and professional programs, as well as relative emphasis given to teaching, research, and service. Therefore, each institution is invited to use the document in whatever manner best fits its circumstances and even to write its own document based on this one, adding or subtracting examples and questions. The authors believe that such a process would be a valuable way to invite campus stakeholders into a fruitful dialogue which could then be shared among the AJCU schools for the benefit of all.

An institution could, for example, choose to use this instrument

- as a basis for a dialogue with its board of trustees about its Catholic and Jesuit mission and identity
- as a springboard for dialogue with the Jesuit provincial superior or the school's local ordinary regarding its Catholic and Jesuit mission and identity
- as a tool in a process of external evaluation.

Above all this is intended to be a living document that schools make their own, a document that is open to rewriting and rethinking as time goes on.

Note that the questions in the document are not implied mandates or litmus tests. That is, a school might have very good reasons for answering “no” to some questions, but that should be an opportunity for healthy

discussion and deeper understanding of its mission and identity. Similarly, the document should not be seen as a scoring mechanism as if there needs to be a certain number of correct answers.

There are tensions and challenges that are part of the context of being firmly rooted in both the American academy and the Catholic and Jesuit world. For each characteristic of the document, tensions and challenges are highlighted.

# PREAMBLE

Jesuit General *Congregation 34* reminds us, “As we look to the future, we need consciously to be on guard that both the noun “university” and the adjective “Jesuit” always remain fully honored” (GC 34, D 17, n. 5). Catholic and Jesuit, descriptors that define us as an institution, are not simply two characteristics among many. Rather, they signify our defining character, what makes us uniquely who we are. As a university our mission is peer reviewed research, research-grounded teaching and teaching as mentoring, and service, all within a climate of academic freedom. As a Jesuit and Catholic university, our primary mission is the education and formation of students in such a way and in order that they may become men and women of faith and of service to their communities. As Father Kolvenbach has said: “The real measure of our Jesuit universities lies in who our students become.”

As a Catholic university, then, we are an important ministry of the Catholic Church. Therefore, we are committed to and guided by the official understanding of a Catholic

university as articulated in the Church’s document *Ex Corde Ecclesiae (From the Heart of the Church)*. We do this within the essential framework of faith and reason which mutually confirm and advance each other.

As a Jesuit University, we continue the Ignatian tradition of “forming men and women for others.” The Jesuit charism, built as it is on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, inspires and gives shape to how we educate, encouraging students to see the hand of God in all things, to discern the “magis,” or the better course of action, to “engage the world through a careful analysis of context, in dialogue with experience evaluated through reflection, for the sake of action, and with openness, always, to evaluation.” (35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, GC35)

We are a Jesuit University also in that we have a clear relationship with the Society of Jesus which is formalized in a written statement (“Statement of Mutual Purpose”) that articulates the mutual commitment and support among the Jesuit community,

The Preamble is based on *The Jesuit Catholic Mission of U.S. Jesuit Colleges and Universities*, approved by the AJCU Board in 2010.

the Provincial Superior of the Jesuits in this region, and the University's Board of Trustees for the support and preservation of the Catholic and Jesuit mission of the institution. The commitment of this institution to the promotion of "a faith that does justice through inter-religious dialogue and a creative engagement with culture" is a shared commitment with the Society of Jesus (GC 35).

As Catholic and Jesuit Universities, then, we are called to affirm this identity and mission in concrete ways and, as much as possible, in all our activities. The following

characteristics reflect particular ways in which the Catholic and Jesuit identity and mission are made manifest. There is no pretense that these characteristics have reached their fullest and most complete expression. Rather, they serve to guide this institution, its leaders, faculty, staff, and students in striving to be more intentional and constructive in ways that promote the Catholic and Jesuit mission. Examples of evidence-based practice are articulated below each characteristic.

As a Catholic and Jesuit institution, then, we seek to demonstrate the following:

Characteristic 1

# LEADERSHIP'S COMMITMENT TO THE MISSION

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**The University's leadership competently communicates and enlivens the Jesuit, Catholic mission of the institution.**

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## Examples of Characteristic 1

### **Mission Articulation:**

**D**oes the mission statement of the University clearly state its Catholic and Jesuit inspiration along with its commitment to teaching, research, and service? Is the University's discussion of its mission and identity both (a) *broad enough* to allow people of good will and diverse religious and philosophical commitments to contribute to the mission and identity of the institution, and to feel valued and respected, and is it (b) *deep enough* to further the maintenance and growth of the Jesuit, Catholic tradition? Are there sufficient numbers of knowledgeable and committed faculty, staff, and administrators to foster and deepen this mission? Finally, do members of the University community periodically discuss the implications of this mission and identity?

### **Board of Trustees:**

Do the bylaws of the University state its mission as a university and its identity as Catholic and Jesuit? Are trustees regularly oriented to the implications of this mission and identity for an academic institution? Are they introduced to the Jesuit charism in higher education as articulated by the Society's congregations and the writings of Superiors General? Are there opportunities

for trustees to grow in their own spiritual development and faith life?

### **University President and Cabinet:**

Does the University seek committed Catholics or those who have a deep familiarity with the Jesuit tradition as well as the traditions and commitments of the academy as its President and—other things being equal—as its vice presidents? Are the President, Chief Academic Officer, and those in charge of student life—and thus responsible for the primary academic mission—able and willing to articulate those key principles which comprise the Catholic and Jesuit identity of the institution? And, are they able to provide guidance consistent with the Church's teachings and Catholic intellectual heritage?

### **Academic Deans:**

Are the University's deans supportive of and familiar with the Jesuit and Catholic mission of the University? That is, can they be competent spokespersons regarding these issues and communicate with relative ease the importance of the University's mission and identity to their faculty, staff, students and external audiences? Do they understand how the Catholic and Jesuit mission might be integrated into the curricular and co-curricular life of their academic

institutions? Do they foster programs within the particular disciplines and professions which support and advance the critical

questions and concerns of the Church and men and women of faith and good will?

#### **Tension 1:**

Our Universities, insofar as they are committed to the standard of “excellence” in higher education, adopt the standards of the academy that value scholarly productivity in highly differentiated fields of study while devaluing an integrative understanding of knowledge that is rooted ultimately in transcendent questions.

#### **Challenge: Personnel.**

Even in those instances where institutions are successful in hiring Catholic leadership, the majority of our lay people come without adequate formation or interest in learning about and implementing the mission beyond humanistic concerns, like “care of the person” or a “commitment to service.” In the absence of a “thick” understanding of the tradition, these good and well-intentioned leaders will be uncertain about how to hire faculty and administrators who explicitly engage the university’s mission and establish and promote programming that links directly to our Jesuit, Catholic identity. How does the institution hope to address this issue?

## Characteristic 2

# THE ACADEMIC LIFE: AN ACADEMIC LIFE THAT REFLECTS THE CATHOLIC AND JESUIT MISSION AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF ITS OVERALL INTELLECTUAL COMMITMENT TO RESEARCH AND TEACHING EXCELLENCE

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The University's academic life and commitments clearly represent the Catholic and Jesuit interest in and commitment to the liberal arts and Christian humanistic education for all students. In addition, academic programs can be found which are distinctively informed by the University's Jesuit and Catholic character, thus contributing to the diversity of higher education in the United States with an education shaped by the service of faith and the promotion of justice.

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## Examples of Characteristic 2

### **Core Curriculum:**

**I**s the core curriculum reflective of the institution's commitment to faith and justice and key values of the institution? Does it offer students an introduction to the world's major intellectual traditions? Does it offer students an introduction to Catholic thought and a similar introduction to the world's major religious traditions? Are the various curricula of the institution designed in such a way that every graduate has achieved at least a basic understanding of what it means to be Catholic and Jesuit? Are these courses taught by faculty who are sympathetic to the material, passionate about teaching undergraduates, and committed to the idea that students are capable of falling in love with life's big questions through the core curriculum?

### **Faculty policies in teaching, research, promotion and tenure:**

Do faculty policies support teaching and research activities that foster a commitment to the development of the whole student? Does the University offer incentives for Catholic and Jesuit-related teaching and research and consider these kinds of interests and commitments in promotion and tenure decisions?

### **Centers and Institutes:**

Are there University centers and institutes that reflect in their foci the Jesuit, Catholic commitment to social justice and other arenas of special concern to the Society of Jesus? Do center activities, programs, and speakers make evident the connections between particular research interests and topics and the Jesuit, Catholic intellectual tradition? Does the university embrace Catholic social teaching in its entirety and avoid the inclination to be selective in its application?

### **Other Catholic Initiatives:**

Are there opportunities including colloquia, speakers, and celebrations, which clearly support and promote the long history and rich texture of Catholic intellectual life, and give witness to the Catholic and Jesuit nature of the institution?

### **Professional Schools:**

Do professional schools within the University share a common commitment to the joining of professional, technical training with personal and moral formation of their students as persons rooted in the Jesuit, Catholic tradition? Are courses offered in the graduate curricula that reflect attention to larger questions of meaning and purpose within the professions? Are the Jesuit and Catholic identity and mission reflected in research and in scholarly and service activities of the faculty of these schools?

**Tension 2:**

Our Universities need to remain competitive with our peer institutions and the demands of our students, both of which suggest a model of education that values pre-professional training and the development of skills aimed at employment.

**Challenge: The Crisis of the Humanities and the Quest to Remain “competitive.”**

Traditional core curricula that focused on grounding students in the Western intellectual tradition through theology, philosophy, literature and history have been adapted and altered to accommodate the need for skill-training and “practical” knowledge at some cost to the breadth and depth of a classical education. This “weakening” of the core curriculum can result in the absence of an impetus to hire the very kind of faculty who bring expertise in the Christian, humanist tradition from various fields into the life of our Universities. Our Universities need to continue to work to achieve an appropriate balance between an education that offers students foundational knowledge in the Western intellectual tradition with the need to offer our students the skills-training and pre-professional programming that our peer institutions offer and the job market requires. How is this addressed?

Characteristic 3

## A CATHOLIC, JESUIT CAMPUS CULTURE

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The University works to foster within its students, faculty, staff, and administrators a virtuous life characterized by personal responsibility, respect, forgiveness, compassion, a habit of reflection and the integration of body, mind, and soul.

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## Examples of Characteristic 3

### **University Ministry and Liturgical Life:**

**D**oes University ministry offer fora for exploring spirituality, faith, and its relationship to service in an intellectually serious way? Does University ministry contribute to the Catholic student body by way of catechetical programming and exploration of the Catholic theological and spiritual traditions, opportunities to make the Spiritual Exercises and other retreats and to participate in service activities? In the event that service activities are handled by an organization apart from Campus Ministry, do the two partner effectively?

### **Building a Culture Committed to Relationality and Responsibility:**

Does the University help to foster a culture for students that draws attention to their actions as moral agents? Does the University assist students in cultivating virtues that will serve them over the course of their lives? Does the University promote a culture that is sensitive to the use of their bodies as moral agents on issues pertaining to sexuality, substance abuse, and health?

Does the University foster a culture that emphasizes responsibility such that students have a sense of stewardship for themselves, each other, their living environments, campus

buildings and property, and the wider community? Does the University think creatively about how to offer an alternative to the “culture of superficiality” with which the Society of Jesus has expressed growing concern? Does the University foster in its students compassion for the poor and marginalized in society?

### **Athletics:**

Does the University provide its students, faculty, and staff with athletic programs and facilities that demonstrate its commitment to development of the whole person? Do the University’s intercollegiate athletic programs demonstrate a culture of respect and character formation? Does the general public recognize in the University’s athletic teams and coaches the values and personal development reflective of its Catholic and Jesuit mission?

### **Community Characterized by Diversity of Thought:**

As articulated by Fr. Nicolas and GC 35, Jesuit universities have a special obligation to work at the “frontiers” of our culture and society. Does the University work at the frontier of hospitality toward those who may feel at odds with particular teachings of our tradition and yet still hunger for communion with the Church, exploration of their faith, and a forum in which to wrestle with some of the difficult cultural questions of our

time? Does the University offer a forum for these questions to be posed that is at once respectful of Church teaching and reflective of the real tensions felt by various members of the University community on these matters? Does the University foster a community of respect in which students can study and employees can work in which they do not feel alienated?

### **Vocational Discernment:**

Does the University create a culture in which students are supported in thinking through important decisions about themselves as people and the career paths and lives of service they will pursue upon graduation? Does the University have programs that provide students with the tools and space to consider seriously the possibility of serving the Church as priests, sisters, brothers, and lay pastoral ministers?

### **Campus Events:**

Does the University sponsor celebrations and colloquia that reflect the mission of the university, such as the *Mass of the Holy Spirit*, various liturgical, religious and civic anniversaries and commemorations?

### **Church Calendar/Academic Calendar:**

Does the University draw upon the cycle of the Church calendar as a way of marking time by creating academic and social events around feast days and other days of significance as a way of promoting an awareness of the time the Catholic faith keeps and its intersection with the life of the University?

**Tension 3:**

Our Universities experience a tension here on two points. First, as universities, we are required to host and moderate open and vigorous debate on contested questions some of which can make Church officials anxious or cause them to presume that we are failing our mission when these questions entail the consideration of issues that are contrary to the Church's teaching. Second, as Catholic and Jesuit, we struggle to maintain a vibrant identity in the face of increasingly uncatechised Catholics and increasing religious and moral diversity on our campuses.

**Challenge: Secularization and Communication.**

Given the increasing number of students who are unfamiliar with their own tradition, plus the increasing religious and moral diversity of our campuses, how ought we to consider what a vibrant Catholic culture might look like? Moreover, this will be done in the context of a predominantly secular, intellectual community that is reluctant about and, sometimes, resistant to the very idea of a "Catholic culture." In the absence of a shared vision of human flourishing, our Universities struggle to communicate a Christian, anthropological vision. In order to avoid employing a loose language of "ethics," "values," and "personal calling" that are disconnected from the philosophical and theological traditions that gave them meaning, what do we do to build a more coherent and vibrant Catholic moral vision and ethic?

## Characteristic 4

# SERVICE

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The University as an institution and all of its various parts seeks to insert itself in the world on the side of the poor, the marginalized, and those seeking justice. It does this in particular by using its academic and professional resources.

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## Examples of Characteristic 4

### **Solidarity:**

**A**re the University's service workers treated with respect and made to feel at home on campus and welcome at University events? Are the poor and marginalized made to feel at home on campus? Do those engaged in service trips learn the local language (for longer trips) and spend time living with and working alongside those they serve? Do participants come away with the ability to see the world through the eyes of those they serve? Do participants find that they gain from the communities with whom they serve in ways consonant with how those communities feel they have gained from the participants?

### **Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm:**

Is service learning integrated into the curriculum? Are there enough service learning opportunities to reach all students? Are faculty members, campus ministers, and student development professionals trained to lead students through reflection? Is there evidence that the University is able to utilize and promote the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm which stresses experience, reflection and action, with special attention to the needs and plight of the poor, those suffering and those who are marginalized? Are there special programs utilizing an engaged pedagogy

(immersions, service learning, volunteer programs, internships, etc.) that are marked by the Jesuit concern for the service of faith and the promotion of justice?

### **Community Outreach:**

Does the University work to be a good neighbor to its local communities and constituencies as well as to the countries and communities that host its study abroad programs? Does it offer itself as a resource for education, cultural outreach, community growth, and discussion of matters of interest to the Church and beyond, and the fostering of community growth?

#### **Tension 4:**

The integration of service as a necessary component of education can be perceived as antithetical to a model of education that sees the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake or for the personal advancement of the learner as sufficient and complete ends. As Jesuit and Catholic institutions we must also consider how our universities function to not only serve the elite but be a resource to the wider human community.

#### **Challenge: “Service and Justice” Excised from Their Originating Narrative.**

Every university in the United States will espouse the value of service because the gathering of a cohort of intelligent and idealistic young people yields this result. They will often do so as a kind of “extra-curricular” component of one’s education. The Jesuit, Catholic university’s challenge is to explore and reveal this appropriate and natural impulse to “do the good” as rooted within the inspiring Christian narrative from which the Jesuit, Catholic university finds its meaning and purpose. The tradition itself, then, offers a distinct interpretation of what terms like “service” and “justice” mean and require of us as a human community. How has this institution employed and embedded this understanding of service?

## Characteristic 5

# SERVICE TO THE LOCAL CHURCH

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The University offers educational and formational programs and resources that build up the local Church; in union with the local Church, it also provides a locus where people of faith can wrestle with difficult questions facing the Church and the world.

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## Examples of Characteristic 5

### Programs and Resources:

**D**oes the institution educate and form an adult Catholic laity? Does it educate first-generation immigrant populations, Catholic and non-Catholic? Does the research and scholarly activity of our faculty foster dialogue between faith and culture? Does the University provide a forum for addressing issues important to the Church and society? Does it make accessible to the Church and society scholarly and educational resources? Does it support ecumenical dialogue and reach men and women who might not otherwise encounter the Church's message of hope?

### Relationship with Local Ordinary:

Are there open lines of communication between the president of the University and the local ordinary? Are there regular opportunities for the theology or religious studies department to engage in constructive dialogue with the local ordinary? Is the local ordinary not a stranger, but welcomed on campus? Are there campus events that encourage engagement and dialogue between the ordinary and various campus groups?

### Preparation of the next generation of Catholic intellectual leaders:

Does the University offer solid undergraduate and graduate programs that engage and prepare theologians, philosophers, and scholars in the Catholic intellectual tradition?

#### Tension 5:

The Church has an interest in opportunities not only for catechesis but also in ministerial and theological training. This brings the Church and the Catholic, Jesuit University into conversation concerning how best to do this in the context of an open debate on contested questions while maintaining fidelity to Church teaching.

#### Challenge: Mutual Witness and Mutual Misunderstanding of "Academic Freedom."

The deep divisions and disaffection that mark the Catholic Church in the United States are also present within the students and apostolic partners of Jesuit universities. This has had a corrosive effect on our mission insofar as it has damaged the moral voice and integrity of the Church and the Society of Jesus and their institutions. As Pope Benedict pointed out to the U.S. Bishops in Rome (Nov. 26, 2011), we as a University community need to offer examples of Christian, Catholic witness to our colleagues and students. The presence of faculty who demonstrate in their very lives the vitality of the mutually informing dynamic between faith and reason remains a necessity for Christian, intellectual witness. There is, at times, mutual misunderstanding between some bishops and some universities on what "academic freedom" rightly requires of Jesuit, Catholic universities. How successfully has this institution managed to build bridges and foster mutual understanding in this realm?

Characteristic 6

## JESUIT PRESENCE

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The University values the presence, work, and witness of Jesuits on its campuses with its students, colleagues, and alumni.

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## Examples of Characteristic 6

### **Jesuits Active in the University as Faculty, Administrators, Campus Leaders and Campus Ministers:**

**D**oes the University do all in its power to maintain a strong cohort of Jesuits who are capable of playing a public role in the life of the university both formally and informally?

### **Relationship with the Society of Jesus at the local, regional, national, and international levels:**

Does the University do what it can to ensure a vibrant and hospitable Jesuit Community

on campus? Are there open lines of communication between the Jesuit provincial superior and the University? And its board of trustees? Does the University participate actively in the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities and its various conferences? Does the University collaborate with other Jesuit institutions throughout the world?

### **Vocation Promotion:**

While encouraging vocational discernment for all students, does the University ensure that there are programs to promote vocations to the Society of Jesus?

#### **Tension 6:**

Jesuit, Catholic universities have benefited from the corporate investment of the Society of Jesus. In most cases, Jesuit Universities want to maintain and augment a strong Jesuit presence. However, there remains a significant and growing need to form and hire a better educated laity who can assist in leadership roles that will preserve the identity and mission of the institutions as Jesuit.

#### **Challenge: Lay Formation and the Need for a Prophetic Call from the Society of Jesus.**

As the number of Jesuits continues to decline on our campuses, we have inadequately trained lay persons in the spiritual tradition of the Society of Jesus. We need to better promote the Spiritual Exercises as a resource for maintaining the spirit and character of our Universities. Moreover, we need to hire persons interested in and capable of doing the Exercises. Both a more intentional and direct engagement by the Society of Jesus in substantive formation of lay leadership and a prophetic call from the Society itself for lay leadership to recognize the importance of the Catholic, Jesuit character of their universities in an unapologetic and inspiring way are required. How has the institution prepared for and fostered lay leadership and Jesuit-lay collaboration?

Characteristic 7  
**INTEGRITY**

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**University Management and  
Administration reflect its mission and identity.**

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## Examples of Characteristic 7

### Human Resource Policies that demonstrate a commitment to mission:

**D**oes the university offer compensation and benefits which demonstrate a commitment to fairness, equity and the well-being of the employee? Does the university demonstrate a commitment to fairness in promotion practices, and to gender, racial and ethnic equal opportunity? Does the University insure a just wage for its employees with particular concern given to those earning the least within the University structure?

### Formation for Mission and Leadership:

Does the University offer programs on Jesuit history, mission, and pedagogy? Does the University, on its own and in cooperation with others, offer a robust program in the *Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life (18th and 19th Annotations)* for faculty, staff, and administrators such that a core contingent of faculty, staff and administrators have a deep familiarity with Ignatian spirituality and become carriers of this tradition? Does the University work to create opportunities for professional development and advancement for its employees?

### Hiring Practices that demonstrate a commitment to mission:

Does the University approach its hiring and recruitment with the intention of preserving and augmenting its Jesuit, Catholic mission across the institution? Is mission-specific language included in job postings that signals the Catholic and Jesuit mission and identity of the institution? Does the University seek to recruit faculty and staff who are willing and able to augment and support the mission and identity of the institution? Are search committees and department chairs able to engage prospective hires in a substantive way regarding the institution's Jesuit and Catholic mission? Are candidates offered materials which clearly state the guiding principles and philosophy of the institution? Does the University actively recruit for mission-oriented hires? Are resources available to identify and target future mission-oriented hires? Do Deans, Department Chairs, Managers and Directors share a commitment to the importance of hiring for mission such that their faculties are aware of its importance for the well-being of the school and, therefore, are supportive of these interests?

**Financial Management that gives evidence of a commitment to mission:**

Does the University's financial management include ethical discernment in its choices of business partners, investment strategies, and deployment of resources shaped by the Catholic Social Tradition and the Jesuit commitment to social justice?

**Physical Resource Management that gives evidence of a commitment to mission:**

Does the university consider and communicate its noteworthy and exemplary commitment to environmental sustainability

in campus development as it directly relates to the Jesuit and Catholic mission? Does the University communicate through art, architecture, and landscape an attention to the transcendent in the campus environment? Are spaces for prayer and quiet reflection--both formal and informal--across the University's campuses? Does the campus environment promote community, conversation, and collegiality rooted in the Catholic commitment to the social nature of the human person?

**Tension 7:**

Across Jesuit, Catholic institutions, there is a desire to welcome and incorporate people of diverse religious tradition and no faith tradition. This noble goal of being a place of welcome that values diversity poses challenges to the creation and maintenance of a strong sense of Jesuit and Catholic community and identity.

**Challenge: A Diverse Faculty and Staff Committed to the University's Mission.**

Traditions, whether of faith or intellect, live in people. Our Universities find it increasingly difficult to say that the life of a Jesuit, Catholic university, in part, depends upon our hiring a significant number of gifted, Catholic faculty and administrators who are conversant in and believing members of the tradition. In a cultural moment where a concern for diversity and multi-culturalism has become a preeminent value and where organized religion is at times dismissed as intellectually unsophisticated, we find it hard to communicate the importance of maintaining a vibrant Catholicity. What actions, symbolic and practical, has the institution taken to address the challenge of fostering unity in mission amid diversity in background and gifts?



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