**Forming for Mission: Scranton’s First Year Ignatian Faculty Program**

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It seems to me that the issue of “hiring for mission” is a neuralgic one at Jesuit colleges and universities. As the number of Jesuits on our campuses continues to decrease, the onus of passing on the foundational principles of Jesuit education is increasingly incumbent on the intentional work of dedicated administrators, faculty and staff. Given this current reality, how do we engage those we hire and form them in the great educational tradition that has been entrusted to us?

Even as my teaching career continued to flourish, I knew I needed to gain a deeper understanding of our foundational Ignatian principles if I was going to be truly effective in helping my students answer the most profound questions about our world and their lives. I needed a different modo de proceder or “way of proceeding” if I hoped to effectively pass on to my students the rich Jesuit educational tradition that was given to me.

My own understanding of Ignatian principles and ideals has been greatly enhanced through my formation in the Ignatian Colleagues Program (ICP). The ICP is a “national program of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) designed to educate and form administrators and faculty more deeply in the Jesuit and Catholic tradition of higher education. The goal of [the] program is to provide a solid intellectual foundation as well as opportunities for participants to personally experience and appropriate their significance so they may better articulate, adapt, and advance the Jesuit and Catholic mission of their campuses.”

As I began my ICP journey, I had some practical concerns about the eighteen-month time commitment and the travel required of all participants. What inspires me about ICP is that, while there have been logistical challenges (everything from making sure to thank my wife for agreeing to parent solo for some of my extended trips to figuring out how to cover a few classes), those challenges pale in comparison to the depth of understanding the program has brought to my sense of what it means to be a part of the Catholic and Jesuit education tradition.

A number of my ICP experiences have shaped my understanding of Jesuit education as well as the way I approach my specific academic discipline in the classroom. My experience in the ICP Nicaragua Immersion Project is a good case in point. Meeting with faculty and staff at the Universidad Centroamericana de Nicaragua (UCA) helped me to gain a new understanding and appreciation about what it means to be a part of the global network of Jesuit colleges and universities. In particular, our conversation with Rev. Jose Idiáquez, S.J. the University’s rector, demonstrated the power of the Jesuit model of higher education to be a constant source of support in challenging circumstances. Simply put, what inspires me about ICP is the opportunity to be reminded that Jesuit higher education is a personal gift to me and foundational to the way I want to engage my students and colleagues back on campus at the University of Scranton.

**Capstone: Bringing the Gift Home**

Every participant in ICP is asked to complete a Capstone Project back on their campus that “provides an opportunity for colleagues to integrate what they have learned in the program and apply it to their work as responsible co-workers and companions in mission.” As I discerned my Capstone Project, I was inspired by the example of my cohort colleagues to develop a deeper understanding of the Catholic and Jesuit ideals that are at the heart of our common educational mission. I also knew that I wanted to make my Capstone Project something that would be transformational to my colleagues at Scranton.

As I discerned my modo de proceder, I came to realize the importance of allowing myself to be formed in the Ignatian educational tradition. As my discernment continued, I began to meditate on my own experience as a first-year faculty member and how my understanding of Ignatian educational principles was sorely underdeveloped at the time. In the end, it seemed to me that there could be real value in offering new faculty a similar opportunity to the one I was experiencing in ICP so that they would have a deeper understanding of these foundational principles to encourage and buoy their research and teaching. With this in mind, I approached my colleagues in Scranton’s Mission Office with the idea of putting together a program that would form first-year faculty members in the foundational principles of Jesuit education.

The First-Year Faculty Seminar is a year-long program that is intended to help new faculty understand all of the opportunities that are available to them at the University of Scranton, and to help them develop a deeper understanding of how those opportunities fit into the model of Catholic and Jesuit education.

Some of the items addressed in our monthly meetings include:

*Each participant will be able to articulate what it means to be teaching at a Catholic and Jesuit university.*

*New faculty members will receive help incorporating mission components into their annual self-report.*

*New faculty members will develop and understand the history of St. Ignatius Loyola, the spirituality at the root of Ignatius’ vision for education, the history of the Society of Jesus, and the historical development of Jesuit higher education.*

*Participation will build community among the members of the entrance cohort and among the senior faculty and administration who will engage the cohort throughout the year.*

I am convinced that Jesuit educational principles can help people understand the world, and themselves, better. For me, the opportunity to teach at a Catholic and Jesuit university has enriched my life personally and professionally. Personally, I’ve become more profoundly aware of God’s spirit laboring in my daily life and in the life of the University of Scranton. Professionally, I’ve learned how to incorporate Ignatian educational principles into my coursework so that the students I teach can be made aware of the foundational properties that give life to all of our Jesuit colleges and universities.

Simply put, I want to help my new colleagues on campus find their own modo de proceder as they begin their careers here at the University of Scranton. May they be inspired, just as I have been, by the animating and ancient spirit of our Ignatian educational tradition.