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## STUDENT VOICES

# A Call for Prophetic Jesuit Leadership

By Sarah Hansman

For two decades, Fr. Michael Himes has welcomed generations of incoming freshmen at orientation with his explanation of what makes Boston College and their impending Jesuit education so meaningful. “The measure of the success of your education,” Himes intones with conviction, “is the measure to which people who *never got* to come to Boston College lead richer, fuller, and more genuinely human lives because *you did* go to Boston College.” Father Himes emphasizes the importance of giving away one’s education – the critical-thinking skills, the acquired talents, the lived experiences – to those who were not privileged with such an opportunity. Former Superior General of the Jesuits Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., argues that at the heart of the Society of Jesus, and subsequently of every Jesuit institution, is “the service of faith” and “the promotion of justice.” Jesuit schools at their best produce dynamic students equipped with both the skills to excel and the conscience to do so ethically. More important, they produce students who are eager to share their education with those in need. Jesuit graduates are commissioned to use their education to create a more just, more compassionate society.

But shaping men and women to enact positive change once they leave campus is not enough. In a position of such immense power and influence, the Jesuit university, specifically university officials, has the task to speak prophetically on issues of social justice. This duty emerges from the core of the Catholic faith, from St. Ignatius’ founding of an order that actively promotes justice, and further back from the gospel itself and the call by Jesus to care for the least among us. Jesuit leadership must model and practice the values they preach. In such a divisive time, this is difficult to do. But for the same reason that it is difficult, it is equally important.

As a senior at BC, there are areas in which I am proud of the administration’s commitment to the “promotion of justice.” Service-learning courses such as PULSE and immersion trips both domestic and international reflect the heart of this mission. However, there have been moments in which I felt that the university fell short in opportunities to reject inequity

**“The real measure of our Jesuit universities lies in who our students become.”**

*-Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.*

and speak out on behalf of the marginalized. For example, there is a lack of space to facilitate and hold conversations or rallies around pressing social issues. Often, it isn’t what the university says and does, but rather what the university *fails* to say, *fails* to do. It is the silence that hurts the most. And in historically divisive times like the one we are living through now, that silence is resounding.

This is not to oversimplify; before condemning administrative silence as cold, students must recognize the intensely competitive, ever-changing world of higher education. Running a top tier university is incredibly difficult and involves a number of moving pieces and unique goals. But if money, prestige, and reputation are taking precedence over combatting injustice in all its forms, I urge our Jesuit universities to reconsider their priorities.

Father Kolvenbach writes, “The real measure of our Jesuit universities lies in who our students become.” If BC expects its students to work for a more just and compassionate society, university leadership must first model that passion for justice. Boston College is a place we come from; and I hope that when my class graduates this spring, we leave with a greater call to strike through the silence and speak out against injustice and, as St. Ignatius said, to set the world aflame.

*Originally from Duxbury, Mass, Sarah Hansman is a senior at Boston College studying theology and higher education. With a passion the Jesuit education, Sarah plans to do a post-grad year of service and then get an M.A. in theology and ministry.*