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David J. Burns

Xavier University - Cincinnati

Debra K. Mooney

Xavier University - Cincinnati, mooney@xavier.edu

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FACILITATING INTEGRATING MISSION INTO THE CLASSROOM: XAVIER'S MISSION ACADEMY

David J. Burns, Xavier University
Debra K. Mooney, Xavier University

Large organizations are comprised of multitudes of heterogeneous individuals – individuals who may often possess very different ideas as to the appropriate purpose of the organization. The needed focus of individuals in upper management, then, is to bring all members of the organization together to pursue a single agenda. One tool at their disposal is the development and implementation of an organizational mission.

Given the semi-independent nature of many positions in higher education, the necessity to establish a clear vision may be particularly important in those institutions. Faculty members, for instance, are well-known for their independent-streak. Indeed, faculty members often view allegiance to their disciplines as being more important than allegiance to their home institutions. Faculty members, however, are on the front line of the implementation of a college or university's mission by the nature of their direct involvement in providing the institutions' primary service – education. It is critical, therefore, for institutions of higher education to spend the time and effort necessary to ensure that faculty members understand and embrace their institutions' missions.

The focus of this paper is to examine the efforts undertaken by one institution to communicate its mission to its faculty members and to gain their buy-in. First, the role and importance of an organization's mission is detailed. Second, the programs pursued by one university to gain the buy-in of faculty members will be examined with particular attention placed on a new program focusing on senior faculty members (Xavier Mission Academy). Finally, the applicability of similar programs at other Catholic colleges and universities will be explored.

Mission

An organization's mission articulates the reason for its existence and its ultimate purpose. As such, it provides a way for an organization to differentiate itself from other similar organizations by providing a delineation of an organization's distinctiveness. An organization's mission does not only provide for an identification of the "big picture," but it also provides a means to support a consistent sense of direction and provides a basis to guide decision making. Indeed, all of the decisions made within an organization should be consistent with the organization's mission.

A mission, therefore, fulfills several objectives. First, a mission sets the direction to be pursued by an organization. Second, a mission provides guidelines to facilitate mission-directed activity. Finally, a mission provides an anchor during times of change, such as is characteristic of higher education at the present time. Indeed, as they are experiencing increasing pressures (e.g., growing competition, decreasing funding, greater demands for accountability, consumer mentality in students), colleges and universities are facing intensifying demands to respond in

ways which may not be consistent with their missions. The multiplicity of activities and functions undertaken by many colleges and universities today makes it increasingly difficult for their leaders to determine the activities which are truly important to the long-term health of their institutions. A clear mission which is communicated and supported across an organization has the potential to maintain an organization's focus during times of rapid change.

When the missions of institutions of higher education are examined, it quickly becomes apparent that nearly all institutions of higher education report a mission including teaching, research, and service (Peck and Stick 2008). How do Catholic universities differ from the thousands of other institutions of higher education? This seems to be a very important question. As private institutions, students attending Catholic universities and their families pay tuitions significantly higher than those charged by most state institutions. Catholic universities, therefore, must provide clear and enticing reasons to warrant the additional expenditure.

Many agree suggest that Catholic universities provide a education which differs from that offered by their state-supported competitors. Buckley, for instance, suggests that Catholic universities offer a much broader education than state universities by adding "a full-faith experience moving towards intelligence and of finite intelligence moving towards its satisfaction in transcendent completion" (1998, 16). Furthermore, the Synod of Bishops state

Education demands a renewal of heart, a renewal based on the recognition of sin in its individual and social manifestations. It will also inculcate a truly and entirely human way of life in justice, love and simplicity. It will likewise awaken a critical sense, which will lead us to reflect on the society in which we live and on its values; it will make people ready to renounce these values when they cease to promote justice for all people (Synod of Bishops 2010, 304).

The missions of Catholic institutions of higher education, therefore, appear to be much broader than those of their public counterparts. The same is true for the missions of Jesuit Catholic institutions. Mitchell (2008), for instance, identifies five traits of a Jesuit education, which include a passion for quality, a study of humanities and social sciences regardless of majors pursued, a preoccupation on ethics and values, importance given to religious experience, and a person-centeredness. Kolvenbach suggests that the key difference involves a focus on justice with the key mission of Jesuit education consisting of educating "the whole person" intellectually and professionally, psychologically, morally, and spiritually" (2008, 155). Similarly, Xavier University summarizes its distinctiveness by identifying five gifts of their Ignatian heritage (mission (the centrality of academic excellence), reflection, discernment, solidarity and kinship, and service rooted in justice and love).

Although the function of a college or university's mission is to establish a sense of purpose and provide guidance in all areas, truly integrating an institution's mission into its decision making is often easier said than done. Even colleges and universities which possess clear and distinct missions often have difficult times remaining faithful to their missions in today's challenge-filled environment. A key to the successful implementation of a mission is the extent to which it is communicated and acted upon by members of the organization.

The additional complexity of the missions of Catholic universities complicates the process of communicating the mission in a way that the members of their university communities, particularly faculty members, understand and act upon it. Consequently, there is often a need for Catholic universities to focus additional time and effort in educating faculty members in their missions. The focus of this paper is to explore a program implemented at a Jesuit university to build an understanding of the mission of the institution among senior members and to build tools to enable them to better integrate mission into their activities. First, existing programs at the university will be reviewed.

Background

In 2004-5, after receiving a Lilly Fellows Program Mentoring Grant, Xavier's Ignatian Programs inaugurated its Ignatian Mentoring Program (IMP). The IMP was developed to acclimate and educate new faculty members (in their second-year at Xavier) to the mission of Xavier University and to provide the resources and the encouragement to carry out their teaching and scholarly work in a mission-focused manner. Given the success of the program, the program has been maintained through the support of the Xavier Jesuit community.

In addition to becoming knowledgeable about the mission of the University, IMP participants are required to explicitly demonstrate the changes which they have made to one of their courses to integrate the mission into their pedagogy/content as a consequence of the program. So far, 62 faculty pairs have been shaped by this mentoring relationship in lasting ways. The IMP has proven to be successful in building enthusiasm for Xavier's mission and has produced a lasting effect on faculty members' teaching and research. Consequently, the IMP has been recognized nationally as a model mission-integration program for faculty and spotlighted at regional and national conferences and periodicals. The book, *Teaching to the Mission*, was produced to highlight and disseminate the work of IMP participants. (The contents of *Teaching to the Mission* is also available online at Xavier's Mission and Identity site at <http://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/>).

In 2009-2010, after receiving another Lilly Fellows Program Mentoring Grant, Xavier's Ignatian Programs inaugurated its Time to Think (TTT) program. The TTT provides a peer-mentoring program for faculty in their fifth through eighth year at Xavier University. The program was developed to address the fragmentation inherent in an early academic career that may keep faculty members from more deliberate and systematic reflection and conversation about their emerging professional identities and how they relate to the University's mission and identity. The TTT program provides the framework for faculty members to form one-on-one peer relationships to reflect on Ignatian principles that can feed faculty as teachers, scholars and whole persons.

Although the above mission activities which focus on relatively new faculty members have had a profound effect on the mission-oriented culture at Xavier University, a group of faculty members who have not received the same level of attention has been senior faculty members (defined as faculty members who have been at the University for over a decade). These individuals are a matter of concern since mission played a negligible role in the life of most faculty members at Xavier University at the time that most senior members were originally hired. At that time,

minimal attempts were made to provide faculty members with education on the mission or to encourage them to actively integrate mission into their classrooms. Issues relating to the mission of the institution were assumed to be addressed by the Jesuits on campus. Since that time, however, the number of Jesuits teaching on campus has declined significantly so that there are only two Jesuits teaching full-time at the present time. The integration of the mission into university undertakings has since been left primarily in the hands of non-Jesuit (and often non-Catholic) faculty members. Given their lack of past development opportunities, many senior faculty members do not possess the knowledge or skills to optimally integrate mission into their activities. Consequently, many senior faculty members are not as knowledgeable of the mission as are junior faculty members. The focus of the Xavier Mission Academy (XMA) program is to address this weakness.

Xavier Mission Academy

The Xavier Mission Academy was funded in part by a Lilly Fellows small grant and was developed as a year-long activity to build the knowledge of middle and latter career faculty members in the Jesuit mission and to encourage them to integrate the university's mission into their academic activities. The structure of the XMA is similar to other existing "academies" on campus (diversity, information fluency, and engaged learning). The focus of the XMA is to provide participants with a realization of the importance of the mission, a working knowledge of the mission, and the tools needed to best integrate mission into their classes. Given that senior faculty members possess significant teaching experience and are very knowledgeable about their disciplines, the academy focused on building upon this knowledge and providing participants with the tools to integrate mission into their classes in a positive way. The program was voluntary. After one member dropped out due to excessive time commitments, eight faculty members (and the group director) completed the academy. Three of the participants were faculty members from the college of business as was the director. The remainder of the participants were roughly equally distributed between the traditional arts and sciences areas and other professional programs.

The XMA was a year-long process comprised of 6 meetings. The meetings were scheduled monthly during the school year. Each meeting, with the exception of the final meeting, consisted of lecture, discussing readings, and completing/discussing exercises developed to address the issues discussed. The agenda is included in Appendix A.

Outcomes and Assessment

The primary goal of the XMA is to increase the mission consciousness of senior faculty members. The XMA was assessed by the quality of the mission-centric focus implemented by participants into their courses – to what degree did the pedagogical/content change directly affect the education received by students? Participants were required to develop and implement a mission-centric focus in at least one of their classes and to aid and encourage other XMA participants in the redevelopment of their courses. As a consequence of participating in the academy, each participant prepared and presented a poster at Xavier's Celebration of Excellence detailing how participation in the academy has affected their teaching activities. (The posters are being retained for future use). Selected examples are included in Appendix B. Participants were

also required to submit a written component to be included in *Teaching to the Mission*, a Xavier University publication which enables dissemination of participants' work across the Xavier campus and to other private institutions of higher learning for use by the entire Xavier community and beyond. The written components will also be posted on the Xavier Mission and Identity website (<http://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/>).

The experience of participating in the XMA appeared to be beneficial to those participating. Some quotes from XMA participants include:

“Faculty enter the Academy thinking that there will be long relaxing afternoons of serious discussions of important issues with colleagues. The reality is that between class preparation, grading, research projects, and committee obligations, time for such deliberations rarely exists. One great aspect of the Mission Academy is that it carves out of one's busy schedule the opportunity to sit down with colleagues from across the institution for serious discussion of some of the Big Issues facing Xavier. It is great time that is well spent!”

“The Mission Academy provided me with an intellectually conducive venue for collectively deliberating on creative and workable ways of integrating the university mission into the content and format of Xavier classrooms.”

“Throughout my participation in the Mission Academy, I was able to identify and address not only a range of conceptual aspects relevant to mission integration, but also a great spectrum of practical ways in which mission integration can be made possible.

The Mission Academy debunked a range of myths and misconceptions with regard to mission integration.

The Mission Academy unveiled ways of integrating the university mission into the classrooms without having to compromise on the format and scope of curricula.”

“Having an opportunity to understand the Ignatian mission at a deeper level has motivated me to reevaluate the courses I teach. In business, quite often we consider meeting the mission is including the teaching of ethical behavior, but the academy has helped me focus on other areas of the mission such as critical thinking and men and women for others. As a result of a recent meeting I have designed a new module in my MIS course which involves a discussion of the Digital Divide and how we might reduce this division. I have also included regular Reflection Exercises in all my courses since I have realized that through reflection an experience can have lasting meaning.”

“As a professor in the physical sciences I could not -- on my own-- find a way to integrate Ignatian principles into my classroom in an explicit way. Fortunately, the Mission Academy has provided me a forum to engage in deep, rich conversations with colleagues from all three colleges at Xavier. Through these conversation I have been challenged, encouraged, and – most importantly – equipped to accomplish the goal of mission integration.”

“There is a difference between morals and ethics. Ethics are values agreed upon by a group (framework unspecified). Morals are a set of values derived from the stories/fables/etc. that come out of a spiritual tradition. Jewish morals are, by definition, different from Islamic morals (though there is a lot of overlap) which are different from Christian (dare I lump all varieties into one bucket?) morals.

I think this is something that differentiates a Xavier from a state school. At Xavier one is free (encouraged) to examine issues not only from various ethical (and legal) frameworks, but from moral frameworks as well. I think that if one incorporates some aspect of any moral framework into a course (outside of a theology or philosophy course) then to my (current) thinking one is doing Mission.

As a Jesuit school we are not blind to moral frameworks (as a state schools ostensibly are), nor should we be limited to a single moral framework.”

Applicability to Other Catholic Colleges and Universities

Although the XMA is specifically directed toward faculty members at a Jesuit university, most Catholic colleges and universities are facing conditions very similar to those faced by Xavier University. First, as previously discussed, virtually all Catholic institutions can be expected to possess missions which are more complex than their state-supported counterparts. Second, many Catholic colleges and universities have traditionally relied upon numbers of religious orders with which they are associated to provide a significant portion of the full-time faculty teaching. Similar to the situation at Xavier University, however, most Catholic institutions of higher education have been forced to rely more and more on non-religious and non-Catholic individuals as faculty members. Most Catholic colleges and universities face a situation very similar to that of Xavier University, resulting in a comparable need to communicate mission and to build buy-in from faculty members.

Given the Jesuit nature of Xavier University, the XMA was developed to impart the Jesuit mission of the institution as is reflected in the readings which formed a basis for the program. The program, however, can be easily adapted to Catholic colleges and universities sponsored by differing orders. Although each order possesses its own primary emphasis, each can easily be adapted to the framework of an “academy.” A key is to provide opportunities for participants to discuss and wrestle with the nuances of the institution’s particular mission. Faculty members cannot only be informed of the mission of the institution, but they must be given the opportunity to become personally involved with the mission.

References

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Currie, Charles L. 2011. “Pursuing Jesuit, Catholic Identity and Mission at U.S. Jesuit Colleges and Universities.” *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 14: 346-357.

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- Mitchell, Robert A. 2008. "Five Traits of Jesuit Education," In *A Jesuit Education Reader: Contemporary Writings on the Jesuit Mission in Education, Principles, the Issues of Catholic Identity, Practical Applications of the Ignatian Way, and More*, edited by George W. Traub, ed., 111-112. Chicago: Loyola Press.
- Peck, Kirk and Sheldon Stick. 2008. "Catholic and Jesuit Education in Higher Education." *Christian Higher Education* 7: 200-225.
- Synod of Bishops. 2010. "Justice in the World." In *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, edited by David J. O'Brien and Thomas A Shannon, 304-318. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books.

Appendix A

Xavier Mission Academy Agenda

Meeting 1 (September 21, 2012) What is the need for mission integration? (Without a Vision, the People Perish (Prov 29:18 NIV)

Preparatory Reading:

- 1) The mission of Xavier University (<http://www.xavier.edu/mission-identity/heritage-tradition/Xaviers-Mission-Statement1.cfm>).
- 2) Douglass, Bruce (2000), "Centered Pluralism: A Report of a Faculty seminar on the Jesuit and Catholic Identity of Georgetown University, in *Enhancing Religious Identity: Best Practices from Catholic Campuses*, John Wilcox and Irene King, eds. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 69-90. (Focus attention on items paragraphs 54-61, pp. 83-84).

Other resources:

- 1) <http://www.xavier.edu/mission-identity/>
- 2) Gleason, Philip (1992), "American Catholic Higher Education, 1940-1990: The Ideological Context," in *The Secularization of the Academy*, George M. Marsden and Bradley J. Longfield, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 234-258.
- 3) Kolvenbach, Peter-Hans (2008), "The Service of Faith in a Religiously Pluralistic World: The Challenge for Jesuit Higher Education," in *A Jesuit Education Reader*, George W. Traub, ed. Chicago: Loyola Press, 163-176.

Abbreviated Agenda:

- 1) Introduction.
- 2) The role of mission in organizations.
- 3) What is Xavier's mission?
- 4) Xavier mission and religious pluralism.

Meeting 2 (October 19, 2012) – Recognizing and overcoming the barriers to mission integration.

Preparatory reading:

Erickson, Suzanne M. (2008), "Prescis of Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach," in *A Jesuit Education Reader*, George W. Traub, ed. Chicago: Loyola Press, 362-365.

Abbreviated Agenda:

- 1) Reflection on Day 1
- 2) What is integration?
- 3) Integration concerns.

Meeting 3 (November 16, 2012) – What do we want to achieve: How does mission relate to our disciplines?

Preparatory reading:

McCormick, Richard A. (2000), "What is a Great Catholic University?" in *Enhancing*

Religious Identity: Best Practices from Catholic Campuses, John Wilcox and Irene King, eds. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 4-11.

Other resources:

- 1) Castellano, Joseph F. and Victor Forlani (2008), "An Emerging Model of Business: Enterprise and Catholic Social Teaching," *Journal of Catholic Higher Education*, 27 (1), 65-81.
- 2) Boston College Jesuit Community (2008), "Jesuits and Jesuit Education: A Primer," in *A Jesuit Education Reader*, George W. Traub, ed. Chicago: Loyola Press, 38-42.

Abbreviated Agenda:

- 1) Reflection on Day 2.
- 2) Contrast "discovering and applying truth" with simple conveyance of information.
- 3) Mission-Learning Pyramid.

Meeting 4 (January 25, 2012) – Fundamental elements of mission integration.

Preparatory reading:

- 1) Newton, Robert W. (2008), "Reflections on the Educational Principles of the Spiritual Exercises: Summary Conclusion and Questions for Teachers," in *A Jesuit Education Reader*, George W. Traub, ed. Chicago: Loyola Press, 274-279.
- 2) Korth, Sharon J. (2008), "Prescis of Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach," in *A Jesuit Education Reader*, George W. Traub, ed. Chicago: Loyola Press, 280-284.
- 3) Palmer, Parker (2008), "The Heart of a Teacher: Identity and Integrity in Teaching," in *A Jesuit Education Reader*, George W. Traub, ed. Chicago: Loyola Press, 311-331.

Other resources:

Gray, Howard (2008), "The Experience of Ignatius Loyola: Background to Jesuit Education," in *A Jesuit Education Reader*, George W. Traub, ed. Chicago: Loyola Press, 63-86.

Abbreviated Agenda:

- 1) Reflection on Day 3
- 2) Different perspective on mission integration.
- 3) A definition of mission integration.
- 4) Mission integration principles.

Meeting 5 (February 22, 2012) – Available approaches to mission integration.

Preparatory reading:

- 1) Bennett, John B. and Elizabeth A. Dreyer (2008), "Spiritualities of – Not at – the University," in *A Jesuit Education Reader*, George W. Traub, ed. Chicago: Loyola Press, 113-132.
- 2) Nicolas, Aldo (2010), "Depth, Universality, and Learned Ministry: Challenges to Jesuit Education Today," April, 1-13.

Other resources:

Tucker, Trileigh (2008), “Just Science: Reflections on Teaching Science at Jesuit Universities,” in *A Jesuit Education Reader*, George W. Traub, ed. Chicago: Loyola Press, 347-458.

Abbreviated Agenda:

- 1) Reflection on Day 4
- 2) Stages of Integration.
- 3) Globalization strategies identified by Aldolfo Nicolas.

Meeting 6 (March 21, 2012) – Participant presentations of proposed personal mission integration.

Celebration of Excellence (April 3, 2012) – Poster Presentation

Appendix B Poster Presentations

