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## Faculty Perceptions of Research Responsibilities and Choices at a Catholic University

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# FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF RESEARCH RESPONSIBILITIES AND CHOICES AT A CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Raymond Benton, Jr., and Marc D. Hayford

**A**n underlying theme in the Catholic tradition is that one serves God by serving humanity. To serve God, one should take actions intended to serve other human beings. The Catholic tradition is less sanguine than is the liberal (in the nineteenth-century sense) tradition, which holds that service to others will come as an unintended consequence of the pursuit of self-interest. The Catholic tradition, as we understand it, admits that while one may serve others without necessarily intending to do so, the likelihood that one will serve others is greatly enhanced if the motivation is explicitly to serve others. Hence, while the ultimate outcome is what is most important, the motivation for one's actions is critical.

One action, for an academic, is the choice of research topics. How do faculty choose research topics, and how do they think they should choose research topics? What are the underlying motivations in topic choices, and to what extent are these choices influenced by working at a Catholic university? Most importantly, do faculty choose research topics with the intent that the outcome of research will serve others, or do they make such choices predominantly on the basis of self-interest?

This paper describes how faculty at one Catholic university perceive the role of research in their lives and how their research is influenced by teaching at a Catholic university. The description is based on a questionnaire of faculty attitudes. The questionnaire design was influenced by Jesuit John C. Haughey's "Catholic Higher Education: A Strategy for its Identity" in *Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education* 16 (2) (Fall 1996): 25-32.

Haughey presents ideas on how faculty can develop a spirituality of research and how a Catholic university might develop a compelling Catholic vision to influence faculty research choices. That the research choices of faculty should be so influenced is imperative, in Haughey's view, if education at Catholic colleges and universities is to maintain a distinct Catholic identity.

Haughey's ideas are based on five beliefs: 1) How Catholic a Catholic college or university is depends on the extent to which its faculty think and teach "Catholically"; 2) Teaching effectiveness is proportional to the depth and breadth

What are the underlying motivations in topic choices, and to what extent are these choices influenced by working at a Catholic university?

of a faculty member's research; 3) The Catholic identity issue cannot be resolved without discussing how faculty choose their research agendas and how these choices are rewarded by the university; 4) Faculty do not spend enough time on the metaethical or spiritual foundations of their research; and 5) Catholic colleges and universities lack the distinctive vision about how they differ from non-Catholic universities that would attract faculty attention and drive their research agendas. Haughey also believes that most faculty at Catholic universities do not think their research is distinctively different from non-Catholic universities. He states, "Most faculty probably believe that the mission of a Catholic university does not and should not affect the research choices of its faculty."

#### METHODOLOGY

During early spring 1996 we were developing a questionnaire to investigate faculty attitudes toward various aspects of research. While writing the questionnaire we encountered Haughey's report presented at the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities National Conference held in August 1995 (Haughey 1996). We modeled several questions on statements or assumptions made by Haughey. We did so because his ideas are provocative and important, but also because he cast his discussion in terms of all faculties taken together. We hypothesized, rather, that differences of opinion would exist between the faculties in business, the humanities and fine arts, the social sciences, and the sciences on questions such as if and how, from a research standpoint, a Catholic university differs from a secular university, and what does and what should motivate faculty in their choice of research topics. (The relevant portion of the questionnaire is attached as an appendix to this report.)

Two classification questions were included. We asked how long the respondent has been at our university, and we asked in which college, school, or division they primarily teach. For the length of service question respondents were presented with three categories: ten years or fewer, 11-20 years, or more than 20 years. This bracketing was used to protect anonymity while permitting the isolation of responses from junior and senior faculty. For the primary teaching assignment we used four categories: business, humanities and fine arts, social sciences, and sciences. We used these broad categories, again, to protect the respondents' anonymity.

The questionnaire was distributed on March 7, 1996, to all full-time faculty in the School of Business not on leave (N=69) by placing a copy in each faculty member's mailbox. It was distributed on April 9th to full-time faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences not on leave (N=375) using address labels obtained from the

university. Faculty in other schools and programs in the university were not surveyed. Reminders were sent prompting those that had not responded to do so. Forty-seven usable responses were received from the School of Business (a 68 percent response rate) and 142 from the College of Arts and Sciences (a 38 percent response rate).

The classification variables permit us to assess the representativeness of the sample. While the School of Business represents only 15.5 percent of the population, it represents 24.9 percent of the sample (see Table 1). Within the College of Arts and Sciences the three divisions are, however, proportionately represented.

Table 1: Distribution of faculty by area of teaching responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

	Sample	University
Business	47 (24.9%)	69 (15.5%)
Humanities/Fine Arts	69 (36.5)	183 (41.2)
Social Sciences	43 (22.8)	100 (22.5)
Sciences	30 (15.9)	92 (20.7)
Total	189 (100%)	444 (100%)

<sup>1</sup>  $\chi^2 = 13.7$ , *d.f.* = 3, *a* < .01

The differences between the time of service obtained by the sample and that determined from university records are not as great nor as marked (see Table 2). However, those at the university ten years or fewer are consistently under-represented across all four divisions while those at the university from 11 to 20 years are consistently over-represented. While the differences may not appear great, they are more than one would expect due to sampling error alone ( $\chi^2 = 21.0$ , *d.f.* = 6, < .01).

Table 2: Distribution of faculty by years of service across area of teaching responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

	Business	Humanities	Social Sciences	Sciences	Total
Sample					
10 or less	18 (38.3%)	33 (47.8%)	19 (44.2%)	11 (36.7%)	81 (42.9%)
11 to 20	18 (38.3)	14 (20.3)	14 (32.6)	13 (43.3)	59 (31.2)
more than 20	11 (23.4)	22 (31.9)	10 (23.3)	6 (20.0)	49 (25.9)
Total	47 (100%)	69 (100%)	43 (100%)	30 (100%)	189 (100%)
University					
10 or less	32 (46.4%)	94 (51.4%)	54 (54.0%)	39 (32.4%)	219 (49.3%)
11 to 20	19 (27.5)	32 (17.5)	29 (29.0)	34 (36.9)	114 (25.7)
more than 20	18 (26.1)	57 (31.1)	17 (17.0)	19 (20.7)	111 (25.0)
Total	69 (100%)	183 (100%)	100 (100%)	92 (100%)	444 (100%)

<sup>1</sup>  $\chi^2 = 21.0$ , *d.f.* = 6, *a* < .01

Faculty most agree with the statement that "research in a Jesuit Catholic university should be evaluated by colleagues and the institution itself in the same way and with the same measures as research done in other universities."

## RESULTS

*Why faculty do and should do research.* Respondents were asked to indicate from a list of eight alternatives the top three reasons faculty, generally, do and should do research. Assigning a code of 1 to the primary reason, 2 to the second reason, 3 to the tertiary reason, and 4 to all others (indicating that the item would have been ranked somewhere between 4 and 8), we calculated the mean response and used that to rank order the eight responses (see Table 3).

There is a significant difference between what faculty say motivates them and what they say should motivate them. The Spearman rank correlation coefficient for the two rankings ( $r_s = .333$ ) is quite low. The noteworthy differences are the relative demotion of Tenure/Career Advancement (from first to seventh ranked) and of Professional Recognition (from third to fifth), and the relative promotion of In Service to Others (from sixth to third) and The Search for Truth (from fourth to second). The one constant is that Institutional Prestige counts little in both rankings.

Table 3: Reasons faculty do research compared to why they should do research, rank ordered.

	Why faculty do research	Why faculty should do research
Tenure/career advancement	1	7
Because it is interesting	2	1
Professional recognition	3	5
The search for truth	4	2
To add to the store of knowledge	5	4
In service to others	6	3
For social change	7	6
Institutional prestige	8	8

Spearman rank correlation coefficient  $r_s = .333$ ,  $t = .86$ ,  $d.f. = 6$ ,  $\alpha > .15$ .

When the rankings of why faculty do research are compared across how long they have been at the university, and in which college, school, or division they teach, there is virtually no variation (see Table 4). Similar results are obtained when comparing the rankings of why faculty should do research across these same two variables (see Table 5). There is widespread agreement on what motivates faculty research as well as on what should motivate it.

Table 4: Reasons why faculty do research, rank ordered, by Years of Service and by Area of Teaching Responsibility.

	Years of Service <sup>1</sup>			Area of Teaching Responsibility <sup>2</sup>			
	< 11 Year	11-20 Years	> 20 Years	Business	Humanities FineArts	Social Sciences	Sciences
Tenure/career advancement	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Because it is interesting	2	2	3	3	2	2	1
Professional recognition	3	3	2	2	3	3	3
The search for truth	4	4	5	4	4	4	4
To add to the store of knowledge	5	5	4	5	5	5	5
In service to others	6	6	7	6	6	7	6
For social change	7	7	8	7	7	8	8
Institutional prestige	8	8	6	8	8	6	7

<sup>1</sup>  $W = 2.135$ ,  $\chi^2 = 44.8$ ,  $d.f. = 7$ ,  $\alpha < .005$     <sup>2</sup>  $W = 2.705$ ,  $\chi^2 = 75.7$ ,  $d.f. = 7$ ,  $\alpha < .005$

Table 5: Reasons why faculty should do research, rank ordered, by Years of Service and by Area of Teaching Responsibility.

	Years of Service <sup>1</sup>			Area of Teaching Responsibility <sup>2</sup>			
	< 11 Year	11-20 Years	> 20 Years	Business	Humanities FineArts	Social Sciences	Sciences
Tenure/career advancement	7	6	6	5	7	7	6
Because it is interesting	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Professional recognition	6	5	5	6	6	5	5
The search for truth	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
To add to the store of knowledge	5	4	4	3	4	4	3
In service to others	3	3	3	4	3	3	4
For social change	4	7	8	7	5	6	7
Institutional prestige	8	8	7	8	8	8	8

<sup>1</sup>  $W = 2.119$ ,  $\chi^2 = 44.5$ ,  $d.f. = 7$ ,  $\alpha < .005$     <sup>2</sup>  $W = 2.704$ ,  $\chi^2 = 75.7$ ,  $d.f. = 7$ ,  $\alpha < .005$

Respondents were asked if they choose their research topics in light of any of the following: yourself (beyond issues of tenure, career advancement, and disciplinary recognition); spouse; family; community; colleagues; and God. A final item on the list permitted them to indicate that they have never thought about it in this way before. Multiple responses were permitted. They were then asked, in a separate question, whether they consider their research in light of what it will do to or for their classroom relationships. The proportion of respondents indicating that they do choose or consider their research topics in light of such considerations is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Proportion of respondents that consider their research choices in light of various alternatives.

	Years of Service			Area of Teaching Responsibility			
	< 11 years n = 79	11-20 years n = 55	> 20 years n = 49	Business n = 44	Fine Arts n = 68	Humanities n = 43	Social Science n = 28
Yourself	68.9%	65.5%	71.4%	56.8%	76.5%	69.8%	67.9%
Classroom <sup>2</sup>	68.9	63.6	75.5	52.3	79.4	74.4	60.7
Community <sup>3</sup>	34.4	27.3	34.7	11.4	45.6	44.2	28.6
Colleagues	30.6	25.5	30.6	22.7	35.3	30.2	32.1
God <sup>4</sup>	10.4	9.1	14.3	2.3	20.6	4.7	7.1
Family	9.8	15.2	10.9	6.8	13.2	11.6	3.6
Spouse	4.4	10.1		2.3	4.4	9.3	
Never thought about it <sup>5</sup>	27.3	25.5	28.6	40.9	20.6	25.6	25.0

<sup>1</sup> Due to incomplete responses, seven respondents were omitted from this analysis resulting in a sub-sample of n = 183. Proportions do not add to 100% because multiple responses were permitted.

<sup>2</sup> The differences across Area of Teaching Responsibility are statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 10.66, df = 3, a = .014$ ).

<sup>3</sup> The differences across Area of Teaching Responsibility are statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 16.36, df = 3, a < .001$ ).

<sup>4</sup> Differences between Humanities/Fine Arts and all other categories taken together are statistically significant ( $Z = 6.24, a < .01$ ).

<sup>5</sup> Differences between Business and all other categories taken together are statistically significant ( $Z = 5.19, a < .01$ ).

For oneself and for classroom relationships were indicated more than all other alternatives. In the middle were community relationships and relationships with colleagues. God, family, and spouse are the least considered. Interestingly, about a quarter of all respondents indicate that they have never thought about it in this way before.

There is very little variation across the length of time at the university or the division in which the faculty teach. None have statistically significant differences on classroom and community across college, school or division in which the faculty teach, on God when humanities and fine arts faculty are compared to all others taken together, and on the final item—"I've never thought about it this way before"—when business faculty are compared to all others taken together.

*Research at a Catholic university.* A third set of questions was introduced with the following comment:

Catholic universities, including the Jesuit universities, are facing more directly than they have in years the "Catholic identity" issue. Resolution of the Catholic identity question may be connected with the faculty's perceptions of their research responsibilities and choices.

Respondents were presented with six statements about research and their research choices and asked to indicate, on a scale of 1 to 5, the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement. The results are presented in Table 7.

Faculty most agree with the statement that "research in a Jesuit Catholic university should be evaluated by colleagues and the institution itself in the same way and with the same measures as research done in other universities." They least agree with the twin statements: "1) that research done by faculty in Jesuit Catholic institutions has a different perspective and comes from a different motivation than research done in non-Catholic universities, and 2) that it should have a different perspective and should come from a different motivation."

The length of time faculty have been at the university has very little influence on their responses. There are some statistically significant differences between faculty across the areas of teaching responsibility. Social scientists agree more than do either the business faculty or the humanities faculty that research should be evaluated the same as research done in other universities. All faculty agree that the university has not yet developed a compelling vision to motivate research, with the humanities faculty being more in agreement than the business faculty. The humanities faculty are less inclined to agree with the statement that the discipline's research agenda should be the primary determinant of faculty research choices than faculty in the other three areas of teaching.

Table 7: Mean Response (standard deviation) indicating degree of agreement with each of the following statements.<sup>1</sup>

	Years of Service				Area of Teaching Responsibility			
	< 11 years n = 78	11-20 years n = 58	> 20 years n = 44	Business n = 46	Humanities		Social Science	
					Fine Arts n = 65	Science n = 41	Science n = 28	Science n = 28
Research should be evaluated the same as research done in other universities. <sup>3</sup>	1.83 (1.00)	1.76 (1.10)	1.86 (0.98)	2.09 (1.03)	1.94 (1.04)	1.44 (0.84)	1.71 (0.94)	1.71 (0.94)
Only the faculty are responsible for defining the character of the university's research output.	2.36 (1.21)	2.14 (1.18)	2.48 (1.13)	2.50 (1.21)	2.43 (1.24)	2.10 (1.26)	2.32 (1.09)	2.32 (1.09)
The university has not yet developed a compelling vision to draw faculty attention. <sup>4</sup>	2.41	2.27	2.53	2.74	2.19	2.49	2.29	2.29
Discipline's research agenda should be the primary determinant of research choices faculty make. <sup>5</sup>	2.69 (1.11)	2.81 (1.11)	2.54 (1.14)	2.54 (0.91)	3.11 (1.16)	2.29 (1.15)	2.54 (0.96)	2.54 (0.96)
Research at a Jesuit Catholic university should have a different perspective.	3.72 (1.27)	3.74 (1.22)	3.95 (1.26)	3.63 (1.16)	3.51 (1.36)	3.90 (1.28)	4.07 (1.15)	4.07 (1.15)
Research at a Jesuit Catholic university does have a different perspective.	3.83 (1.05)	3.77 (1.03)	4.07 (1.06)	3.96 (0.92)	3.57 (1.10)	3.93 (1.15)	4.11 (0.92)	4.11 (0.92)

<sup>1</sup> 1 = Agree Very Much; 5 = Disagree Very Much

<sup>2</sup> Due to incomplete responses nine respondents are omitted from this analysis, resulting in a subsample of n = 180.

<sup>3</sup> Significant differences exist across Area of Teaching Responsibility ( $F = 3.62$ ;  $d.f. = 3, 176$ ;  $\alpha = .014$ ). Duncan's multiple range test indicates, at the .05 level, significant differences between Business and Social Science and between Humanities/Fine Arts and Social Science.

<sup>4</sup> Significant differences exist across Area of Teaching Responsibility ( $F = 3.45$ ;  $d.f. = 3, 176$ ;  $\alpha = .018$ ). Duncan's multiple range test indicates, at the .05 level, significant differences between Business and Humanities/Fine Arts.

<sup>5</sup> Significant differences exist across Area of Teaching Responsibility ( $F = 5.68$ ;  $d.f. = 3, 176$ ;  $\alpha = .001$ ). Duncan's multiple range test indicates, at the .05 level, significant differences between Humanities and Fine Arts and each of the other three categories.

## CONCLUSIONS

The faculty who responded to the questionnaire have what might be called "traditional academic values." They engage in research because they want tenure, they want to advance their career, they find their research topics interesting, and they want professional recognition. They may wish and feel that other motivations should inspire their choices regarding research topics, but they are aware of the necessary reality of choosing research topics that promote their career.

Research chosen for the reasons of tenure, career advancement, mere interest, and professional recognition may lead to outcomes that serve others. If it does, it will be as an unintended consequence of the pursuit of self-interest. Most faculty would like their research efforts to be useful to others. Only a minority of the respondents believe that working for a Jesuit Catholic university influences their perspective or motivations for research. And only a minority think that it should. Most of the responding faculty feel that in the area of research the university should follow the same model as other universities. These attitudes and opinions are widely shared across all faculties, regardless of their time of service with the university. Some differences were found between faculties, but while these differences were statistically significant, it is not clear that they are large enough to be of practical importance. There were, for example, differences regarding the degree to which the faculties indicate they now consider their research in light of various alternatives other than self-interest. Business faculty are less concerned about how their research choices impact classroom relationships; business and science faculty are less concerned about how their research choices impact their relationships with their community.

A greater proportion of respondents in the humanities (but still a minority) indicate they choose their research topics in the light of their relationship with God. But that may well be expected given the university's large philosophy and especially theology departments. Interestingly, a greater proportion of business faculty indicate they have never thought about how or why they choose their research topics.

There is widespread agreement that research in a Jesuit Catholic university should be evaluated by colleagues and the institution in the same way and with the same measures as research done in other universities. There is some variation here between faculties, however, with the social sciences agreeing more with the statement. When it came to the university's vision and whether or not it was sufficiently compelling to draw faculty attention beyond their own disciplines, there was also some variation between the faculties. Here the business faculty felt more strongly

that the university did have such a compelling vision, while the humanities faculties were more neutral. Regarding whether or not a discipline's agenda should be the primary determinant of faculty research choices, the humanities faculties were less sanguine than faculty in other divisions.

The above discussion raises the issue of whether the incentives, in terms of granting tenure, pay increases, and internal funding for research, at Catholic universities should be geared toward promoting the conscious choice of research topics that serve others, as suggested by Haughey. And if so, it is not altogether clear whether faculty will welcome such action or see it as intervention in an otherwise sacrosanct area. This is an issue well worth further research.

#### APPENDIX

The following questions from the questionnaire specifically deal with the issue of faculty perceptions toward their research responsibilities and choices.

13. From the following list, what are the top three reasons faculty, generally, do research? Place a [1] for the primary reason, a [2] for the secondary reason, and a [3] for the third reason.

##### *Why faculty do research*

- because it is interesting [1]
- the search for truth [2]
- tenure/career advancement [3]
- professional recognition [4]
- institutional prestige [5]
- in service to other people [6]
- for social change [7]
- simply to add to the store of knowledge [8]

14. Now indicate the top three reasons faculty *should* do research. Place a [1] for the primary reason, a [2] for the secondary reason, and a [3] for the third reason.

##### *Why faculty should do research*

SAME LIST AS ABOVE

15. Do you choose your research topics in light of any of the following? (Check all which are applicable):

- yourself (beyond issues of tenure, career advancement, and disciplinary recognition)
- spouse
- family
- community
- colleagues
- God
- I have never thought about it in this way

16. Do you consider your research in light of what it will do to or for classroom relationships?

- Yes     No

17. Are you now actively engaged in research?

- Yes     No

*Catholic universities, including the Jesuit universities, are facing more directly than they have in years the "Catholic identity" issue. Resolution of the Catholic identity question may be connected with the faculty's perceptions of their research responsibilities and choices.*

Below is a set of questions about how you see your current research choices. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

- |  |           |          |               |       |           |
|--|-----------|----------|---------------|-------|-----------|
|  | Disagree  |          | Neither Agree |       | Agree     |
|  | Very Much | Disagree | nor Disagree  | Agree | Very Much |
|  | [5]       | [4]      | [3]           | [2]   | [1]       |
18. Research done by faculty in Jesuit Catholic institutions **has** a different perspective and **comes from** a different motivation than research done in non-Catholic universities.
19. Research done by faculty in Jesuit Catholic institutions **should have** a different perspective and **should come from** a different motivation than research done in non-Catholic universities.
20. Research in a Jesuit Catholic university should be evaluated by colleagues and the institution itself in the same way and with the same measures as research done in other universities.
21. Loyola has not yet developed a sufficiently compelling vision of what it is about to draw faculty attention beyond their own disciplines or lead faculty to choose



their research topics in light of such a vision.

22. A *discipline's research agenda* should be the **primary** determinant of the research choices faculty make.
23. It is the responsibility of the faculty, and **only** the faculty, to define the character of the research output of their institution of higher learning.

We would now like to ask two questions for purposes of classification only.

25. How long have you been at Loyola? Have you been here

- [1] for 10 years or less,
- [2] from 11 to 20 years, or
- [3] for more than 20 years?

26. In which college or school are your primary teaching responsibilities?

- [1] School of Business/Graduate School of Business
- [2] School of Education
- [3] School of Social Work
- [4] College of Arts and Sciences/Graduate School—Humanities and Fine Arts
- [5] College of Arts and Sciences/Graduate School—Social Sciences
- [6] College of Arts and Sciences/Graduate School—Sciences
- [7] School of Nursing
- [8] C.O.R.D. or H.R.I.R.
- [10] I.P.S.