

Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education

Volume 24

Article 4

10-1-2003

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Recommended Citation

Whall, Helen M. (2003) "Caring for the Whole Faculty," *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*: Vol. 24, Article 4.
Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations/vol24/iss1/4>

Caring For the Whole Faculty

Helen M. Whall

The discontent faculty have begun to express within the American academy might abate on Jesuit campuses were we to extend the principle of "cura personalis," so important to Jesuit formation, to the development of all faculty.

A friend, just returned from his first sabbatical, confident as only the rested and recently tenured can be, asked whether I thought Jesuit universities rewarded excellence in teaching and service any better than did secular schools? I laughed and told him, "Of course not." I reminded him of his own experiences the year before and assured him I could produce witnesses. My friend, an immensely successful and charismatic teacher brought to tenure review the typically heavy service record of any charismatic teacher—not to mention, as in his case, that of a committed Jesuit. Yet he had been just as neurotic as all junior faculty facing final review. That is, until his book contract arrived. No, Holy Cross does no better at rewarding teaching and service than do comparable secular schools. Unlike the secular colleges we compare ourselves to, however, we continue to emphasize the primacy of teaching and the importance of service. We just do so in a rather negative way. Like other Jesuit institutions of higher learning, we punish poor teaching and reprimand those who serve with reluctance. But we positively reward publication, pre- and post-tenure.

Holy Cross is blessed with a wealth of good teachers; we have, in fact, so many talented teachers at every rank that "classroom satisfaction" remains the uncontested criterion of excellence which current students and alumni check on various evaluation forms. Our teaching

endowment should place us at the top of that annoying *U.S. News and World Report* rankings list, but the criteria which a commercial magazine uses to rate American colleges signal instead how commercial educational standards have become. In the face of such market place demands, any means of assuring that our students come first should reassure parents. And what is true about Holy Cross and its historical insistence that teaching remain the primary criterion for tenure remains true throughout Jesuit institutions of higher learning. Or so I am assured by one former student who now teaches at Loyola Baltimore, and by the niece who attends Fordham in New York, and by the colleagues who work at Boston College and so on and so on. We all will usually not tenure a "fair" teacher even if he or she has published very well by each campus's standards. We all will almost never tenure a "bad" teacher who has published well.

Over my twenty-seven years at Holy Cross, I do not think I have ever seen a service record make or break a tenure case. Instead, failure to serve willingly or well has seemed more like a negative reward used to hold someone back from promotion. Hence we all know that service has value. Yet so little that I am quite sure that we, like our colleagues at companion schools, do not serve for any reward other than that of doing. For example, though we have no summer session, when our Provost and our Academic Dean requested volunteers to begin discussions last

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more than fifty volunteers from all ranks who are now captives of four sometimes exasperating, always time-consuming and inevitably provocative sub-committees. Generous service, like good teaching, has become such a campus norm that we take "good" for granted and "fair" for "poor." Service is the ethos of my campus at its best. That cornucopia of goodwill, however, might one day cease its magical replenishment if positive rewards do not soon also appear. Rewarding publication will always be important; ironically, that does little to refill the horn. Quite the opposite. Publication keeps the scholar constantly focused outward. That is good if teaching and service are rewarded, for the outward view protects against insularity. But without balancing the criteria for academic success, we forget that publication keeps the professional always packed, always ready for that next move.

I suppose punishing poor teaching and ostracizing those who refrain from whole-hearted service is preferable to upholding the standards of a vintage Oxbridge joke. Three dons cross the quad. One boasts, "I am the best teacher at university this year. I only have two students!" The second sniffs and announces, "I am the best teacher! I only have one student" The third, looking with pity at his colleague, sighs, "My dears, everyone knows that I am the best teacher. I have no students." Unfortunately, though the joke is old, the attitude that great university teachers do research and seldom attract or need teach students, let alone serve on anything less than five-star committees, has made its way across the Atlantic. But those of us who continue to fight not against the importance of rewarding research (here a given) but for sustaining the primacy of teaching and the importance of service in higher education think the time has come to reconsider the reward and punishment system.

We have moved deeply enough into the

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twenty-first century that we must simply accept that we are here, in the dreaded future of systems breakdown not of computers but of professorial and student education itself. Both have become so stressful that *The Atlantic Monthly*, a magazine with a bit more intellectual capital than *U.S. News and World Report*, seized the imagination of commencement speakers across the country when it published an essay called "The Organization Kid" in April, 2000. That essay detailed the compartmentalized, goal-driven days of our students. Meanwhile faculty at conferences speak of no time for lunch, no time for the much parodied sherry hours of old *New Yorker* cartoons, and the collapse of collegiality. I get the sense that even neighbors now know better than to tease us about our lawns and "summers off."

More disturbingly, I hear too many talented young faculty mutter on their way to the parking lot, "They don't pay us enough to do this." Those words are overheard, of course, by impressionable young students who weigh their futures and are already aware that the odds of getting a teaching job with a Ph.D. in too many academic fields are

already slim. When I asked one to "do a reality check" then come back and talk to me before applying to graduate schools, I had meant he should examine his motives for continuing on with the study of English literature. Instead, he toured the faculty parking lot. He showed up at office hours with a grim look and said, "You're right. I don't know if it's worth it. The cars you people drive!" I already had my doubts about this student's aspirations, but I also felt bad that there was no reason for him to envy less material aspects of a professor's life, external markers which I saw the last glimmers of when I left Emmanuel, a Catholic women's college, and headed off to Yale in 1971. That was a world with time for the exchange of ideas, for conversation, even for a walk across a quad. A world in which it seemed my teachers were quite happy, though when I arrived at Yale, it was clear that there, the need to publish quickly singed that joy.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that now, even Yale and Harvard, Stanford and Berkeley, as well as all other colleges and universities are being asked to examine their emphasis on publication. The reasons for doing so, however, are more pragmatic than idealistic. Academic presses, especially those which have served the humanities, are trimming back at an alarming rate. The most recent issue of *Profession* tallies the economic impact of recent events on scholarly presses; set-backs in the stock market, severe cutbacks in NEH funding, the shrinking book budgets of university libraries -- budgets already over-consumed by scientific journals -- have pitted established faculty against untenured faculty, brand names against newcomers when editors seek to select the few books they can publish.

Stephen Greenblatt, current President of the Modern Language Association of America, actually wrote to all college and university English

and modern language Department Heads in the spring of 2002, pleading that they remind colleagues how much those now under tenure review "face a challenge -- under inflexible time constraints and with very high stakes -- that many of them may be unable to meet successfully, no matter how strong or serious their scholarly achievement, because academic presses simply cannot afford to publish their books." If institutions of American higher learning regain perspective and evaluate more judiciously their tenure candidates' research potential as well as their accomplishment, they might also have time to look more seriously at and reward their work as classroom teachers and citizens of the academy. But only pragmatism will drive secular institutions to that happy field.

There are more compelling reasons why Jesuit institutions should address their own solution, which would be to sustain positive incentives to publish, now that publishing has grown more difficult, and negative rewards -- a.k.a. punishments -- for failing to teach and serve well. Central to the Jesuit mission is a commitment to justice; that commitment was itself written into twentieth century appeals to students and their parents as that which made Jesuit higher education unique. Now, in addition to preparing young men and women to work in the world aware of their obligations to justice, it is time to look to a just balancing of the academic reward system established for faculty on campus. But how? According to what guidelines shall we proceed, since we have so long looked to secular institutions, which have yet to order their own house in this regard? We need only continue looking at the principles of Jesuit formation. It is time that the principle of "*cura personalis*" was applied to faculty formation.

Cura personalis, perhaps best translated as "caring for the whole self," also became a catch phrase on many Jesuit campuses as the twentieth

century closed, one often rendered as flat through over-use as "men and women for others," but no less important than that first compelling phrase. Currently, deans and student life personnel invoke *cura personalis*, the seventh of the "Seven Principal Elements of Ignatian Spirituality," to discuss student development. Such conversations center especially on residence life and emphasize the need for teachers to consider the "integrated student," not merely the mind of a young man or woman. These conversations are important, but I would like to continue this conversation by considering *cura personalis* in terms of faculty development. I would, moreover, like to consider two very different kinds of selves, each in need of integration, each in need of being integrated with the other, as a radical call to re-examining ways of making true the value of teaching and service on our Jesuit campuses.

The first self is the person who serves the institution; the second is the institution made up of the many selves who serve it; my special interest is faculty, but by extension I mean all who work and study on our campuses. If all of us who teach on Jesuit campuses undertake a much deeper examination of how professors could be formed, I also think Jesuit institutions would be in a much better, much safer position when opening out the conversation centered on *cura personalis* to include professors in relationship to students who are in the process of becoming more fully integrated men and women for others. Jesuit education is too important, as a now retired colleague once told me, to be left to the Jesuits. There are too few Jesuits teaching for their heritage to be locked away within the rites of priesthood. Instead, the core values of the Jesuit educational mission must be imparted to those who care about Jesuit education, and that should be done now with the full weight and authority of what may be the last full generation of Jesuit presidents and administrators. Only these men

will possess the moral authority to achieve such a revitalization. Lose the moment and something that took centuries to come into being will be lost forever.

In the formation of Jesuits, that lengthy and rigorous process about which we who are "lay faculty" know too little, the Director of Formation must be especially sensitive to the principle of *cura personalis*, must listen carefully over the ten years of growth and learning to the special needs and talents of the young man he is grooming for service. (Ah, but sex inclusive language has its place. For then sex specific language makes its point.) That Director must always consider, must care for the "whole person" when selecting the seminarian's assignments, when the seminarian and, ultimately, the priest, chooses or accepts job placements. Though there are many exceptions, these are young men who will undergo such development from their mid-twenties through their thirties; the second half of formation is equivalent to the apprenticeship years for most faculty. The mentored years. Why not train the deans and department chairs of Jesuit colleges and universities to extend, fully and frankly, the principle of *cura personalis*, to "junior" faculty? This practice would be especially important in making teaching assignments and in performing teaching evaluation. And, since application of the principle does not cease once a Jesuit priest is "formed," why might we not sustain such attention to the reality of the whole person, to his or her shifting needs and talents, across the arc of a career?

What would that mean? Obviously, at the most pragmatic level, such factors as young children and ill partners or elderly parents would be considered more than rank when a chair made out schedules. So, too, a teacher's skills as a discussion leader, a whiz with technology, a gifted lecturer, someone especially innovative with collaborative projects, or even someone interested

in studying new methods, would be considered when looking at a department's "whole picture." Administrators, moreover, would also consider the whole -- the need, now dealing with lay faculty as a group, for adequate compensation, good benefits, decent child care, various support systems -- all that a director might have been able to note more easily within the smaller world of a religious order, but which is still part of the formula that makes *cura personalis* so vital. But of greatest importance to this discussion of how best to attend to developing a "whole" teacher, the nature of excellent teaching would be acknowledged as student-centered rather than either content-centered or method-driven. Excellent teaching would be discussed, perhaps even taught, as what makes students learn. All kinds of students.

Cura personalis. Attending to the whole person is not a principle which the senior faculty member must sustain only in the face of the junior, though power demands that this is where we begin. In 2000, I was awarded a plaque as "distinguished teacher" for that year. I cherish the award, for after twenty-seven years at Holy Cross, teaching remains what makes me take the College Square exit off of Interstate 290, September through May. The "honored" teacher, however, has to give a talk to the faculty, and I really did find the challenge daunting. I think there are so many dedicated and good teachers at Holy Cross that all I have to do is race down the stairs and I am bound to knock at least one of them over. I said something like that in my lecture, and I also said something about my appreciation for the variety of good teachers at Holy Cross, about how important it was that we had such a variety, because I figured that as long as there was someone who was excellent at drawing students into discussion, I didn't have to; as long as there was someone who could wait out the five minute silence, I didn't have to. (Other than in seminars

and small classes, I'll admit it; I am a rather old fashioned interactive lecturer).

That talk provoked some discussion with my peers. Was I really serious? Did I really think that the many kinds of teaching the young faculty were now bringing to college classrooms were as valid as, say, Socratic method? I am grateful to my colleagues for being forthright with their concerns, because my conversations with peers at conferences convince me that those concerns for newer teaching methods are implicit everywhere. My answer is not only "Yes, new teaching methods are valid." It's, "Yes, new teaching methods are valid and needed." Protecting the young from their elders and educating elders in accepting change would come under training in the ways of *cura personalis*.

My generation, for the most part, enjoyed a remarkably unified curriculum and concurrent unified pattern of teaching, one which splintered just as we entered graduate school. Our current young colleagues both grew up within a multi-valent teaching pattern and have completed all of their research work with that prevailing world of prismatic views. Those who review young faculty can too easily fail to distinguish their disdain for various critical methodologies from their discomfort with the new pedagogies which reflect or serve those methods. Teachers, for example, who deliberately defy the authority of lecture notes or emphasize collaborative learning or employ web technology or insist upon discussion groups as a *result* of their methodologies, can be in a position of double jeopardy. Their teaching styles often reflect years of research in gender studies or in studies of race or in theories about power. Some men and women bring to their classrooms new understandings about cognition or effectively employ new technologies. But even faculty who use more traditional methods in their research may still employ what their elders consider non-traditional classroom methods.

They are probably copying the styles of the best teachers they ever had...seven or eight years ago, back in the 1990s of their undergraduate days! Hostile senior feedback to teaching methods which students rate as "good" or "excellent" can be utterly confusing during a new faculty member's first years in a department.

A department's impatience with new pedagogies as students themselves adapt to those methods will also block student development. If we limit their acquisition of intellectual coping skills, we limit their access to the world our students inherit. This is the generation that cannot afford either cognitive complacency nor the cognitive dissonance which results when only one channel on a widening bandwidth is open to reception. But if we who are entrusted with the professional lives of new tenure-line faculty members do not find a better way to listen and hear the whole person, we, too, will not be heard. A mere month ago, at one of those workshops on curriculum development, a delightful young colleague waxed eloquent about doing away with all but those who taught collaboratively. She is a very effective and popular, well-published teacher. She will probably be chair someday. I hope she keeps me on. In actuality, what matters is whether one is good at what one is doing. If I learn to use collaborative projects well over the years, I will use them, just as I now lift interesting exercises left behind on the photocopying machine. And there could be no greater classroom crime than making a great discussion leader give a bad lecture.

I know that we must continue to debate the issue of what is taught. Content matters. But the matter of how material is taught is far more fluid. Since many of the newer pedagogical methods spring from research work done in the area of power relations, or cognitive science, or technology, or behavioral science, a careful evaluation of how different students in fact do learn well when such methods are used well may actually lead open-minded elders to see the

virtues of new fields or sub-fields within the research which generated these pedagogies in the first place. In the best of all possible worlds, the seamlessness between research and teaching need not be found within each one of a university's assembled faculty, but in the university itself. That other "self" which must be attended to if we employ *cura personalis* is the institution, that place whose purpose for being is education.

Service on college committees can too often fulfill every joke which ends, "invented by a committee." But properly staffed and seriously mandated, committees allow colleagues to reach across disciplinary boundaries and bind us to the institution we serve. If the principle of *cura personalis* were seriously inculcated, however, over those important introductory years, and then sustained by deans and presidents and chairs when appointments to *ad hoc* committees were made (and if faculty even began to think of the principle when casting votes for elected committees), how much good might be done in letting person and personal talent conquer personality and personal agenda? Committee work becomes less of a burden when it suits one's talents. And much less of a burden still when that work seems to make a difference. Even more importantly, if we come to see the institution as a "whole self" made up of our selves, now integrated into that one unified school, then our college presidents could turn to each of us with far greater ease and ask that each teacher consider his or her students under the principle of *cura personalis*.

The great fear for many lay faculty when anyone, Jesuit or not, begins to speak of applying religious terms either to student or faculty lives is a legitimate concern for boundary issues. If the phrases are uttered in Latin, will bell, book and candle soon follow? Howard Gray, S.J., the best of all missionaries when it comes to advancing Jesuit education, should be listened to and listened to carefully. During a recent visit to Holy Cross, Father Gray, with his wise and tolerant embrace of the real, told a large group of faculty

how much he wished Jesuit colleges would accept the nature of Jesuit education as a living, evolving, eclectic force. He advocated, in his aggressively unforceful way, for a time when all Jesuit schools are sure enough of themselves to advertise themselves as teaching "in the Jesuit tradition" rather than in the "Catholic and Jesuit tradition." Gray is right. It is not that Jesuits are not Catholics. It is that teaching in the Jesuit tradition is quite other than teaching in the Catholic tradition.

There are many Catholic models of education. Were deans to emphasize to all whom a college or university hired that faculty would be working under the principle of *"cura personalis"*, that they would be asked to treat all others who studied and worked at the college in a similar way but were not expected to subscribe to the tenets of Catholicism, simply to respect the living faith tradition of the school's founders, sufficiently sure of our identity. For some, it's as simple as, "I am just awful with people outside my field of specialty. That's why I teach at the college level!" For others, anxiety runs deeper, "Are you nuts? I never speak to students about anything but work. These days, you could get sued." But if we see ourselves as part of a fully functioning whole, and if we have the time and opportunity to know those other "selves" we are linked to, we need never go it alone as advisors or mentors. The faculty member who sometimes has trouble remembering her husband's name or his children's birthdays, need not panic when asked to consider the "whole student" as well as teach him or her Renaissance drama. And the extremely charismatic teacher will have constant reminders of where the boundary lines are. In fact, when it comes to student advising, the individual faculty member attuned to *cura personalis* as a campus-wide practice *should* never

go it alone. For if all of us together respect each other as having trained talents within a carefully listened to and "integrated self" known as our community, we will be willing to share the burden of attending to the student in the process of becoming an integrated person. We will share him with teachers whose views differ from our own. We will share her with teachers whose methods differ from our own. We will trust them to choose a mentor and if they choose us, we will be careful. We will listen. And we, too, will have come to know the "whole" which has served us so well. We will know when to call the counseling center for that student, when to call the infirmary, when to call a chaplain, a dean, a friend. We will know when all we need do is talk about Renaissance drama, hear what our student has to say, push her, prod him, follow her into the land of intellectual discovery.

Under such a system, one in which the principle of *cura personalis* has become as second nature as a cliché, we will of necessity have to balance

the three criteria, perhaps by allowing an "offset" within one candidate with a different offset in another, perhaps simply by being more realistic about our expectations when it comes to research. Never, I repeat, never should we set up two classes of citizenship -- those who publish and serve, those who teach and serve. Take that route and forget all the Latin you ever learned. Take that route and you will have simply established a new paradigm for competition. Gamesmanship is too deeply embedded within the American psyche not to see any such two-player alternative as one set for winners and losers.

A short pedestrian bridge connects the roadway to Stein Hall, a major Holy Cross classroom building. Last spring, as I rushed to my 11:00 a.m. class, I pulled up short, startled to see two students playing the game, "Rocks and



Photo Courtesy of St. Louis University

Scissors." The sensation was one of near vertigo as I spun back to my youth in an all male neighborhood. A variant of "bucking up" or "shooting fingers," in "Rocks and Scissors," a fist beats two fingers and a flat palm betters a fist, for a rock can break scissors -- but paper can cover rock. The winner gets to slap, knuckle, or give an Indian burn to the loser. I learned to despise competitive games -- not competition -- at an early age. I had thought the game lost but realized some variant of it had always been played on campus. It truly is time we established a system of rewards only, winners only. It is time we reintegrated teaching, scholarship, and service. The material rewards for excellent teaching, sustained inquiry, and dedicated service will never satisfy those who scan parking lots for our net worth. But treat us as "whole persons" and then all good teachers, all good citizens of the academy will at least feel valued. In a world where rocks break scissors, paper covers rock and scissors cut paper, value outlasts them all.

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Student Spotlight

Rose Ann Holandez became a Saint Peter's College icon when she was named the 2003 recipient of the prestigious Davies-Jackson Scholarship, a small school equivalent to the Rhodes Scholarship. She was rewarded with a two-year graduate school package at St. John's College at the University of Cambridge valued at \$50,000.

Featured everywhere on campus, Holandez, who was active in campus activities and boasted a 3.97 GPA, was even the subject of an advertising campaign promoting the values of a Saint Peter's



Photo Courtesy of Saint Peter's College

Jesuit education.

"Rose is a terrific student, and a fine example of the kind of person who attends Saint Peter's College," said Dr. Peter Costello, Saint Peter's College Director of Graduate Studies and Special Scholarships. "She took advantage of the education Saint Peter's afforded her. As a first generation college student, she is a tribute to herself, to our diverse student body, to the Jesuit tradition of outstanding education and to our fine faculty and staff."

Speaking of the Davies-Jackson Scholarship, Holandez says, "I have had this goal since Delicia (Reynolds) won it during my freshman year." "It is a great opportunity to study abroad at one of the world's finest institutions. When I got to Saint Peter's, I was determined to make the most of my college education. This scholarship to attend St. John's is a great reward. I'm looking forward to going."

This is not the first major award Holandez earned as a Saint Peter's College undergraduate. She was a finalist for the Truman Scholarship, public service's top scholastic honor, and participated in the 2002 Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs Junior Summer Institute at Princeton University. Last fall, Holandez won an International Student Exchange Program travel scholarship and studied at the Graduate School for International Studies at Ewha University in Seoul, South Korea.