

Loyola College in Maryland

Obstacles to Implementing Justice Initiatives

Report for October 2002 Justice Conference

Loyola continues its sesquicentennial year with a strong and ongoing focus on the faith and justice that Father-General Kolvenbach called all of us to foster at Jesuit colleges and universities. With the help of many other individuals and groups across the college, the Loyola delegation to the Santa Clara conference met with staff, administration, students, and faculty to discuss the Father-General's talk. We have worked to combine reflection with action, setting and achieving hard goals to strengthen existing programs and implement new ones, and to make faith and justice even more integral to the intellectual and cultural life of the college.

Loyola is home to substantial faith and justice resources. Members of the Justice Committee found that some of our most important work is helping to create connections among all of Loyola's existing offices and initiatives that promote faith and justice. Each of these programs is so strong in its own right that we found we had to overcome a lack of connections between the programs. We have an embarrassment of riches in such programs as the Center for Values and Service, the Catholic Studies program, and ALANA (office for African, Latin, Asian, and Native Americans). The committee helped work to foster connections among these programs and to invite every member of the college community, including groundskeepers and the board of trustees, to participate in existing programs and in the new initiatives we have helped launch. We offered the Spring 2002 faith and justice colloquium's focus on "a personal call" so that each member of the college would be invited to consider his or her work in the light of a vocation and as a part of Loyola's unique mission and identity.

To overcome a lack of knowledge among some members of the campus, we work to inform people about the specific nature of Jesuit traditions of education. The faith and justice to which Father Kolvenbach invites us to contribute are distinctively Jesuit and Catholic; at the same time, we join in a dialogue and work with people from diverse faith and ethical traditions. In addition to educating members of the community about Father Kolvenbach's October 2000 call to foster faith and justice, we continue to initiate campus-wide conversations about diverse faith and justice work.

We also work to overcome a feeling held by some that the existing faith and justice programs are so strong that faith and justice initiatives are already taken care of, and that therefore there is no need to participate. The conversations among all campus communities help distribute justice work across campus, so that it is viewed as something everyone can participate in, not as the specialized province of Center for Values and Service, Catholic Studies, or even the Justice Committee. In this way, the personal call to participate in and build upon justice work leads directly to a focus upon community. Our first faith and justice colloquium addressed the personal call; our upcoming fall colloquium addresses community, and the way we all work together for justice.

Another obstacle to implementing justice initiatives is that sometimes staff have not been a focus of invitations to work for faith and justice. We made a major point of

offering \$3000 faith and justice grants to staff as well as students, faculty, and administrators. These grants are the first that are open to staff, and we wrote separate, less academic-based, guidelines for these grants, asking staff to examine a situation of injustice in a local Baltimore community, document it by using photographs, video or cassette recordings, share this work with the Loyola community, and propose and direct ways in which Loyola can work with the local community to promote justice. Other programs on campus that are open to staff include the immersion program Encuentra El Salvador, in which every year a group of students, staff, faculty, and administrators travel to live and work with the people of El Salvador.