

The 2012 AJCU National Survey of Trustees of Jesuit Higher Education

Executive Summary

Background

The Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) engaged the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct a national survey of trustees of Jesuit higher education. The questionnaire was designed by CARA in consultation with the AJCU President and presidents at the Jesuit colleges and universities.

In June, a total of 573 trustees at 27 Jesuit colleges and universities had responded to the questionnaire, either in part or in full, representing a response rate of 60 percent among participating universities and a margin of error ± 2.6 percentage points.

Thirty-three of 41 Xavier trustees (80%) participated in the research. Xavier respondents averaged 10 years of service; 53% were alumni of Xavier.

Xavier Results

Seven major questions were asked of respondents. To the question:

1. Which of the following reasons motivated you to join this board?

The order of identified reasons for Xavier trustees was:

- I value Jesuit Catholic education (88%)
- I felt honored to be asked (85%)
- I value higher education (82%)
- I value this college/university (82%)
- I want to give back (79%)
- I have special skills or talents that would be useful to the board (52%)
- I am representing my community (36%)
- I want to influence university policy (30%)

2. How well prepared do you feel to perform each of these board-related responsibilities?

The order in which Xavier trustees responded "very prepared" (4 on a 4-point scale) was:

- Assuring that long term planning is in place (55%)
- Approving the budget (52%)
- Assuring the Jesuit Catholic mission of the institution (52%)
- Hiring and evaluating the president (45%)

3. How satisfied are you that:

The order in which Xavier trustees responded "very satisfied" (4 on a 4-point scale) was:

- Board members actively support the Jesuit mission of the college/university (85%)
- Board policy decisions reflect the Jesuit mission of the college/university (85%)
- The college/university's programs and services reflect its Jesuit mission (70%)
- The board ensures that the institutional policy and practices are consistent with Jesuit Catholic mission (i.e., just pay, investment strategies, accessibility, etc.) (70%)
- Board members are familiar with the Jesuit mission of the college/university (61%)

4. How important is it to you that there is a Jesuit presence on the board?

The percentage of Xavier trustees responding "very important" was 88%

5. How familiar are you with each of the following?

The order in which Xavier trustees responded "very familiar" (4th on a 4-point scale) was:

- The academic rigor of this college/university (73%)
- Catholic mission/identity at this college/university (64%)
- History of this college/university (58%)
- Characteristics of Jesuit education (58%)
- Catholic social teaching (48%)
- Catholic intellectual tradition (36%)
- History of the Jesuits in the United States (36%)
- Ignatian Spiritual Exercises (33%)
- Ex Corde Ecclesiae (18%)
- The "Challenges" talk of Fr. Adolfo Nicolas, S.J. (18%)

6. How interested are you in participating in the following as a member of the board at this college/university?

The order in which Xavier trustees responded "very interested" (4 on a 4-point scale) was:

- Board orientation to Jesuit identity (55%)
- Sharing best practices with trustees from other Jesuit universities/colleges in carrying out the governance of the Jesuit universities/colleges (45%)
- Workshop, class, or course on Jesuit Catholic identity (42%)
- Learning experiences with trustees from other Jesuit universities/colleges regarding the distinctive Jesuit educational heritage (42%)
- Voluntary community service (24%)
- Spiritual retreat (21%)
- International immersion trip (15%)

7. Which of the following collaborative efforts do you think would benefit each of the schools as well as the consortium as a whole?

The order of the 'most beneficial' effort identified by Xavier trustees was:

- Formation in mission and identity for trustees, faculty and administrators (33%)
- Creating a stronger "Jesuit" image (24%)
- Sharing of "study abroad" programs for students (15%)
- Faculty/student exchange programs (15%)
- Sharing academic research program or institute (15%)
- Engaging in shared services (e.g., accounting, pooling investment money) (6%)
- Collaborating in purchasing (e.g. property insurance) (6%)

One additional question was asked in an open-ended format: **What is the greatest challenge facing Jesuit higher education in the next five years, and what should we do about it?**

Four themes emerged from the national sample (responses from Xavier trustees were not reported separately):

- Costs and accessibility (33%)
- Mission and Identity (e.g., what it means to be Jesuit and Catholic, tensions between the Church and larger society)
- Decreasing Jesuit Presence
- Board Development (e.g., cultivating the next generation of trustees)

Xavier-National Comparison

Given the relatively small sample size at any one university, rather large differences between a university percentage and the national average is necessary for inference. Such that, any difference between Xavier and the national average must be approximately 25 percentage points or more to reach statistical significance. One item reached significance and one was close; both in the positive direction (and both pertaining to Question #3).

Board members actively support the Jesuit mission of the college/university

XU= 85% National= 60% (Percentage responding "very satisfied")

Board policy decisions reflect the Jesuit mission of the college/university

XU= 85% National= 62%

Summation

Overall, Xavier board members responded to the 2012 AJCU survey in a manner similar to trustees at other Jesuit universities (e.g., percentages, rank order) with one major exception.

Xavier trustees, in relation to their colleagues at peer institutions, are notably more satisfied with governance responsibilities and the 'Jesuit mission' as illustrated by the following:

- Board members actively support the Jesuit mission of the college/university' (85% versus 60%)
- Board policy decisions reflect the Jesuit mission of the college/university' (85% versus 62%)
- The board ensures that the institutional policy and practices are consistent with Jesuit Catholic mission (70% versus 53%)
- Board members are familiar with the Jesuit mission of the college/university (61% versus 48%).