



## ICP Mission Project Summary

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### Title

Mission, Leadership, and Turnover: Select Leadership Roles at AJCU Institutions

### Overview

How can Jesuit Catholic universities maintain their identities even as the number of Jesuits occupying positions of leadership continues to dwindle? The Ignatian Colleagues Program is one of the ways that the AJCU has addressed this question: by investing in the mission formation of lay leaders. Yet the rapid and seemingly increasing turnover rate in university leadership positions poses significant challenges. This pilot data project tracks the current tenure (years of service in the current position) of the people holding three leadership positions at each of the 27 Jesuit universities in July 2019 and July 2021. This project began out of curiosity sparked by meeting my own colleagues at the opening ICP retreat. Now it includes an Excel template that facilitates the tracking and comparison of Deans of Colleges of Arts & Sciences (or similar), Provosts, and Presidents. Office-holders who are members of the Society of Jesus and those who have participated in the Ignatian Colleagues Program are identified as such. This report also reviews the current positions of all the ICP participants from Xavier University.

### Significance

This data project seeks to provide a model to quantify and track the challenge through three leadership positions common to all 27 Jesuit universities. The template can easily be expanded to include additional positions as well. I expect it to underscore the importance of initiatives such as ICP, to provide a measure of its influence over time, and possibly to inform future strategy for the AJCU's efforts to support the shared Jesuit Catholic mission of its institutions.

### Details

- Brief overview of methods
- Excel spreadsheet with position-holders and length of tenure in July 2019 and July 2021
- An easy-to-maintain or adapt template
- Analysis, conclusions, and further questions

## Indications of Success

- An understanding among AJCU of the pace of turnover of university leaders informed
- Use of this collective data by individual institutions to shape recruitment and retention of leaders
- Use of this data by individual institutions or by the AJCU staff to inform their investment in leadership development
- Expansion to include additional key leadership positions

## Challenges

- As with any such project, the methods and assumptions inevitably allow the data to tell only part of a complex story—and thus has a risk of reductionism
- Institutional differences place a limit the number of additional leadership positions that are common to most or all institutions
- To retain value over time, the data set would need to be expanded and updated annually; this would require either a personal or perhaps an institutional commitment – which is not yet clearly justified



## Final Report

### Mission, Leadership, and Turnover: Select Leadership Roles at AJCU Institutions

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This project began on a whim. After arriving at the Loyola University Retreat and Ecology Campus outside Chicago for the opening of my ICP cohort, I was surprised to meet two fellow college of arts and sciences (CAS) deans whose names I didn't know. Why surprised? Despite regularly attending the annual meetings of AJCU arts and sciences deans and associate deans, I didn't even know that the other colleges had appointed new deans. So that night in my room at the retreat center, I started creating a roster of CAS deans at Jesuit universities—using quick internet searches to identify the current deans and their dates of appointment.

Struck by what I learned, my curiosity grew. So in subsequent weeks I found spare moments to expand my list to include Provosts and then Presidents—and then updated them yearly.

#### Conclusions

If none of the project's conclusions are particularly surprising, they do quantify dynamics that many have noticed:

- 11 AJCU institutions (40%) will inaugurate a new president in 2021-22 or 2022-23.
- The number of presidents belonging to the Society of Jesus continues to decline; 2 of the current 7 have announced retirement at the end of the 2021-22 academic year.
- Current AJCU provosts have, on average, completed only 2.8 years in office; only 6 of the 27 (22%) have been in their roles for at least five years.
- 22 of 27 institutions (81%) will have a new president, provost, or both between July 1, 2019 and July 1, 2022.
- CAS Deans have, on average, been in their roles six months longer than provosts—but only 3 had been in their roles at least eight years on July 1, 2021.
- ICP participation has been high for all three positions, including 80% of CAS deans with at least two years in office in 2021.
- Of Xavier's 26 ICP participants (cohorts 1-12) who occupied administrative positions at the time, the majority (8 of 15) have since left for positions at other, non-AJCU institutions; all of the faculty participants (9 of 9) remain at Xavier.

These dynamics offer good reason for reflection about ensuring that our shared mission flourishes. And for those of us who champion increased cooperation among AJCU institutions, the rapid turnover of leaders poses a particular challenge. I suspect that the AJCU itself – and faculty leaders at each institution – will be even more essential in fostering the relationships of trust upon which successful collaborations can be built.

## Positions tracked

The choice of these three leadership positions stems from the project's origin; it could easily be expanded. However, there are a limited number of leadership positions that are common to all (or even most) AJCU institutions. No college other than CAS is common to all 27, for example. In fact, even CAS is not a universal category, so that has necessitated some choices.

For example: I include from Loyola Marymount the dean of the Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts, as well as the College of Liberal Arts and Education from Loyola University New Orleans. From Fordham, though, I include three deans: of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, of Fordham College at Lincoln Center, and of Fordham College at Rose Hill.

At the College of the Holy Cross and Spring Hill College, the positions of dean and provost are combined—so I include the office holder on both lists.

## Methods

I initially gathered the names and start dates from institutional websites and public news reports. Notices in the AJCU Higher Ed News e-mail from Deanna Howes Spiro have made it simple to keep up with new appointments. The online [ICP directory](#) was used to identify ICP participants. Corrections are welcome.

Since this project began, the AJCU has welcomed a 28<sup>th</sup> institution: St. John's College in Belize City. I have not, however, included St. John's in this analysis.

This model calculates tenure *to date* of the current office holders – and so cannot be compared directly to studies of average (completed) tenure.

Rather than asking “how long do people occupy these positions?” it asks “how long have the current office holders been in their positions so far?”

It calculates number of years to one decimal point and uses as an ending date July 1, by far the most common transition date. So someone who began on January 1, 2020 had by July 1, 2021 completed 1.5 years; someone who began on July 15, 2019 has completed 1.9 years. (The formula in fact calculates completed months, then divides by 12 to yield the number of years.)

It does not calculate the length of tenure for those appointed in an interim or acting capacity, regardless of how long they have been in their roles. They are assigned a tenure of 0.0 years. The notes often provide more information about the length of that appointment.

For those who held the role in an interim or acting capacity before being appointed to the same position, I use the start date of the permanent appointment – but try to include a note indicating the previous appointment. That of course makes the length of tenure appear shorter

than if the interim period had been included, as (for instance) for the president of Gonzaga University.

For presidents, the spreadsheet calculates separately the average tenure for presidents who are members of the Society of Jesus, in addition to providing an aggregate average.

## Analysis

### Presidents

On July 1, 2021, the average tenure to date of presidents was 7.1 years. The average tenure of Jesuit presidents was more than twice that of other presidents.

#### July 1, 2021

Jesuit presidents (count)	7	all presidents	
average tenure	11.4	average tenure	7.1
other presidents (count)	20	median tenure	6
average tenure	5.5		

In general, the two-year period of this study is too short to allow identification of trends over time. The small number of universities means that individual changes have significant effects on the averages.

For example: in 2019, the Jesuit presidents had (perhaps counter-intuitively) a *lower* average tenure than in 2021. That's easily explained by the relatively new Jesuit presidents at Santa Clara and Scranton in 2019 who were no longer in office two years later.

#### July 1, 2019

Jesuit presidents (count)	11	all presidents	
average tenure	10.8	average tenure	8.0
other presidents (count)	16	median tenure	5
average tenure	6.1		

However, the two-year comparison does draw attention to one striking (and widely noticed) dynamic: recent and planned retirements of long-serving Jesuit presidents are reducing both the number of Jesuit presidents and the overall average tenure of AJCU presidents.

There are 7 Jesuit presidents as of July 1, 2021, down from 11 two years earlier. In both years, there were 8 presidents total with more than 10 years in office to date.

This trend looks likely to continue. There are 5 new AJCU presidents for 2021-2022 (one from the Society of Jesus), 2 interim or acting presidents, and 4 more (two Jesuits) who have announced their retirements next summer. Without any additional changes, that will reduce to 5 the number of presidents in 2022 who have more than 10 years in office.

And it means that 11 of the 27 AJCU institutions (41%) will inaugurate new presidents within a two-year period. That is very likely unprecedented.

Nevertheless, slightly more than half of AJCU presidents still have been in office at least five years.

**Number of AJCU Presidents with more than 5 years in office**

	5 years or more in office	10 years or more in office	15 years or more in office	20 years or more in office
July 1, 2019	17	8	5	2
July 1, 2020	19	9	6	2
July 1, 2021	15	8	4	2
July 1, 2022 (projected maximum*)	14	5	3	2

\*projections account for announced retirements

Provosts

The brief tenure of AJCU provosts might be the most striking result of this study.

July 1, 2021

average tenure	2.8
median tenure	2.0

This in fact represents a modest increase from 2019 (average 2.0, median 1.0), a year in which there were 4 new provosts and 6 interim provosts – itself a noteworthy situation. The number of changes in a given year will cause significant fluctuations in the averages each year. By contrast, there was less turnover for the 2020-21 academic year (data not calculated) than either for 2019 or 2021.

Yet this study also reveals how few provosts in recent years have been in their positions for extended periods of time. Only 5 of 27 (19%) having been in office at least five years.

**Number AJCU Provosts with more than 5 years in office**

	5 years or more in office	8 years or more in office
July 1, 2019	5	0
July 1, 2020	5	2
July 1, 2021	5	2
July 1, 2022 (projected maximum)	6	5

## Deans of Colleges of Arts and Sciences

The situation for CAS deans is similar to that of provosts, if less pronounced.

July 1, 2021

average tenure 3.3

median tenure 2.4

2019 and 2020 seem to have been a year of unusually high turnover for CAS Deans, with 3 new deans and 7 interim deans in 2019, then 6 newly appointed deans and 3 interim deans in 2020. For 2021-22, there 5 interim deans and no newly appointed deans.

Length of tenure to date is still quite short, but longer than for provosts.

### Number of CAS Deans with more than 5 years in office

	5 years or more in office	8 years or more in office	10 years or more in office
July 1, 2019	6	2	1
July 1, 2020	10	2	1
July 1, 2021	9	3	1
July 1, 2022 (projected maximum)	11	5	1

### Aggregate change in leadership roles

The institutional effect of the turnover in each of these roles depends in part on the larger university context, so the first tab of the spreadsheet aggregates the average tenure of these 3 positions and sorts the institutions by average tenure of all 3.

At best, this offers an impressionistic sense of the scale of leadership turnover at each university—not least because this study does not consider other key leadership positions.

Another limitation: for people moving from one position to another at same institution, or from one AJCU institution to another, their length of tenure in their current position does not fully reflect the continuity of institution or of mission. Moves within institutions or among AJCU institutions are reflected in the notes – but only when those happen to have come to my attention. In many other cases, new appointees bring deep experience or affinity with the institution or the mission that neither the numbers nor the notes capture.

The changes together do, however, suggest that there will have been an unusual amount of change in two key leadership roles at AJCU institutions between 2019 and 2022: president and provost.

Between July 1, 2019 and July 1, 2022 (including upcoming retirements and resignations announced so far in 2021), **81% (22 of 27) AJCU institutions will experience turnover in president, provost, or both.** 22% (6 of 27) will have change in both positions.

Only Boston College, Georgetown, Saint Peter's, Loyola Marymount, and Fairfield have not had and (to my knowledge) do not anticipate a change in either position during that period of time (listed here according to average length of tenure-to-date of these 2 positions).

Despite the relatively short span of time under consideration, then, this analysis points to a period of unusually rapid change (2019-2022) for AJCU institutional leadership. Length of tenure seems unlikely to increase considerably, even if median tenure to date of provosts and CAS deans can hardly decrease much further.

Are presidents and provosts changing more rapidly than other leaders at AJCU institutions? This study cannot speak directly to that. Anecdotal information suggests similar rates of change for other positions, if not quite so pronounced as that for provosts.

Are AJCU institutions unique or unusual in this respect? Not likely. Instead, they seem to reflect larger patterns in higher education leadership.

#### ICP participants

The rapid change underscores the importance of the Ignatian Colleagues Program to supporting the mission and identify of AJCU institutions.

This analysis confirms that the ICP is successfully reaching the majority of CAS Deans, relatively rapidly into their tenures. In 2021, 12 of the 15 deans (80%) with more than 2 years of tenure had participated in an ICP cohort.

For provosts with more than 2 years of tenure in 2021, 7 of the 12 (58%) had participated; 55% of all provosts (15 of 27)—including 2 interim provosts—were part of an ICP cohort. That shows a strong effort to recruit new provosts into ICP, plus the effect of ICP-trained leaders subsequently moving into provost or interim provost positions at the same or different AJCU institutions.

For non-Jesuit presidents with less than ten years of tenure, 6 of 13 (46%) have participated in ICP – including at least 2 who were part of ICP before being named to the permanent presidential role.

This project also points to an ongoing, and perhaps growing, challenge for ICP. Many participants already occupying leadership roles will leave their current positions, and likely their current universities, within a few years.



## Xavier Participants in ICP

The ICP directory allows one way to assess this question: how many ICP participants remain at their current institution or have moved to another AJCU institution?

In the case of Xavier, I happen to know all of those who have participated. So it was simple to answer this question for one institution. (It is no unquestionably a challenge to keep current information in the ICP directory about the current status of all 13 cohorts.)

Xavier has had between 1 and 3 participants in each ICP cohort (1 – 13), for a total of 29 participants. The data below will exclude the 3 participants in cohort 13—since (obviously) the participants in the current cohort remain at Xavier.

I have distinguished between faculty, staff, and administrators—and include in the latter both Cabinet-level staff and faculty holding primarily administrative roles, including assistant and associate deans.

### Xavier ICP participants: cohorts 1 - 12

category	ICP participants	still at XU	at XU in administrative role	retired	left for non-SJ institution	left for SJ institution
administrator	15	6 (40%)	6 (40%)	1 (7%)	8 (53%)	0
faculty	9	9 (100%)	1 (11%)	0	0	0
staff	2	0	0	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	0
total	26	15 (58%)	7 (27%)	2 (8%)	9 (35%)	0

Xavier's 29 ICP participants (including the current cohort 13) represent only 4.4% of the 654 participants listed in the ICP directory, so these results cannot be extrapolated to make any generalizations about the entire program. Perhaps this example might, however, inform the principles used by university presidents and chief mission officers to recruit future ICP participants.

## AJCU Programs in Times of Rapid Leadership Turnover

How might the AJCU and individual institutions respond to such challenges and dynamics? Continuing to recruit new appointees in key positions to ICP seems prudent. Might some other leadership positions change less frequently than president, provost, and CAS dean? If so, their participation in ICP might benefit their own institution for a longer period of time.

Xavier's experience might also suggest an increase in ICP invitations to faculty members, who continue to be the longest-serving members our institutions. Their deep engagement in our universities' Jesuit Catholic mission is all the more essential in times of rapid leadership turnover.

Other AJCU programs, such as the [AJCU conferences and affinity groups](#), will also remain important as the people in many leadership positions come and go.