

# Xavier University Mission Examen

## Visiting Team Report

March 2016

### Introduction

Xavier University has successfully modeled its 2016 Mission Examen self-study with the AJCU document *Some Characteristics of a Jesuit Catholic University: A Self-Assessment Instrument*. They provided compelling examples of the leadership's decided commitment to mission; an academic life and campus culture that reflect the Jesuit Catholic mission committed to a faith that does justice through service to the local church, the region, and to the world; a supportive Jesuit community; and deep institutional integrity. After a careful review of the self-study and an extended visit on February 17-18, 2016, the visiting team is pleased to affirm most enthusiastically the mission strengths, priorities and planned enhancements of Xavier University.

As indicated below, a strong, innovative commitment to Jesuit mission permeates the campus, community, and culture of the university. This commitment is the result of past, present, and future mission priorities that are squarely rooted in Ignatian spirituality and aligned with the priorities of the Society of Jesus. Among the most noteworthy of Xavier's achievements are the wide array of innovative, effective formation programs that enable students, staff, faculty, and trustees to understand and advance the university's mission. The fecundity of these programs goes beyond the walls of the university, enhancing the mission capacities of other schools within and beyond the network, as evidenced in the development and growth of online resource, [www.jesuitsource.org](http://www.jesuitsource.org).

The findings of the visiting team are summarized below in sections related to mission strengths and mission enhancements. A schedule of the site visit is attached to this document.

### A. Mission Strengths

The Xavier Mission Examen lists five strengths and the institution has re-affirmed their commitment to these strengths into the next decade. We affirm these strengths and cite a few illustrative examples below:

1. *Xavier's Jesuit Catholic identity pervades the culture as evidenced through the curriculum, the community's shared recognition of purpose, brand and identity, the foundational documents, and the campus' art and physicality.*

The visiting team affirms that the pervasiveness of mission is very visible and lived across all members of the Xavier community and is visibly encountered by all who spend time on the campus. Of the many exceptional ways in which mission is expressed, the following are particularly notable: the intentional formation of the members of Board of Trustees; the *Seeking Integration and Wisdom: The Xavier Way* document that speaks powerfully to a way of proceeding consistent with Xavier's Jesuit, Catholic roots; the

new Core Curriculum and related programs that are deeply rooted in the gifts of our Ignatian heritage (*Magis*, Reflection, Discernment, Cura Personalis, Solidarity and Kinship, and Service Rooted in Justice and Love); annual programming that specifically demonstrates its commitment to their Jesuit Catholic identity; The Dorothy Day Center for Faith and Justice that has become an important and integral presence on campus: the centrality and influence of the Center for Mission and Identity/Conway Institute; artwork and campus design that provide strong visual representation of the mission and identity of the university; and human resource policies and practices that recognize the inherent dignity of each person.

2. *The University successfully orients students, faculty, staff and administrators to the mission, and it continues to support the mission diligently through **numerous curricular and co-curricular programs and initiatives.***

The visiting team affirms that the University is successful in the orientation of students, faculty, staff, and administrators, and that the mission is pervasive in curricular and co-curricular programs and initiatives. Of particular note are: Manresa orientation programs for faculty, staff, students, and trustees; mission mentoring programs for faculty, staff, and administrators; intentional formation of cabinet members for mission leadership; and their flagship AFMIX (Assuring the Future Mission and Identity of Xavier) program, which is a 2-year formation program on the mission and identity of the University.

3. *The processes by which the tradition is expressed throughout the campus community are **inclusive and broad.** Everyone is invited into the mission and valued for their personal and professional appropriation of the University's Jesuit Catholic identity. This promise was articulated through the lens of Pope Francis' call for a "culture of encounter" in The Xavier Way: Seeking Integration and Wisdom document.*

The visiting team affirms that the mission and identity is expressed throughout the campus in an inclusive and broad manner, and that individuals are invited and valued for their personal and professional appropriation of the University's Jesuit Catholic identity. A staff member summed up the inclusive culture the team experienced by sharing "I feel at home here," and the president of the Muslim Student Association explained "I am most content with my religion and life than I have ever been before." Of the many exceptional ways in which this is expressed, the following are particularly notable: the broadly inclusive and authentic manner by which the guiding document, "The Xavier Way: Seeking Integration and Wisdom" was developed; the Xavier Student Commitment developed by students in 2014 as their mission-based honor code; the way faculty, staff, administration, and students all speak to the inclusiveness of Xavier and many note that "this is home;" and the intentional commitment to diversity that animates the Dorothy Day Center for Faith and Justice.

4. ***Community service and engagement** are core commitments deeply embedded in the University's ethos as demonstrated through the various academic and co-curricular opportunities as well as the mutually beneficial partnerships with neighboring communities, civic organizations, local schools and regional affiliates.*

The visiting team affirms that community service and engagement are expressly and visibly part of the ethos of the University, through academic, co-curricular, and integral partnerships within the community and across the region. Notable examples include: the mutually reinforcing relationships with area Catholic schools; the community outreach and educational work of programs like the Institute for Spirituality and Social Justice, Xavier's Ethics/Religion and Society program, the Brueggeman Center for Dialogue, and the Eigel Center for Community-Engaged Learning; a network of community-focused "mission animators" convened by the president to enhance outreach effectiveness; and the work of the Dorothy Day Center for Faith and Justice, including its summer internship program. Considering the University's interest in diversity and inclusion, it is worth noting that one staff member shared, "There is an energy around the Center for Faith and Justice that is highly inclusive."

5. *Xavier's allocated resources effectively support the orientation, understanding and animation of the University's Jesuit Catholic identity.*

The visiting team affirms that the resources, both people and finances, support the orientation, understanding and animation of the University's Jesuit Catholic identity. In addition to all that is cited above, other noteworthy examples are: a strongly supportive Jesuit community; a committed, engaged Board of Trustees, the visionary and intentional leadership of President Fr. Michael J. Graham, SJ, who prioritizes the allocation of resources for mission; the work Dr. Debra Mooney, Chief Mission Officer, who has been instrumental in infusing an understanding of mission across the university; The Center for Mission and Identity and its Conway Institute for Jesuit Education, which offers an array of programs and maintains a comprehensive collection of digital and print resources on Jesuit Education and Ignatian Spirituality; financial management policies and practices that support the mission of the University; and a strong commitment to environmental sustainability.

## **B. Mission Enhancements**

Building upon the clear mission strengths articulated above, Xavier University has prioritized five mission enhancements as part of its strategic planning process. The visiting team is convinced that these enhancements are appropriate, effective, and attainable ways to advance the already strong mission commitment of the University for which they are recognized. We offer the following affirmations and encouragements.

1. *Successfully launch and develop the Institute for Spirituality and Social Justice through the Department of Theology.*

The University has, indeed, resourced, marketed, and launched the Institute. The visiting team was able to meet with faculty and review the documents, curricula, enrollments, and programs of the Institute. The plans are impressive and the anticipated outcomes are appropriate to a Jesuit institution and will serve the Church and wider community in important ways that remind one of the social projection achieved by the institutes of the

University of Central America in El Salvador, for example. The outreach of the Institute will not, however, be limited to those enrolled in graduate programs, as it will welcome participants in workshops, certificate programs, and retreats.

2. *Endow an Institute for Ignatian Spirituality and Leadership through the Center for Mission and Identity.*

This is a realistic and strategic next step for the Center for Mission and Identity; one that builds upon the successful model for the endowment of the Conway Institute for Jesuit Education. Once this second Institute is fully funded, the Center will have two parallel mechanisms to ensure the ongoing formation of faculty, staff, and trustees to advance the mission. The seed funding that has already been committed by the president is simultaneously another example of leadership's commitment to mission and an effective way to enable donors to imagine the types of programs that will happen under the auspices of the Institute.

3. *Devise fresh ways to integrate mission and identity into staff and faculty hiring, development, and evaluation.*

This enhancement is squarely within the capacities of Xavier to achieve for at least two notable reasons. First, the University has a proven track record for designing, funding, and sustaining innovative programs to form and inform colleagues. AFMIX, Manresa Orientations, Faculty Mentoring Programs, and JesuitResource.org are just but a few such programs. Second, the Center for Mission and Identity has an effective practice of utilizing people who have been formed to help form others, be it in the program they went through or a new initiative. They are, so to speak, "building a deep bench" filled with talented, creative people who desire to share with others what they themselves have received. The visiting team saw evidence of this in the AFMIX, Faculty Mentoring, Manresa, and ICP programs.

Of particular note is the developing practice of including adjunct faculty more intentionally in the programs offered by the Center for Mission and Identity. Aware of the growing importance of and challenges to adjunct faculty, the visiting team strongly encourages continued focused growth in this area.

More globally, the Office of Human Resources has been working to enhance the performance appraisal process to include a deeper alignment with Ignatian values and has also developed a hiring site with mission descriptors throughout.

4. *More intentionally connect such sectors of University work as diversity, sustainability, community engagement, interfaith dialogue, local and global solidarity, etc., to the core Jesuit mission of the University.*

This is a particularly Ignatian enhancement because it is an entrepreneurial, responsive, and adaptive attempt to establish fruitful conversations among university professionals who are committed to the work of justice in the community. These professionals are

gathered informally as “mission animators.” They determine their goals and projects by sharing their individual efforts to respond to the needs of the wider community and promote the common good. By so doing, they create a synergy and impact that no one office could make on its own, as evidenced in the March 12, 2015 discussion of Pope Francis’ commitment to the environment and the March 5-6, 2015 Neighborhood Summit. The animators explained that “We build social capital by being involved in the process – building long term relationships for the community,” and “Xavier is known for being intentional and as a place for discourse.”

5. *Hire a Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, constitute a President’s Diversity and Inclusion Advisory and Action Council, and create a strategic plan for diversity and inclusion that proceeds from our Jesuit identity and supports the Xavier Way.*

Given the pressing issues of race, power, and privilege in our schools, cities, and country, this is a timely and fundamental mission enhancement for Xavier, as it is for all Jesuit and Catholic schools. The visiting team is confident that the University is poised well to successfully achieve this enhancement over the next several years through their ongoing collaborative efforts and commitment to justice. The University has already established the position of Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, hired a well-respected leader and academic administrator, Dr. Janice Walker, to serve as CDIO, and has identified strategically located space for the new office.

The following quotation from one community member speaks volumes to their commitment to this mission enhancement: “Our hope is that in five or ten years time, diversity and inclusion is as much a part of the fabric of Xavier’s culture as mission has become.”

To this end, the visiting team strongly recommends that the University maintains and enhances the existing connections between the Center for Mission and Identity and the emerging Office for Diversity and Inclusion. Though they will not share a space, the mission of the University binds them together in purpose. It is fitting that the Director of the Center for Mission and Identity has served as the leader of the President’s Diversity and Inclusion Action and Advisory Council during its first year. The team suggests, for example, that the CMO and the CDIO meet regularly with the president in the first year or two to help ensure that the hope expressed above comes to light.

## **Conclusion**

The visit to Xavier University confirmed the information provided in the 2016 Xavier University Mission report and associated materials. The report provided impressive evidence that Xavier has integrated the Characteristics of Jesuit Colleges and Universities outlined by the Association of Jesuit Universities and Colleges (AJCU). The seven characteristics are apparent throughout the fabric of the University. The visiting team’s interactions and interviews with all stakeholders affirmed the integration. Most significant, the characteristics are put into action, including but not limited to the core curriculum, programming, facilities, celebrations, community engagement and staff, student, faculty and administrative planning and “work.” We are confident that the

University has done an exceptional job assessing its strengths and building on them by identifying strategic mission priorities for the next several years.

The team wishes to express its gratitude for the hospitality and kindness of everyone with whom they interacted. The materials provided were thorough, clearly presented and specifically addressed the characteristics. The schedule provided an opportunity to gain a breadth of interactions that provided opportunities for frank dialogue about Xavier's efforts to seek integration and wisdom while recognizing that creative tensions exist.

We commend all members of the Xavier community for their efforts to aspire to their vision, live their mission and model their values.

**Respectfully Submitted:**

Dr. Edward J. Peck  
John Carroll University  
Chief Mission Officer  
Adjunct Professor of Theology and Religious Studies

Dr. Ellen F. Spake  
Rockhurst University  
Chief Mission Officer  
Professor of Physical Therapy

Dr. Mary Wardell-Ghirarduzzi  
University of San Francisco  
Vice Provost, Diversity Engagement & Community Outreach  
Adjunct Professor of Organizations, Communication and Leadership

Professor Pamela Zarkowski, JD, MPH  
University of Detroit Mercy  
Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs  
Professor of Dentistry