

# Xavier University Mission Priority Examen

## Peer Review Report

### I. Key Information

- A. Institution: Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio
- B. Report Submission Date: January 2024
- C. Xavier University Leadership
  - Dr. Colleen Hanycz, President
  - Vincent C. Caponi, Board Chair
- D. Peer Visitor Committee
  - Dr. Cynthia M. Schmearsal, EdD, Creighton University (Chair)
  - Brigid Kinsella-Alba, Marquette University
  - William Kriege, M.A., Rockhurst University
  - Rev. Myles Sheehan, S.J., M.D., Georgetown University
- E. Local Self-study Committee
  - Dr. Debra Mooney, PhD (Chair)
  - Fr. Jim McCann SJ
  - Fr. Edward Schmidt SJ
  - Mr. Joe Shadle
  - Mr. Tim Sundrup
  - Ms. Jennifer Tighe
  - Ms. Roberta Whitely
  - Dr. Teresa Young, EdD

### II. Previous Jesuit Mission Priorities 2016 Enhancements and Update

In the last decade, Xavier University has moved to the forefront of Jesuit higher education as a university where faculty, staff, and students are knowledgeable about and act in light of the fundamental animating spirit at the heart of the University. Now, Xavier is poised to become even better recognized as a mission-driven organization acting upon and embodying its fundamental Jesuit identity—and enabling others to act upon Jesuit values as well. We will:

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

Accomplished— This was a restructuring of the master’s program in theology. The recent addition of an asynchronous online option along with the in-person option has contributed to an increase in enrollment. The program’s curriculum has been revised, offering concentrations in theological studies, ethics and spirituality, and pastoral and social ministry. Certificate programs are also available in biblical studies, ethics, pastoral care, and spirituality.

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

Outcome of goal accomplished - Rather than founding a second institute within Mission and Identity, three significant gifts and endowments now cover almost all operating expenses.

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

Accomplished – Examples: updated prospective employee website, modified evaluation procedure [kept mission intact], and added “hiring for mission” as a responsibility in the Charter of the Board’s Jesuit Mission and Identity Committee.

**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.**

Accomplished – Area representatives, called ‘Mission Animators, met regularly to support activities associated with an annual theme. An initiative of this connection was to offer internal grants, funded by gifts, for faculty, staff and student engagement. Topics were Truth, Racial Healing and Justice (2021), Take It On 2020/Civic election engagement (suspended due to COVID), Women (Celebrating 50 years of women students at Xavier; 2018-19), Economic Justice (2017-18), and Immigration and Refugees (2016-17).

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

Accomplished - Janice Walker, Ph.D., formerly the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and professor of mathematics, founded and served in the role for five years. During her tenure, an advisory board was constituted, and a strategic plan was created with goals met. The strength of this accomplishment is evident in the robust and smooth transition to the next vice president, Ivy Banks, JD. As Fr. McDonald noted, “She [Ivy] has come to Xavier from Phoenix and promises to be an important figure at Xavier. Xavier should be complimented for moving this MPE priority forward by creating this department, effectively staffing it and advancing on its 5-year strategic plan for diversity.”

**III. Current MPE Self-study Process**

In November 2022, Father Provincial Karl Kiser, S.J. invited Xavier University to initiate its Mission Priority Examen (MPE) process. In the ensuing months, an invitation to reflect on mission was engaged with some stakeholders, notably staff within the Division of Mission and Identity, faculty and staff participants in select mission formation programs, trustees, and XUC, a leadership body comprised of the

Senior Leadership Team and their direct reports. The structure of the reflection questions posed with the listed stakeholders both addressed the two areas requested by the Provincial and followed the structure of an Ignatian Examen.

The initial self-study report informed by the reflections was drafted over the summer. Recognizing an unusual volume of employee transitions in the wake of the pandemic - a phenomena not unique to Xavier - in addition to incorporating the insights of the reflections surfaced, the writers also used the report as an opportunity to educate newer faculty, staff, and administration on the breadth of the University's mission and the ways in which its Jesuit, Catholic identity is expressed.

The greatest breadth of reflection and engagement, including with some key stakeholders such as the Jesuit community, occurred in August and September of 2023 once the original draft of the MPE was written and circulated among the broader Xavier community. Such circulation included announcement at the academic year's opening convocation and posting in "Xavier Today," a campus newsletter, with an invitation to offer feedback and learnings. Reflections offered through in-person conversation and electronic communications informed the late-September penning of a penultimate self-study report draft, leading to the final draft in advance of the late November 2023 MPE peer visit.

#### **IV. Self-Study Content**

##### Characteristic 1: Leadership and Public Commitment

Xavier University demonstrates marked and noteworthy intentionality in forming the Board of Trustees in an understanding of the university's Jesuit, Catholic mission and in a way of proceeding marked by this mission. This valuing is evident in myriad ways, many detailed in the self-study report. Of particular note is the practice of having new trustees begin their board service as members of the Mission and Identity committee of the board, a means of inviting their intentional engagement with Xavier's Jesuit, Catholic identity and shaping their mission-centered service into the future. The value placed on selecting trustees for and forming them in mission was demonstrably evident in the peer team's session with Trustees. Over half of the board self-elected presence and engagement at the visiting team's in-person listening session with Trustees.

Another leadership body of particular note is the university's Senior Leadership Council (SLC). "Mission alignment/promotion" is an expressed Leadership Competency, an overt nod to valuing mission. Additionally, there is a long-standing tradition of a strong Mission & Ministry presence at Xavier; the recent transition from an office to a division demonstrates a sustained and deepening institutional valuing.

In terms of public expression, there are visible markers of mission and identity on campus, and additional opportunities for enhancing public expression of mission surfaced in our visit. Two notable opportunities named in listening sessions include deepening the institution's role as a voice for justice and a new, intentional (i.e. centralized) physical location for Jesuit community

### Characteristic 2: The Academic Life

Xavier University has a deliberate and robust commitment to its mission as a Jesuit and Catholic institution. The educational program is guided by attention to what are termed the “four Curas: Cura Propria, Cura Personalis, Cura Studiorum, and Cura Apostolica,” with a goal of providing an experience for the students that is broad, humanistic, and looking to their intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth. The core curriculum serves as the basis for conveying the Jesuit and Catholic mission in an effort to provide depth and reflection on six Jesuit values at the heart of the core: Magis, Reflection, Discernment, Cura Personalis, Solidarity and Kinship, and Service Rooted in Justice and Love. Student learning outcomes in the core curriculum are mapped onto the six Jesuit values as evidence of academic grounding and achievement consistent with mission and identity.

A variety of campus centers provide a focus on academic excellence with emphasis on faith, justice, theology, spirituality, ethics, Catholic studies, and environmental studies. Faculty are engaged in the mission through the work of the Center for Mission and Identity with specific development programs on Jesuit education and Ignatian pedagogy offered by the Ruth and Robert Conway Institute for Jesuit Education.

Graduate education at Xavier looks to integrate the University mission by combining mastery over specific areas of study with reflection on how Catholic and Ignatian heritage provide ways to illuminate these areas of study.

A major new effort for Xavier University is the establishment of a College of Osteopathic Medicine. This effort is the first of the five mission priorities and enhancements in the University's Strategic Plan for 2023-2031. A new dean has been hired for the College of Osteopathic Medicine which will open in 2027. The Board has developed a special task force to oversee the development of the school along with the new dean. The medical school is envisioned as furthering Xavier's mission by focusing on training providers geared to service and primary care with a hope to help meet the State of Ohio's need for more primary care practitioners.

Discussion with faculty revealed great affinity with the mission of Xavier, concerns about finances, diversity, retention, and tensions about competing visions of the meaning of Jesuit and Catholic for Xavier, as well as a hope for a future where there was a greater openness to change in an environment where people felt safe to challenge to question.

The plans for the new College of Medicine will bring a new faculty to the University and there is a need for further exploration of how a faculty will be recruited that aligns with Xavier's mission and is committed to developing physicians who value primary care that is driven to work with those on the margins of society.

### Characteristic 3: The Pursuit of Faith, Justice, and Reconciliation

The extensive depth and breadth of Xavier University's commitment to inclusion, diversity, and equity evidence it as authentically committed to the mission-centered nature of this work. The university has invested spiritual, intellectual, and financial resources in this arena.

Xavier's valuing of diversity, equity and inclusion is evident in its mandating that all new members of the Board of Trustees start with a term on the Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the Jesuit Mission Committee. This leadership formation in conjunction with the Vice President for Institutional Diversity and Inclusion (CDIO), Office of Diversity and Inclusion (OIDI), and the Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) aim to assure that Xavier's policies, structures, and programs advance equity and inclusion. Robust student, faculty, and staff advisory boards and affinity groups that engage students of color, students who identify as LGBTQIA+, and veterans create spaces in which students from underrepresented populations can find a deeper sense of belonging, find their voice, and flourish. Accessibility and Disability Resources de-stigmatize learning disabilities by providing targeted support for the expanding population of students on the autism spectrum.

In addition to striving to create a nurturing and equitable campus, Xavier invites students to *go forth* as Ignatian agents of change with the *Take It On* Initiative of Civic Engagement, which, among other things, invites students to lean into the discomfort of civil dialogue with people possessing opposing political views. Additionally, the Walter Brueggeman, SJ Center for Dialogue encourages interfaith conversation and understanding. Given today's news-cycle, these two initiatives address some of our world's most pressing issues.

As the university works to deepen its realized commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion opportunity exists to – in the words of Fr. Walter Burghardt, SJ – sustain a “long loving look at the real,” recognizing that for so many institutions, Xavier included, retention and other key success markers for individuals of diverse identities do not reflect the reality for which we aspire. Another opportunity for enhancement in this characteristic lies in continued efforts to advance financial access through strategic growth in endowed scholarships.

### Characteristic 4: Promoting an Ignatian Campus Culture

Xavier University has worked to set a strong foundation that lives the Mission of Xavier through values of Reflection, Discernment, Solidarity and Kinship, Service

rooted in Love and Justice, *Cura Personales*, and *Magis*. Throughout campus, employees, students and board members spoke of Xavier's mission fueling their commitment to fostering a community that centers students and provides them with a transformational experience.

The new positioning of the Dorothy Day Center within Mission and Ministry along with the several new hirings within the department, allows for new energy and new ideas to create space for students on campus. In addition, Xavier has committed five employees to a three-year spiritual director program with the Midwest Province Office, which will enhance Xavier's ability to offer the Spiritual Exercises to more members of the university.

The combination of a strong infrastructure of Mission programming for faculty and staff paired with energy from the Jesuit community, lends to refreshing the community of Xavier within its Catholic and Jesuit Mission.

#### Characteristic 5: Service to the Catholic Church

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) identifies appropriation of the faith as one of [six areas of core competencies](#) for college education/ministry. XU addresses this demand by creating a more engaged laity through the myriad of opportunities offered by the Center for Faith Justice (CFJ) that include weekly and daily mass, weekly opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation and pray before the Blessed Sacrament, and annual immersion trips, Lenten programs, and participation in the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults.

XU creates a more educated laity through its Ethics/Religion and Society sequence of courses, minor in *Catholicism and Culture and Spirituality and Solidarity*, and minor in *Peace and Justice studies*. XU also directly serves the Catholic Church by offering a significant discount on graduate level tuition for Catholic school teachers and through President Colleen Hanycz's service on the:

- Higher Education Working Group of the Education Subcommittee of the USCCB
- Steering Committee for the annual meeting of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU)

Furthermore, XU Chief Mission Officer and University Sustainability Coordinator have served on the Archdiocese of Cincinnati's Laudato Si Action Platform Implementation Committee and the Care for Creation Task Force, which spawned the Archdiocese's first Care for God's Creation: The Laudato Si Action Platform Conference. XU provides an example of leadership for the surrounding Catholic community through its commitment to green facilities management (geothermal heating of the Our Lady of Peace Chapel) and architecture (LEED certification of Alter Hall, Health United Building/Recreation Center, Conaton Learning Commons, Smith Hall, Justice Hall,

Central Utility Plant). The 2022 formation of the Laudato Si Steering Committee will continue to advance XU's status as a Catholic leader in caring for our common home.

#### Characteristic 6: Relationship to the Society of Jesus

The Jesuit community at Xavier University supports the University in teaching, scholarship, campus ministry, and administrative leadership. A major commitment of the Jesuits at Xavier is its involvement in Masses, sacramental ministry, retreats and spiritual direction. The Jesuits have also provided substantial financial assistance to the University via support for educational centers, scholarships, retreat programs, and University fund raising campaigns. Although the community is relatively small with nine Jesuits directly involved with students, it serves as a vital and generous presence within the University.

Xavier University supports the local Jesuit community, the Upper Midwest Province of the Society and the worldwide Society. It has created in 2023 the Michael J. Graham, S.J. Endowment to Sustain Jesuits and Their Works at Xavier and used these funds to hire a Jesuit in a new position of Associate Vice President for Mission and Ministry/University Jesuit Chaplain. Xavier engages with the Midwest Province in assisting with province initiatives and, as well, takes part in programs sponsored by the Association of Jesuit College and Universities and contributes to the work of the International Association of Jesuit Universities. Xavier has a well-deserved positive reputation for its resources that are shared nationally on Ignatian spirituality and values in higher education.

There is tension, however, about what it means for Xavier University to be Catholic and Jesuit. This topic surfaced in multiple meetings with discussions sometimes focused on discomfort on what is perceived as a currently over emphasis on Catholic as a descriptor and a move away from what are, among some, thought to be more inclusive Jesuit values. The Jesuit Community expressed a strong desire that there be a move forward in furthering the reality that there is no Jesuit without Catholic, that one cannot simply label anything perceived as difficult or a source of pain as Catholic, and that broadly attractive ideas like diversity, care for the environment, openness to people of all faiths or none are somehow uniquely Jesuit. In addition, Jesuits working at Xavier acknowledged that their decision to locate the Jesuit residence on the periphery of the campus in a not easily accessible location has made them marginalized. This marginalization is not only geographic with concerns raised by members of the Jesuit Community that fostering a loving and realistic fidelity to the Catholic Church in matters of worship, relationships with the Archdiocese and larger Church, and a respectful candor about matters of Church teaching is sometimes unwelcome. The Jesuits on campus are not a reactionary or backward-looking community; they feel there is a need for Xavier to move into a more thoughtful and welcoming appreciation of Jesuit as both Catholic and Jesuit, realizing that there will be tensions, misperceptions, and feelings of hurt that need to be dealt with honestly and with compassion.

### Characteristic 7: Institutional Integrity

With an intentionality that pervades all levels of the university, Xavier invites students, faculty, staff, administrators and the Board of Trustees to learn and model what it means to be a mission leader at the university. From onboarding through continued educational programs, Xavier puts an emphasis on the importance of being grounded in mission.

Xavier's bright spots are uniquely evidenced in the expansive mission programming available to faculty and staff including Manresa, AFMIX, and the new Ignatian Leadership Development Program. Attaching the metric of becoming 33% Ignatian Educators of Distinction in the current strategic plan promotes the importance of mission development throughout departments across campus. Given the strength of Xavier's mission programming for faculty and staff, we recommend the institution explore opportunities for deepening integration of equity, diversity and inclusion in such formation offerings.

One clear and widely acknowledged challenge Xavier faces is a financial deficit that has created a scarcity of resources across many levels of campus. This includes a decrease of up to 40% in some departmental budgets and static merit increases over a sustained period of time. Funding issues have also placed strain on faculty and staff, with many expressing a need to do more work for less and to feel like – while they are giving 100% to serve students – they are not appreciated for the work they are doing. In addition to the deficit, a need to hire and retain faculty and staff of color across the university was expressed.

### **Areas of Provincial Emphasis**

#### 1. Mission Formation

Xavier has worked very intentionally to create accessible space to meet the needs of students, faculty, staff, administrators, and their Board of Trustees. Their care for developing a strong Mission has allowed for the opportunity to have spaces of open dialogue and listening across the university. There is a freedom present where members of the university feel comfortable speaking because they know they will be heard and that what they say matters.

As they embark on a new leadership model within the Mission Division, and with many new leaders across the university, they have a wonderful opportunity to be creative and innovative with their programing, branding, and class development.

#### 2. Sustaining Agreement

Xavier University's President, Dr. Colleen Hanycz, is engaged with the Superior of the Jesuit Community, Fr. Walter Deye, S.J. understanding the role of director of the work of a Jesuit institution. In conversation, it is clear she takes this



responsibility seriously and that her role as President of Xavier is meant to be in conversation with the Superior of the Jesuit Community, the Provincial Assistant for Higher Education, and the Provincial. The sustaining agreement was recently signed and is well understood by Dr. Hanycz. Likewise, she is committed to the Provincial's recent effort in creating a collaboration agreement that is less legal and more focused on vibrant relations between the Province and the universities under his care.

The way the relationship maintains its vitality, energy, and sustained effectiveness will be continuing the broad and deep communication Dr. Hanycz has with the Jesuits locally and at the Province level. In having a lay President at Xavier University I expect there will be more engagement and vitality as she realizes the importance of the relationship with the Society in a way that a Jesuit might take for granted or politely ignore.

## V. Jesuit Mission Priorities

### A. 2023 Mission Priorities

Xavier commits to the following five Enhancements over the course of the Strategic Plan 2023-2031:

1. The establishment, support, and execution of the first Jesuit College of Osteopathic Medicine will align with and boost the Jesuit Catholic mission of the University. As President Hanycz stated in the announcement, “This college will sit squarely at the intersection of community need, Xavier’s established academic strengths and a remarkable Jesuit Catholic mission that emphasizes service that is rooted in justice and love.”

In the next year:

- + Will hire a mission-conscious founding dean of the College of Medicine, who will advance the Jesuit Catholic identity of the University through the College.
  - + The Board of Trustees’ College of Medicine Task Force will commence.
2. The re-constituted Division of Mission and Ministry will achieve its purpose to:
    - + enhance the animation of the University’s Jesuit Catholic educational identity and activation of the four Universal Apostolic Preferences
    - + provide greater support for student ministry and faith formation
    - + further enhance the faculty/staff engagement with Xavier’s Jesuit Catholic identity
    - + strengthen connections to networks, especially the Midwest Jesuit Province,
    - + the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati Jesuit Family
    - + sustain the presence of- and pastoral engagement with campus Jesuits

As part of this Priority, the 2023 establishment of the Michael J. Graham, S.J. Endowment to Sustain Jesuits and other gifts will be advanced to fully endow all campus Jesuits and all operations of the Division by 2031, thus, in perpetuity.

In the next year:

- + Will onboard those serving in the newly created positions of Associate Vice President for Mission and Ministry/University Chaplain and the Associate Director of Mission and Identity/University Sustainability Coordinator, as well as complete the hiring and onboarding of open positions in the Center for Faith and Justice/Campus Ministry, including the Director, two senior campus ministers and an Administrative Assistant III.
- + Will finalize the legal and logistical steps to establish the Fr. Graham

Endowment and begin its annual growth.

3. Feasible goals of the campus' Laudato Si 'Action Plan will be identified and advanced to fulfill Xavier's commitment to being a Laudato Si' university.

In the next year:

- + Will conduct a campus asset inventory
- + Will advance on the first- and second-year goals of the LSAP, including seeking LEED standard for the new College of Medicine building, conducting a recycling audit, and developing an Integral Ecology Seminar for staff leading to Province Ignatian Educator of Distinction recognition.

4. Develop and implement a model of Ignatian vocational discernment for second year students.

In the next year:

- + Will onboard the new Associate Provost for Academic Engagement, including participation in the current cohort of the AJCU's Ignatian Colleagues Program.
- + Will plan and offer a pilot Ignatian Vocational Discernment retreat in preparation for large-scale rollout.

5. Actions and initiatives to advance on the two key performance indices of institutional health for Leadership in Mission and Identity will be undertaken.

- + KPI1 = Province Ignatian Educators of Distinction
  - o goal: 33% of Xavier's actively working full-time faculty and staff will have received the distinction. To achieve this, we need to keep up with retirements and departures and incrementally engage more people in mission education and formation; 2023 = 30%.
- + KPI2 = Making intellectual-spiritual life connections
  - o goal: the mean score for senior students on the 13 mission questions will be >3.0 (from the administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement every three years); 2020 = 2.88 (Jesuit mean 2.72)

For KPI1, in the next year

- + (Vice presidents) will support the professional development of all XUC members to reach the competency level of Province Ignatian Educator of Distinction.
- + Will offer a newly created Xavier Mission Leadership Seminar for the many recently hired key leaders.

For KPI2, in the next year

- + Empower staff, especially those in the divisions of Mission and Ministry, Student Affairs, and Diversity and Inclusion, to assist students in making more explicit connections between the Ignatian values/ spirituality and their lived experience.
- + Empower faculty through professional development opportunities, especially through the Center for Teaching Excellence, the Center for Mission and Identity/Conway Institute, the Eigel Center and the Brueggeman Center, to strengthen intellectual-spiritual life connections in the classroom context.

B. Strategic and Achievable Nature of the Priorities

Xavier's five mission priorities are strategic, reflecting carefully thought through strategies within the University's current strategic plan. Adopting them – given mission alignment – as the university's mission priorities helps to ensure they remain a central focus and also supports allocation of essential resources. Finances will play an important role in ultimately determining the achievability of the priorities.

**VI. Peer Visitor Team Recommendations to the College/University**

Xavier University's mission priorities intentionally align with the institution's current strategic plan, an effort to ensure they receive the needed attention and support.

We underscore the importance of opening the new College of Osteopathic Medicine with an unequivocal commitment to mission integration and honor the magnitude of this new endeavor, as discussed in Characteristic 2 above. Additionally, we affirm the vision of the new Division of Mission and Ministry in deepening formation in and engagement with the Jesuit, Catholic mission for all stakeholders. Similarly, we affirm the University's investment in sustainability through the hiring of a new position and the situating of that position within Mission and Ministry and an institutional commitment to clearly articulate and track mission-related key performance indicators (KPIs).

Coupled with the mission priorities formally expressed in Xavier's self-study report, priorities that we understand and endorse, we rearticulate some of the additional opportunities discerned through our visit and noted earlier in this report, notably:

- the opportunity to continue deepening embodied commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion discussed in Characteristic 3,
- the opportunity – detailed in Characteristic 6 of our report – to engage the broad university community in the inextricable relationship between Jesuit and Catholic and the ways in which values and commitments commonly attributed to Jesuit identity are – at their base – expressions of Catholic identity, and

- the broadly acknowledged need and commitment to continue laboring toward a future marked by institutional financial health.

## **VII. Conclusion and Additional Comments**

Xavier University is impressive in the ways in which the university strives to intentionally integrate, pervasively promulgate, and authentically embody its identity as a Jesuit Catholic institution of higher education and for its desire – evidenced throughout our interactions with the university community – to deepen its embrace and expression of this shared mission, growing to ever more fully serve as a beacon of light for and source of hope in our world.

