

Education for Justice: A Report from the Task Force

I. HISTORY

In October of 2000, a delegation of University of Scranton administrators, faculty and professional staff attended a conference on Commitment to Justice in Jesuit Higher Education at Santa Clara University. At that conference, Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach challenged all Jesuit colleges and universities in the U.S to be characterized more and more by “the service of faith and the promotion of justice...in who our students become, in what our faculty does, and how our universities proceed.” Jesuit colleges and universities around the world reacted to this challenge by engaging in discussion on the status of their academic and student life programs. These reflections revealed that much work pertaining to “education for justice” was already being done on Jesuit campuses, but except for a few notable exceptions, little coordination and synergy among these efforts existed.

So too, on the University of Scranton campus, early conversations focused on ways of involving more campus activities, including student life and academic affairs, in “the service of faith and the promotion of justice.” These early conversations revealed that at Scranton, as at other institutions, there already existed some activities that addressed this call. However, it was clear that much more coordination and organization would be necessary to bring forth a coherent program.

On 6 December 2002, a gathering of University people discussed initiatives related to education for justice on the University of Scranton campus. Comments from the gathering revealed very sound interest and guarded enthusiasm for developing programs in the areas of “education for justice.” Subsequently, Sr. Mary Anne Foley, Dr. Marie George, Dr. Elizabeth Randol, Dr. Rhonda Waskiewicz and Dr. Joseph Dreisbach, all present at the gathering, met on three occasions to develop the plan concept and make recommendations for a working body which would explore developing a structure that would promote the practice of education for justice in all aspects of University life, especially opportunities available to students. The group proposed a task force structure, composed of faculty, students, staff and administration and identified tasks that were to be pursued over a two-year period.

In November 2003, in response to this group’s recommendations, University President Scott R. Pilarz, S.J., appointed a two-year Task Force on Education for Justice to examine, publicize and promote campus initiatives, to research and propose new ones, and to propose a permanent structure to guarantee that such initiatives would continue to be effective. The Task Force was composed of representatives from faculty, staff, administration and students, and reported to the Administrators Conference through the Director of the Center for Mission Reflection.

Charges for the Task Force on Education for Justice

The first year charge to the Task Force included the following:

- Audit existing programs and projects relating to education for justice in the academic, student affairs and administrative divisions of the University, and map the education for justice infrastructure at the University, including elements in the curriculum.
- Investigate education for justice programs and initiatives at other colleges and universities, especially those similar to the University of Scranton.
- Develop an active communication process, including a website, to publicize activities, projects and programs relating to education for justice on our campus.

By the end of the second year, the Task Force was to conclude exploration of options and present a proposal for a permanent structure devoted to education for justice at the University of Scranton.

Throughout the time of its mandate, the Task Force was to:

- Serve as a clearinghouse and point of contact for the receipt and dissemination of information, questions, and possible initiatives related to education for justice.
- Identify and promote opportunities for faculty, staff and students to grow in understanding of justice issues and to engage in meaningful activity intended to promote education for justice.

Membership

The following people were invited to join the task force. All accepted.

- Rev. John Begley, S.J., Faculty, Department of Theology and Religious Studies (2004-2005)
- Mr. David Christiansen, Vice President for Finance (2003-2005)
- Dr. Joseph Dreisbach, Dean, CAS (2003-2005)
- Sr. Bernadette Duross, RSM, Director of Ignatian Spiritual Formation (2004-2005)
- Dr. Mary Anne Foley, CND, Faculty, Department of Theology and Religious Studies (2003-2005)
- Mr. David Ganley, Student, CAS, Justice Club (2004-2005)
- Mr. Anthony Giancattarino, Student, CAS, Justice Club (2003-2004)
- Dr. Patricia Harrington, Faculty, Department of Nursing (2003-2005)
- Mr. John Kraybill-Greggo, Director, Counseling Training Center (2003-2004)
- Ms. Dawn Lavelle, Dexter Hanley College Student Government President (2003-2005)
- Ms. Kristina Mardjokic, Student, CAS, Justice Club President (2003-2005)
- Dr. Michael Mensah, Faculty, Department of Accounting (2003-2005)
- Ms. Catherine Seymour, Campus Minister (2003-2005)
- Rev. John Shea, S.J., Vice President for Mission and Ministries (2003-2004)
- Ms. Patricia Vaccaro, Director of the Center for Social Action and Service Initiatives (2003-2005)
- Mr. Edward Wahesh, Area Coordinator, Student Affairs (2004-2005)

Education for Justice: A Preliminary Mission Statement and Definition

Initially, the Task Force recognized the need for a common understanding of what is involved in “the service of faith and the promotion of justice,” in order to gather data, evaluate our existing efforts, stimulate campus discussion and build consensus on this issue at our university. After a careful review of Decree Three from the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus as well as the growing literature on the subject, the Task Force adopted the following **preliminary** interpretation of our mission on education for justice:

Because the University of Scranton is founded on the gospel of Jesus Christ, it is committed to education for and activity on behalf of justice. This commitment is reinforced by the decision of the Society of Jesus to work for “the service of faith and the promotion of justice.” A significant dimension of this commitment is social justice which is concerned with how social, political, and economic structures impact individuals and groups, especially the poor and the less powerful. Thus, the promotion of justice includes:

- *A concern for the rights and welfare of the less powerful in society: the poor, racial and other minorities, women, children, the unborn*
- *A concern for the welfare of less powerful nations and communities in an era of global competition, dominated by highly developed economies*
- *A concern for the equitable and sustainable use of the environment for the sake of present and future generations*
- *A commitment to the promotion of peaceful, nonviolent means of effecting change and resolving conflict*

Taskforce Structure

Guided by this initial mission statement, the Task Force proceeded on its first-year agenda as described above. Throughout its two years of work, although the Taskforce met regularly as an entire group, it decided to allocate certain aspects of the agenda to smaller subcommittees. These included the Subcommittee on Student Life Issues, Subcommittee on Curriculum, Subcommittee on Communication, and Subcommittee on Practices at Other Universities.

Vision

As is probably always the case, people's understanding of justice varies widely, and many people responded to our initial inquiries about justice-related activities with such things as taking up a collection. In seeking to clarify further what we mean by education for justice, we were helped by Constance Fourré's description of the distinction between charity—"giving from one's abundance out of kindness"—and justice—"action to bring about structural change." She notes that in Catholic social thought both have always been considered necessary, but today justice is critical:

Because of society's complexity and the size of institutions today, service and sharing alone are not an adequate response. The root causes of poverty and the unequal distribution of power are built into the world's systems and institutions. Significant change, and therefore help for those in need, is impossible without addressing those institutions and systems.¹

Fourré proposes a five-step continuum between charity and justice, noting that service learning can involve any of these activities but needs to include the last two in order to be a vehicle for justice education:

1. collections, which provide resources to recipients but without any personal contact for students
2. direct service, which answers immediate needs and provides students with personal contact but does not bring about long-term change
3. service for empowerment, which begins to provide recipients with skills and assets they need to make changes in their lives
4. analysis, which brings about an awareness of the role of structures in the status quo and begins to evaluate strategies for change
5. advocacy, which works to change structures.²

We generally agreed that classes in a variety of disciplines are the prime venue for the kind of analysis that is critical to education for justice.

We do not believe that the above description of social justice, with the qualifications offered by Fourré, resolves all the questions that arise concerning the meaning of justice. Indeed, we support the recommendations of colleagues that on-going consideration of the nature of justice be built into all the University's initiatives in justice education and in particular into course syllabi. However, this vision has informed our research and our recommendations.

¹ Constance Fourré, *Journey to Justice: Transforming Hearts and Schools with Catholic Social Teaching* (National Catholic Educational Association, 2003), 7-8.

² Fourré, 53.

II. PROJECTS

Education for Justice Inventories

To provide a basis for evaluating existing social justice efforts, in the spring of 2004 the Task Force requested the heads of all the major divisions of the university³ to complete an inventory concerning courses, programs, activities, policies and procedures that deal with social inequities, global issues, environmental concerns, or peace. Most departments responded.

- *Courses.* From CAS 11 departments and 6 interdisciplinary programs responded; from PCPS, 7 departments; from KSOM, 5. They indicated that justice has a central role in 41 courses for majors (32 CAS, 9 PCPS) and an important role in 158 (69 CAS, 73 PCPS, 16 KSOM). Most GE courses are taught in CAS, which reported that justice has a central role in 36 GE courses and an important role in 79; PCPS reported 3 GE courses in which justice plays an important role.⁴ Of those courses, 85% dealt with social inequities, about half with global issues, and a third with environmental issues and/or peace. Fewer than 20% of those courses utilized out-of-class activity.
- *Programs & Activities.* In addition to what is done by academic departments, the Center for Ethics Studies, Judaic Studies, Bridges to El Salvador, Women's Center, Wellness Center, Justice Club, University Players, Counseling Center, Student Affairs, and Student Activities and Orientation reported educational programming about justice issues, more than half related to domestic social inequities. The Center for Social Action and Service Initiatives organizes and sponsors service to the poor in the local area and through trips in the U.S. and abroad. Many departments and organizations engage in charitable action, e.g., fundraising.
- *Policies & Procedures.* Bookstore, Physical Plant, Print Shop, Food Services, Public Safety, Human Resources, Purchasing, Systems & Software, Network Services, Library, and Treasurer's office have policies and/or procedures to address environmental issues; all these departments as well as Financial Aid, Internal Auditor, Affirmative Action have policies to address social inequities.

In order to gain further information about how justice is being addressed in courses, during Intersession and Spring of 2005 members of the Task Force assisted by other faculty queried 32 individual faculty members in the three undergraduate colleges, as well as most of the Theology, Philosophy and Political Science departments. Information garnered about their courses has been collected in a database, and their concerns and suggestions are summarized below.

Focus Groups

During the 2004 fall semester, at the request of the Task Force, the Department of Counseling and Human Services conducted focus groups to ascertain the perceptions, concerns, and recommendations of faculty, professional staff and undergraduate students concerning Education for Justice at the University. Invitations were sent to stratified samples of each group, derived with the assistance of the Office of Assessment & Institutional Research. For faculty 126 (50% of total) were invited and 21 participated; for students 1000 (20% of total) were invited and 12 participated; for professional staff 111 (50% of total) were invited and 27 participated. The 60-75 minute sessions were co-facilitated by graduate counseling students enrolled in practicum during the fall 2004 semester, and the director of the counselor-training center prepared a summary report, which the Task Force received at the beginning of the 2005 spring semester. The Task Force believes that in spite of the low turnout, particularly among students, comments and recommendations from all three categories of participants contained useful information and should be taken seriously.

³ Academic Departments, Interdisciplinary Programs, Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, University Ministries, Financial and Administrative Services, Student Organizations.

⁴ Some courses are counted twice since they can be taken by majors or by other students as GE.

All three of the targeted populations generally agreed that the University of Scranton makes substantial efforts in “promoting justice,” but that there are areas where growth is necessary and desired:

- Need for an agreed upon definition of social justice (faculty and staff).
- Need for university recognition of and support for research and activity on behalf of justice by students and staff (faculty).
- Appreciation that the university accords individual professors and departments freedom to decide what features of justice to include in their curricula and the freedom to decide how to convey the concepts to students. (faculty).
- The degree to which social justice is addressed in courses varies greatly depending on the professor, and justice is often addressed abstractly without concrete examples (students).
- Importance of field experience and service learning; the latter should be required for students in all majors. (all 3 categories). Need for greater funding for service and field trips, more service opportunities available to commuters, and follow-up on service experiences.
- In some courses where it is required, what is learned through the service is not applied to course material. (students).
- Faculty and staff should join students in service activity (professional staff).
- Groups within the university and the university as a whole don’t always “walk the walk” as well as “talk the talk” of social justice, especially with regard to the environment and gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons (all 3 categories).
- Concern that the task force report will not lead to concrete action (faculty).
- Seeing students involved in social justice-related tasks often makes us want to become more involved in social justice-related activities ourselves (faculty).

External Best Practices

Members of the Task Force completed a web search in order to ascertain education for justice initiatives at other institutions of higher learning. These initiatives were broken down into two categories: academic programs (undergraduate/graduate degrees in Peace/Justice related areas) and justice centers (office, center, or department that had the primary goal of educating, promoting or coordinating peace and justice related initiatives on campus).

In our search, several programs and initiatives found on other college and university campuses were labeled “best external practices” by committee members because of their excellence in promoting and educating for justice. These programs include: The University of San Diego’s Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice, Loyola University New Orleans’ Twomey Center for Peace through Justice, American University’s Justice Programs Office, and Villanova University’s Center for Peace & Justice Education.

Each of these centers/programs possesses the following characteristics:

- Goals and events highly publicized on their university’s webpage.
- Strong emphasis on scholarly research and education development on campus.
- Provides interdisciplinary academic program in Peace and Justice.
- Offers a degree (undergraduate or graduate) or a concentration in a justice-related area.
- Center’s Mission/Goals tied directly to University’s Mission.
- Implements a faculty development program in addition to a faculty lecture series.
- Provides local community service, education and advocacy initiatives.
- Student staff members participate in programming.
- Grants and other external funding contribute to center’s programming/finances.
- Collaboration with other offices, centers and academic departments on campus.
- Focuses efforts on critical issues of workers' rights, racism, poverty and justice.
- Education of faculty, staff, students and local community in peace and justice issues through speakers, forums, workshops and films.
- Utilizes national and local advocacy and social justice organizations in order to further its mission and identity.

Education for Justice Website

Construction was begun on a website, which will include:

- University resources for faculty, staff and students: current scholarship, database of courses, programs, service learning and other service opportunities, etc.
- Regularly updated calendar of events (with notice of these also to be sent to *RoyalNews*).
- Documents: Fr. Kolvenbach's Santa Clara Address, Task Force Report, etc.
- Links to other sites.

III. CONDITION OF EDUCATION FOR JUSTICE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SCRANTON

Curriculum

Interdisciplinary programs

Justice is multi-faceted and so it is not surprising that a number of significant curricular initiatives in justice education have taken the form of interdisciplinary courses and concentrations. Most of the courses in these concentrations fulfill General Education Area Requirements and many fulfill the Cultural Diversity requirement, as well. Most of the programs permit some substitution of courses. As a result, many students should be able to complete the concentrations within the minimum number of credits needed for graduation. The following four concentrations are almost by definition concerned with social justice: Environmental Studies, Latin American Studies, Peace and Justice Concentration, and Women's Studies. Within these Concentrations, the curriculum's concern with justice is clearly met. A variety of methodologies is employed in each of the Concentrations, such as films, symposia, guest speakers and some hands-on experience outside of the classroom.

College of Arts and Sciences

Philosophy and Theology

While specific course content is determined by individual professors, in most cases students in these courses reflect on the meaning of justice. In some sections, video presentations, case studies, autobiographical and fictional narratives, assignments and/or classroom discussions enable students to relate principles of justice to contemporary situations. In addition, the Center for Ethics Studies, co-founded and co-directed by members of the two departments has organized and sponsored faculty study groups and lectures.

Social Sciences

Political science courses are designed to foster awareness of situations of injustice, from political theory courses that focus on analyzing what justice is, to courses on public policy and government institutions that analyze how governments may create injustices, and/or try to remedy or eliminate them. Students are expected to keep up with current events so that what is going on in the world around them can be integrated into course content. Political science courses develop and enhance students' skills in critical thinking, analysis, and research skills that are necessary for understanding the causes of and possible responses to unjust situations, institutions and systems. Several faculty use exercises (in class and outside of class) that force students to be engaged citizens. Post-exercise analysis and reflection are key components of such experiences. Examples of such exercises are the Voter Registration Process Report, Local Government Guide Entry, *NY Times* Op-Ed analysis, balancing the budget simulation, and European Union simulation.

A number of Psychology and Criminal Justice courses emphasize critical thinking and analysis of attitudes when dealing with such issues as capital punishment, gender- and race-based discrimination, substance abuse and human rights violations.

Humanities

Because literature is primarily concerned with all matters human, several offerings in the English and Foreign Language departments consist largely of developing critical thinking on social issues which the reading of a wide variety of works requires, including colonialism, racism, sexism, free market system, sexism, poverty and human rights. History courses that emphasize justice issues include Race in America, Women's History, and the Latin American history courses. Some sections of the introductory U.S. History courses include discussion of significant justice issues.

Natural Sciences

Several members of the Chemistry Department have worked to infuse justice issues into courses, notably the concepts of "green chemistry" and sustainability. The Physics Department offers a course in "Energy and the Environment" that treats of such matters as the equitable distribution of finite energy resources and consumerism/consumption of citizens of the United States over against the poverty of underdeveloped countries.

College of Professional Studies

Overall, the faculty members are engaged in serious examination of the issues of Education for Justice. Much of the content for majors in the College of Professional Studies centers around the human condition, and course content is rich in the issues of justice. The emphasis is on two areas: a concern for the rights and welfare of the less powerful in society, that is, the poor, racial and other minorities, women, children, the unborn; and a concern for the welfare of less powerful nations and communities in an era of global competition, dominated by highly developed economies. The faculty is aware of best practices in the curriculum. They mention repeatedly reflection and experiential activities. They are also aware of the challenges they face to focus learning more effectively on matters of justice in society.

School of Management

The KSOM mission statement includes "fostering a comprehension of and sensitivity to international issues and social justice; and modeling personal integrity and ethical decision-making." Justice issues are discussed at the level of individual behavior within organizations (minimal standards of professional conduct and decision-making) and at the level of corporate citizenship (organizational strategies, policies, procedures, etc.). Business majors prepare students to enter specific professions, such as accounting, marketing, and finance. Students are required to know the standards of business ethics applicable to their intended profession. As a result, many of our major courses discuss and analyze minimal standards of behavior in areas such as employee relations, customer relations, governmental relations, and community relations. Underpinning all these discussions are issues of just and equitable treatment of the less powerful stakeholder, whether they be an employee, a community, or a country. The issues discussed are, however, not specifically labeled as justice issues and often not disclosed as such in course descriptions of syllabi. The College is aware that this needs to be done. Proper recognition of these issues as matters of justice will allow instructors to broaden analyses beyond the minimal standards contained in codes of ethics to include additional expectations arising from the University Jesuit mission and identity.

“Gaps” in the curriculum

In addition to information gathered on courses and programs across the three colleges, Task Force interviews yielded faculty perceptions of gaps that need to be addressed. Many of these gaps reinforce opinions expressed by participants in the Focus Group discussions and are summarized as follows:

- There is no shared understanding of the dimensions, goals, and objectives of education for justice among faculty on campus.
- We have few coordinated programs to provide developmental opportunities for faculty interested in contributing to justice education through their courses and scholarship.
- There have been few discussions of justice education in departmental goals and objectives. As a result, justice in the curriculum is often not recognized or explicitly identified in syllabi and course descriptions. Opportunities for coordination of efforts may be lost and assessment of outcomes may not be formally conducted.
- We lack a central repository of information on curricular efforts and other justice-related resources. This makes course development (especially interdisciplinary courses) difficult. Faculty often has difficulty identifying and gathering reliable data for use in courses.
- The University has few mechanisms in place for encouraging, supporting and rewarding relevant justice-related curriculum development and scholarship.
- Students are not introduced to justice as part of the Jesuit mission in education in any systematic way during their first semester on campus. By the time they encounter bits and pieces of related issues, many regard the concerns as ideological.
- Service learning opportunities are not coordinated enough to ensure that every student has the opportunity to participate in and reflect on realities underlying justice issues analyzed in the curriculum.
- The University’s commitment to justice education is not evident on campus. There is no organizational structure devoted to it.
- The University’s Education for Justice commitment and activities are not prominent on its Website.

Student Life Initiatives

Student Life encompasses the work of Campus Ministry, the Center for Social Action and Service Initiatives, and all the Departments of Student Affairs, including Residence Life; Student Activities and Orientation; Jane Kopas Women's Center; Center for Health, Education and Wellness; Career Services; and Athletics. In reviewing the results of the inventories, the following strengths were noted:

- The Justice Club and its activities, which are available to the entire University community. However, it does not seem appropriate that a majority of campus-wide activities are planned by a club.
- The Jane Kopas Women's Center and the model it uses for programs and activities, in addition to having resources and materials available for further information on issues and topics.
- Recently developed Education for Justice website.
- International Service trips providing a reflective component and an experience of cultural immersion.
- Development of collaborative programs such as FIRST (Freshmen Involved in Reflective Service Together) run by the Center for Social Action and Service Initiatives in conjunction with Student Activities.
- Generosity of the University Community.
- Interest of student body.

However, clearly efforts in this area are not coordinated. There is no centralized office location or philosophy of justice and no person responsible for collecting and disseminating information. There is need of readily available materials and resources, and more funding for justice education initiatives.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TASK FORCE ON EDUCATION FOR JUSTICE

Establish a Central Organizational Unit to Promote and Manage Education for Justice Initiatives

Create an Institute for Justice Education, reporting to the Vice President for Mission and Ministries and led by a full-time professional staff person and a half-time faculty member, with clerical assistance. The Institute would be considered a strategic initiative, with its own funding mechanism. The responsibilities of the Institute would include the following:

- coordinate and organize justice initiatives both in and outside the classroom.
- centralize information to make it possible for resources to be shared.
- provide faculty and staff training and development in justice education.
- assist and support faculty in designing or redesigning courses and incorporating service-learning related to justice; the latter in collaboration with the Center for Social Action and Service Initiatives.
- support the development of interdisciplinary justice-related courses, possibly based on case studies of the region.
- promote scholarship and research on justice.
- act as liaison to the Justice Club and other student efforts.
- develop a Justice Education Advisory Board broadly representative of the University community, with additional members drawn from the local community, other Jesuit Universities with such centers, etc.
- assess annually the state of Justice Education at the University.
- pursue funding opportunities for all forms of Justice Education.

Recruit and Retain Faculty with a Dedication to Education for Justice

Identify, through normal recruiting processes, faculty with interest and ability to incorporate education for justice into their professional work, including teaching and research.

Increase Service-Learning Options and Conversations about Justice-Related Topics in All Disciplines

Encourage faculty in all colleges to offer courses or lectures within courses related to ethical issues in their disciplines, and to incorporate justice-related service learning with a reflective component. Determine appropriate support levels for such efforts by faculty and the Center for Social Action and Service Initiatives.

Involve First-Year Students in Justice-Related Conversations and Academic Activities

Develop the first-year experience to ensure that students are engaged in justice education. These initiatives could include developing components of the summer orientation and Freshman Seminar, as well as other opportunities and activities.