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Integrating Jesuit Core Values and Service Learning for Successful Marketing Classes at Regis University

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Abstract

The first section of this article identifies four Jesuit values and describes their meaning relevant to a teaching environment. Next the article defines and describes service learning from the faculty member and Regis University perspective. The next section describes how each of these Jesuit values is integrated in a meaningful and relevant way into a marketing course using a service learning project as the vehicle to demonstrate their meaning. The author uses examples from her Advertising and Promotion and Consumer Behavior marketing classes to illustrate these concepts. The author teaches accelerated classes for non-traditional students. This means the classes are held once a week for four hours for either five or eight weeks. The students are comprised of adults with families and careers. These examples are from classes taught in the classroom, but she has also adapted them to online classes as well.

The main reason I teach graduate and undergraduate marketing classes at Regis University is because of its Jesuit mission. When I first started teaching at Regis nearly 10 years ago, I didn't know how much I embraced its mission due to the fact that I was figuring out who I was as a new faculty member, and the fact that I wasn't knowledgeable about the Jesuit, and hence, the Regis mission. I've since learned part of the Regis mission is *Men and women of all ages taking on leadership roles and making a positive impact*. For those of us at Regis that have studied Jesuit pedagogy and the Regis mission, we've shortened this to *men and women in service to others*. After my two years of formal studies as an Ignatian Scholar and my continued desire to study more on my own, I've had an awakening and realized it is not only Regis, but also Jesuit values that continue to pull me into the classroom.

In marketing, explaining how a program is different from another program is called product differentiation. These Jesuit core values differentiate Jesuit institutions from other universities. There are many Jesuit core values that exist; however, I have identified four that I personally embrace and have integrated into my classes. Accordingly, I use service learning as a vehicle to illustrate these values.

“Service learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development.”¹ For example, my Advertising and Promotion class provided service learning to a nonprofit organization in Denver called the Family Tree. The class created an integrated marketing communication promotional plan for the Family Tree's thrift store, called the Treasure Chest. The students conducted a situational analysis, identified marketing objectives, and identified promotional mix elements (such as advertising, sales promotion, email) and tactics for each element to meet the objectives. The students then created three collateral pieces for the nonprofit so if the organization liked what the students did and it met their overall marketing objectives, it could implement the strategies and ready-made materials. In addition to helping the nonprofit, the students had work samples for their marketing portfolios.

This article will identify and define four Jesuit values, define and describe service learning and describe how each value is integrated into the class through a service learning project for either a graduate or undergraduate marketing class.

Jesuit Core Values:

1. *Magis*
2. *Cura Personalis*
3. Finding God in All Things
4. Service with Others

1. *Magis*

Magis is the Latin term for “more.”² When I bring more into the classroom, it doesn’t mean my students write more papers, adding to their already full class and workloads. Instead, *Magis* can be thought of in terms of transcending. The point of transcendence is that it lies within each of us. According to the *Webster College Dictionary*, transcending means, “to rise above or go beyond the ordinary limits of; overpass; exceed.” The experience of *Magis* transcends religion; it enables me to guide my students to a higher emotional or cognitive level than they have been before. This involves challenging my students in a way they may have not been challenged before, yet it requires me to help guide them through this challenge so it is not so overwhelming. I spend time in class talking about their project and discussing, analyzing and demonstrating how the marketing concepts apply directly to the project in a clear and concise way. It also means students share their insights as well and play an active role in teaching each other in the learning process.

2. *Cura Personalis*

Cura Personalis is a Latin phrase that translates as “care of the entire person.” Through Jesuit pedagogy, I’ve learned I’m responsible for educating the brain (head) of my students while taking great care of their hearts. According to Ronald Modras, professor of theology at St. Louis University, educating the whole person must take into account character and morals.³ I spend time getting to know my students as individuals by having them discuss their dreams and hopes as marketing professionals through assignments in class. Through these activities I’m able to show concern for their total development as human beings. Teaching the whole person can include the students’ emotions, spirit, values, cultural and faith traditions and following Jesuit traditions. We encourage that exploration in an honest and open way in the class.⁴ To encourage students to share their feelings and thoughts, I share my feelings

and thoughts with them through experiences I’ve had professionally, working as a marketer as well as class-appropriate personal topics. For example, on the first night of class, I have a handout that describes courage and talks about the role courage plays in our lives. I tell them I admire their courage for upending their lives to come back to school. This demonstrates my understanding of their role as student as well as builds a foundation of what the learning environment will be like in my class, one in which I seek out honest and differing viewpoints. My role is to encourage students who may not normally speak up in class to feel comfortable sharing their ideas.

3. Finding God in All Things

Finding God in All Things sums up Ignatian spirituality. “It invites students to search for and find God in every circumstance of life, not just in explicitly religious situations or activities such as prayer in church.”⁵ This concept addresses “the spiritual dimension of human beings [which] can be recognized in the orientation of our minds and hearts toward ever more than we have already reached (the never-satisfied human mind and the never-satisfied human heart).”⁶ Even at a Jesuit university, I am not comfortable explicitly integrating God or prayer into my marketing classes.

However, if I replace the term God with either higher power or spirituality, then this Jesuit value has meaning for me personally so that I am then extremely comfortable integrating into my marketing classes. “Spirituality is something we grow in without even giving it a name that liberates our energy in life to help other people.”⁷ To me, spirituality also means there is a power greater than ourselves. How this relates to the professional is that often times we work in an environment in which situations are out of our control due to management, economic and/or social elements. As students and marketers, I teach students that they need to work with the facts and information they have at the time and make the best decision based on what they know. That hopefully minimizes them looking back on decisions with regret or cognitive dissonance. With the integration of Jesuit values and service learning I see my students in the process of transforming during the class, perhaps without the

students being totally aware that growth is occurring. The outcome is that they learn valuable marketing skills and also have a foundation to refer to when they are faced with difficult ethical and moral decisions as marketers.

4. Service with Others

“Service is at the core of Ignatian spirituality, encapsulated in a phrase that Ignatius used more than any other: ‘helping souls.’”⁸ Service is also described as the love that manifests itself more by deeds than by words.⁹ In my classes, service with others is not giving a hand out to an organization, it is working with these organizations to provide them with a service or teach them a skill that they may not otherwise have. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., summarizes the importance of service with others when he says “students, in the course of their formation, must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to suffering and engage it constructively. They should learn to perceive, think, judge, choose and act for the rights of others, especially the disadvantaged.”¹⁰

My students are not only able to use their new marketing skills in their careers, but also in their volunteer or community work. A service with others experience also makes students aware of a valuable skill they have and how they could help others with it. On their own, each value is meaningful and provides guidance in the classroom. However, combined in the aggregate, these four core values are closely interrelated and extremely powerful as guiding principles in teaching marketing students.

When There’s More to Learning

“Academic service learning is a pedagogical approach that links identified community need with curricular outcomes. Students reflect in such a way to gain further understanding of the course content, while also gaining a broader appreciation of their own personal commitment to the common good and to their inner development.”¹¹ A model of service learning I have embraced is “whereby students provide expertise or assistance in an area that meets both unmet needs and course learning objectives.”¹²

Several critical elements must be present in every project to be called service learning and they include:

- “The needs of the community, rather than of the academy, determine the nature of the service provided.
- The server and those being served learn and teach.
- The ‘pedagogy of learning through service’ includes structured time for reflection, where students write about their learning experience as they are going through the learning process.
- The emphasis is on accomplishing tasks to meet human and community needs in combination with international learning goals.
- It is a philosophy of ‘human growth and purpose, a social vision, an approach to community and a way of knowing.’”¹³

“Reflection and consciousness-raising are essential components of learning. It remains central to the mission of Jesuit education to prepare students with the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful in society, but also provide them with the tools necessary to engage in social transformation by providing a deeper understanding of the historical, social, cultural, political and economic contexts of important societal issues.”¹⁴

I often use the term *applied learning* to describe service learning. Students learn marketing concepts in the classroom and how to apply these concepts in a meaningful way. For example, in my Consumer Behavior class, students learn what segments are to a target market and they then identify who the segments are for an organization. Students created a strategy to increase financial contributions to the Allied Jewish Federation in a downturned economy. The students learned the three segments that the organization wanted to increase donations from were 20- 28-year-olds, 29-35-year-olds and corporate sponsors.

Unlike traditional learning, service learning provides an opportunity for students to work directly with an organization. Organizations I have worked with include nonprofits and small family-

owned businesses. “It is important to ground today’s concept and practice of service learning in [Jesuit] higher education’s long tradition of service. In his preeminent history of higher education, Frederick Rudolph reminds us from the beginning, the American college was cloaked with a public purpose, with a responsibility to the past and the present and the future.”¹⁵

As a culture we have grown away from helping each other and have centered on individualism. As a professor, service learning gives me the opportunity to introduce the concept of greater good and demonstrate its meaning. Service learning has given me the chance to reach students who may not have the time or opportunity out of the classroom to be exposed to this type of learning situation.

Integrating Core Values & Service Learning – Lessons Learned

Relationships are one of the most important elements for me when deciding which organization I choose in selecting service learning projects. For example, over the course of two years, I became friends with the marketing director at a nonprofit organization. My classes conducted research and created promotional strategies for her organization. When she changed jobs, I continued to work with her at her new organization rather than work with the previous organization after she left. Continuity with the person, rather than the organization, enriches our relationship and therefore builds on the foundation we created so that the communication between the marketing director, the students and me is honest and constructive. This enables me to get feedback from a peer to improve and build upon previous projects my students have worked on.

The service learning projects I choose also take into account the needs of the community. As a result, my students primarily do projects for small business owners and nonprofits because they often have limited funds and lack the ability to hire consultants or staff to help with their marketing. Another important element I take into account when choosing a project is the actual type of marketing work the organization needs completed. I choose projects that will meet the

learning objectives for the course, but they must also be interesting for the students. Examples of projects I have worked on that are most well suited to service learning include: analyzing collateral materials from a branding or messaging perspective, creating a branding and positioning strategy and conducting a situational, competitive and consumer analysis.

For each class, I write my syllabus around the project the students will be doing on behalf of the organization, which I refer to in class as *the client*. Each week, students write an individual paper, which is designed to demonstrate the students’ understanding of the marketing concepts they have read about and we have discussed in class. Service learning provides an excellent opportunity to assess the students’ critical thinking skills when applying the marketing concepts to the project. Simultaneously, the students work together in a team to create one paper with their ideas that will be presented to the client on the last night of class. This final paper becomes a “best of” compilation of the students’ individual work and ideas. The focus of the final paper is on editing and combining their weekly papers based on my feedback rather than writing original content. For example, over the course of several assignments in a Consumer Behavior class in which the content focuses on the “activities people undertake when obtaining, consuming and disposing of products and services,”¹⁶ students were asked to conduct a market and competitive analysis. The students become experts about the industry, the competition and their products and the client’s products through their research. As students are learning the marketing concepts, they are also learning the appropriate information about the client to offer ideas and advice at the end of the class. Throughout the class, students are able to contact the client as much as they need to if they have questions or need clarification. After the final presentation is given, the students engage in a discussion with the client so that in the end, the server (the students) and those being served (the client) learn from and teach each other. We also use this time to reflect on the process the students went through individually and as a member of a team in meeting the class outcomes.

Because service learning projects require students to learn the marketing concepts of branding,

positioning, messaging and apply them immediately, I have found with this learning model students need additional reassurances and feedback. If confusion or uncertainty about how to apply the marketing elements exists, it is not always easily detected by the conversations and discussions we have in the classroom. However, the lack of understanding the marketing concepts becomes apparent in the weekly written assignments. In traditional courses, feedback on papers is returned at the following class. However, during a five or eight week accelerated class, waiting until the next week to provide feedback is not optimal because the papers topics build on each other from week to week. Therefore, I provide feedback to my students two days before the class, so they can incorporate my feedback into their next paper. The feedback I give to the students is two fold. The first is about their ideas and application of the concepts. The second part is in relation to the ideas of other students. For example, I might write a comment such as: “you’re the only one who had this idea, discuss it with your team to see if it’s possible to incorporate into your final paper.” With regards to the final paper, the students’ *Magis* shines through. They email me their paper two days early so I can give them feedback in order to present a professional and accurate document to the client. I have seen how committed my students are to their work and the client by meeting these deadlines.

In building on the foundation I establish at the beginning of class, each class I provide opportunities for students to anonymously answer the following reflection questions:

- When were most engaged as a learner?
- When where you most distanced from learning?
- What action/information was most helpful?
- What action/information most confusing?
- What bit of information/discussion/element during class surprised you the most?¹⁷
- Describe any concerns/questions/thoughts you may have regarding your final paper.

These reflections provide me with another opportunity to engage with my students on an informal level – helping to further build community with the class and get to know them a little more personally using an informal means. Students do not receive grades for their reflections, instead they receive reassurance that I am reading their thoughts and hearing their concerns, which I respond to at the next class. With a strong foundation in place by getting to know my students, the emphasis turns to focusing on the service learning project to meet the human and community needs in combination with the learning goals set by the course.

Each of the four Jesuit core values is demonstrated by the students as they work on the service learning project. In realizing *Magis*, students learn the concepts and then apply them immediately. That offers the students more of a challenge than just learning concepts and demonstrating on a test that they are able to identify concepts in isolation. For example, the students experience *Magis* after learning so much more about a company than just elements that will affect its marketing strategy. For example, one of my classes was creating a promotional plan for a one-year old family owned coffee shop. They were surprised to learn that the business was losing \$1,000 a month, despite the owner working long hours. This bit of information transcended their perception of what it is like being a small business owner; they thought the owner was making a lot of money. As a result of this understanding, they were much more empathetic to the owner, resulting in developing relevant, cost-effective and fully developed marketing strategies and realistic tactics the owner could implement immediately. The cost savings were a result of inexpensive marketing strategies, such as designing a discount sticker in which a sticker with a discount was placed on the cup insulator and could be used next time the customer came into the shop. Cost savings were also realized because the staff of the coffee shop could apply the sticker themselves and did not need to hire a printer for coupons.

In recognizing *Cura Personalis* in a service learning environment there is much passion demonstrated by the students. As a result, tears of joy or heated, yet respectful, disagreements are often a part of

and encouraged in the class. Students are willing to take a risk in a service learning environment to discuss their research findings, describe their ideas and share their analyses with the class and me. Students feel honored to be working on behalf of the organization and they become extremely invested in the project succeeding. I find the students enthusiastically put in additional hours to complete assignments.

Another situation that can arise in service learning is that the organization provides a service that the students are intimately familiar with, which provides much insight. For example, a class was doing a project for an inpatient children's psychiatric hospital and one of the students had a child who spent time in a psychiatric hospital as a youth. She clearly understood the ill-conceived perceptions society had on parents with sick children and was able to share her experiences with the class, which gave other students insight into the parents' perspective. Given the sensitive nature of the project, I had a private conversation with the student to ensure that she would feel comfortable working on the project and if not, I would assist her in dropping the class and receive full reimbursement. Luckily, she wanted to stay and share and her experiences, which was invaluable to the class.

As a result of Finding God in All Things, students in my classes have demonstrated an unimaginable amount of energy and discipline despite working full-time jobs and caring for their families. Despite these demands, my students come to class with the readiness to act and lead others through all four hours of class discussion and activities. Their forcefulness of expression engages and stimulates each other throughout the class. In addition, they have conducted hours of research and writing outside the classroom handing in assignments and preparing for the next class. If the students are not already aware of their never-satisfied mind and heart before coming to class, a service learning experience gets them in touch with the joys of the analytical process and teaches them to explore, think and question in ways they have never done before.

For example, a Consumer Behavior class was to conduct a situational and competitive analysis for an organization. This research would then be used

to help create a promotional plan for a capital fund-raising campaign. After spending two weeks working on the assignments, one of the students suggested to the class that a brand awareness campaign needed to occur before the organization could even begin planning the capital campaign. After much discussion in class, the students felt strongly that they needed to create a brand awareness strategy as the first step. The student's argument to change the class focus was so well thought out that it made good sense to the students and to me. As the facilitator, I was open to the student's idea even though this required changing the weekly assignments to address the new reality. Therefore, the focus of the final paper changed mid-way through the class. I have learned to be flexible and not have a set way in which the project can be implemented.

In many instances, the organizations are capable of doing the research and analysis my students are providing them. It's not a matter of whether they know how to do what my students offer; it's a matter of not having the time to do it themselves or the staff to do it. My students learn what it means to experience Service With Others; this includes:

- Getting to know employee/s from an organization;
- Learning about the organization's shortcomings; and
- Understanding the organization's customers to provide valuable ideas that can be readily implemented.

If students do not already volunteer in their community before coming to my class, a service learning experience demonstrates that there are many different ways to give to one's community.

In my class, I enjoy playing an active role in guiding my students through this experience. I continually work on the right balance of involvement in the project: too much and it's no longer the students' ideas and too little and the students flounder and the results do not match the assignment outcomes as identified. In addition, the classroom norms must be set so that students feel comfortable sharing ideas that seem risky or off base. They quickly learn the classroom is a safe, dynamic place and assignments may change

throughout the course. Students also learn I do not show up to class with the answers predetermined and they have to figure out what I'm thinking. Instead, we discuss ideas and make many changes to strategies, ideas, assignments and lecture topics along the way. This reflects the realities of the world in which they live and what they can expect as marketers.

In keeping with our human need for reflection and reinforcing the strong loving and open class environment, on the last night of class, the students share their reflections on the class and process after they have completed it. I ask them to reflect on some of the following questions, which guides our discussion (it is their choice as to which ones they answer):

- What moves or drives you in marketing?
- What did you initially expect about the organization that you were surprised to learn about?
- What were the most valuable lessons you learned working on this service learning project?
- What were the most helpful ideas, thoughts or feedback that you will use in your marketing career?
- How does marketing an organization assist a community?
- What value to you, the business and the community did you provide with your services?
- What ideas do you have for change that would help future students with a similar service learning project?
- What have you learned in other classes that this class built on?

In conclusion, I wish to borrow a concept that Howard Gray, S.J. presented at the JCU Staff Services Committee Spring Open Meeting on May 1, 2002, with regards to John Carroll University and the Ignatian tradition. He said: "I want to emphasize that this will always be an invitation not a command performance, that it is a chance to enrich what you already possess not a sneaky way to make you think different or pray different." I wish that same idea for you in integrating Jesuit core values and service learning into your class. Take the teaching gifts you possess and enrich

them by looking for ways to either integrate core values and/or service learning opportunities. You need not rewrite your entire syllabus at one time if that doesn't appeal to you, instead try a new idea each time you teach and stick with the ones that work. After making little changes over time, you will see you have transformed your class through your experiences of teaching service learning and from student feedback. Remember: be open to constantly adjusting and modifying as you go. ✨

Notes

- ¹ Denise Cope and Amy Sheber Howard, *Academic Service-Learning Brochure* (Denver, CO: Regis University, 2007).
- ² George W. Traub, S.J., *Do You Speak Ignatian? A Glossary of Terms Used in Ignatian and Jesuit Circles*, 6th ed. (Cincinnati, OH: Xavier University, 2001).
- ³ Ron Modras, *Ignatian Humanism: A Dynamic Spirituality for the 21st Century* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2006).
- ⁴ Kevin Cullen, S.J., "Conversations in Rocky Mountain National Park," *Magis National Faculty Retreat* (Estes Park: June 25, 2008).
- ⁵ Traub, *Do You Speak Ignatian?*
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ Gray, *Ignatian Spirituality*.
- ⁸ Modras, *Ignatian Humanism*, 80.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., *The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education*, address presented at the Commitment to Justice in Jesuit Higher Education conference, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA, October 6, 2000, http://www.scu.edu/ignatiancenter/events/conferences/archives/justice/upload/f07_kolvenbach_keynote.pdf.
- ¹¹ Denise Cope, *Conversations with Denise Cope* [Cope's thoughts adapted from Bringle and Hatcher, 1995] (Denver, CO: Regis University, 2008).
- ¹² Denise Cope and Amy Sheber Howard, *Academic Service-Learning Brochure* (Denver, CO: Regis University, 2007).
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ Regis University, "Regis Mission," accessed August 20, 2008, <http://www.regis.edu/regis.asp?sctn=ars&p1=sl&p2=sp&p3=>

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- ¹⁵ Barbara Jacoby, *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996).
- ¹⁶ Roger Blackwell, Paul Miniard and James Engel, *Consumer Behavior*, 10th ed. (Mason, OH: South-Western College, 2006).
- ¹⁷ Stephen Brookfield, *Address Given at Regis Faculty Development Day* (Denver, CO: Regis University, May 19, 2012).

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