

**Transformative Justice:  
A Vision for Loyola University Chicago 2015-2020**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Loyola Today**

Loyola University Chicago was founded in 1870 to provide educational opportunities for underserved, immigrant communities in Chicago. The University that took shape and grew, as the city and nation grew, was always in one sense or another a “special project.” The founding Jesuit community was quite conscious of its unique role and duty to form men (and later, women) who might better their own situation as well as improve the lives as those in their communities. Over the years, the University expanded its offerings to include more schools and professional education programs (medicine, law, social work, education, criminal justice, etc.) to contribute to improving the lives of those who inhabited Chicago and the nation. Improving the lives and conditions of those less fortunate and on the margins was then, and is today, its central purpose and mission for the greater honor and glory of God.

Today, Loyola University Chicago continues this mission by providing opportunities for students of all social classes and religious backgrounds, with no less than a third of its students first in their families to attend college. Its diverse faculty, through research and community service, advance the service of faith and the promotion of justice as they expand knowledge and our understanding of the important humanistic values that should guide and sustain us. This commitment, then, to social justice is long-standing, embodied in a myriad of ways across the University—in the work of individual researchers, pedagogical initiatives, academic programs, Centers of Excellence, and more.

In the words of Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach, the former Superior General of the Society of Jesus, "Every Jesuit academic institution of higher learning is called to live in a social reality . . . and to live for that social reality, to shed university intelligence upon it and to use university influence to transform it." Loyola University Chicago is certainly grounded in a particular social reality—its historic mission and role in Chicago, its Jesuit and Catholic identity, its own history, its rich community of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the current cultural context in which it is immersed. Periodically, universities, like Loyola, ask themselves if the institution’s mission, as currently expressed, is still compelling—that is, does it still inspire and motivate? And, given new challenges and the urgency of certain social and environmental conditions in which we find ourselves today, we ask ourselves if that mission needs to be expanded and deepened, again, for the greater honor and glory of the Creator.

The University is well positioned to begin this reflection and plan for its future. The present stability of the institution, the support from its alumni and friends, plus a growing number of faculty who are eager to participate in a collective effort to improve the condition of those in our community and world, make this moment in the University’s

history an opportune time to reflect on what we might do and who we might become. Our conversation is further contextualized by a sense of urgency, felt on the national and international level, for an engaged pedagogy to guide our teaching, for a renewed commitment to interdisciplinary approaches to solving societal and environmental problems, and for a new kind of university committed to going beyond its walls to include those needing support and assistance and those seeking justice in its efforts. We are, in fact, at a unique and important moment.

### **What Will We Become?**

The next five-year Strategic Plan will guide the University from 2015 to 2020, its sesquicentennial anniversary. The question we face is: How do we, as a university, live *for* this social reality and use our influence to *transform* it? Said another way: How might Loyola become a beacon of hope for others and an instrument for preparing young men and women for the project of creating and sustaining a more just, humane, and sustainable world? In what ways can Loyola's vast talent, its faculty and its resources, be of greater service to those less fortunate and those on the margins of society, as well as those who work for a more sustainable and just world?

Such questions presume that Loyola University Chicago is more than a collection of departments and degree programs, more than the sum of its faculty and students, and a greater force for good than as a single economic and social institution among many. It is, in a phrase, a "social project." As such, it is a transformative agent, an institution that "seeks to insert itself into a society, not just to train professionals, but in order to become a cultural force advocating and promoting truth, virtue, development, and peace in that society" (Nicolás, 7). Because of this, the University seeks especially to promote social equality and to integrate the poor into society as it expands our understanding of the social realities of the poor and works to appropriate the vast treasure of our Judeo-Christian humanistic tradition.

While the University has benefited from strong financial support, growth in enrollments, and increased faculty productivity throughout the past decade, beyond its walls, the plight of those who struggle to maintain or improve their economic conditions has worsened. The gap between rich and poor has widened. The forces of injustice and threats to the environment have not diminished. Today, inequality of economic opportunity, access to health care, access to education, the increasing vulnerability of our natural environment, and a host of related problems require focused and coordinated attention. What people lack most are meaning and hope. The world needs universities like Loyola, with their considerable intellectual and social resources, and their access to talented young minds and hearts, to be instruments for reimagining our social and material lives. What role, then, can and should Loyola play to address these conditions? How will it become an instrument in the creation of a better world for all?

Such questions are to be addressed by each academic unit and by the University community as a whole. Over the next six months, faculty, staff, administrators, students,

alumni, benefactors, and community and international partners are invited into this discussion, a conversation designed to reimagine what Loyola University Chicago may become over the next five years. The following two-part vision statement is offered to initiate this process.

## **A Vision to Guide Us**

The following vision takes its inspiration from three important sources:

- The University's founding impetus and mission
- The teachings and mission of the Church and the Society of Jesus
- The academic community that is called to discern in each age how best to promote knowledge in the service of humanity for the greater glory of God

These rich traditions guide the University and its supporters whenever they come together to consider how best to plan for its future. In the first part, we explore more deeply the Catholic and Jesuit notion of social justice, which we take to be at the heart of the university as a social project. We hope this outline provides a common starting point for articulating what social justice means at Loyola University Chicago.<sup>i</sup> In the second part, we propose five institutional priorities for Loyola University Chicago that particularly embody this commitment to social justice in light of our contemporary realities.<sup>ii</sup>

We believe that this is a bold vision. It should move us as members of the institution beyond our comfort zones. It asks us to measure success by different metrics. This effort will benefit by a diversity of gifts and perspectives, and full participation is invited. And, if it is focused by unity of vision, it should move us toward the extraordinary, not only as a Jesuit, Catholic university but equally as a leader that can inspire others in higher education.

## **I. SOCIAL JUSTICE**

How do we, at Loyola University Chicago, understand the phrase "social justice"? Here, our working understanding is informed first, though not exclusively, by our Jesuit and Catholic traditions. It builds on and deepens the concept of justice, paying particular attention to the dignity of human persons, the common good, and the transformation of social structures. It incorporates at least four essential commitments: the necessity of a *personal or spiritual transformation*; a *preference to be with and for the poor and marginalized*; the notion of *accompaniment or solidarity*; and a simultaneous focus on the *local and global*.

Over the past several decades, social justice has become the most characteristic dimension and aim of Jesuit educational institutions. In 1975, the Society of Jesus redefined its mission as "service of faith and promotion of justice" and has since worked to deepen its understanding of a phrase now familiar to those who work in Jesuit institutions—"a faith that does justice." This emphasis reflected the growing body of

Catholic thought that developed over the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is often referred to as "Catholic social teaching." For many, the term "social justice" has been recognized as the particular form of justice that is "a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel,"<sup>iii</sup> or an obligation on the man or woman of faith to see to it that all have access to the good of this earth.

Social justice begins with fundamental insights about justice itself. In general, *justice* requires that a person or society render to a person what is due him or her (*reddere suum cuique*). Thus, a commitment to justice is, at root, a commitment to *the dignity of the human person*. It requires a deep understanding of the nature of the human person—a central task of a liberal arts curriculum. It also requires that we understand *persons and justice as inextricably social*. Justice always holds in creative relationship the good of the individual and the common good. This has been described as "the sum total of those conditions of social living whereby human beings are enabled more fully and more readily to achieve their own perfection." In other words, this understanding of social justice recognizes that many of the goods required for individuals to flourish—and that are consequently due to them—are goods that we necessarily share or hold in common.

The notion of *social justice* pushes more deeply into these insights. Beyond assuring fairness in relationships between individuals and legal or governmental institutions, social justice recognizes the need to *transform* many of the world's economic, political and social structures. We can see that most of the intractable injustices that oppress people across the globe are rooted in entrenched and unfair structures and are often opposed to the common good. Moreover, they are designed to prevent people from accessing the benefits of society. Consequently, they impede the ability of people to flourish as full human persons.

Transforming these structures requires that opportunities for participation must be extended to those persons who lack access to those common goods needed to thrive. For them to develop to their fullest potential and contribute in meaningful ways to their communities, conditions and institutions around them must change. One of goods we hold in common is the environment in which we all are embedded. Thus, the basic human rights to clean air, land, water, food, shelter, and dignity—also known as environmental justice and sustainability—are crucial components of social justice. Furthermore, the right to education, access to healthcare, and a living wage follow as basic not only to survival but to full participation in society. Human thriving is impossible without these rights.

In this vision of social justice, then, the University would consciously seek to transform social structures in order to simultaneously advance the common good and the dignity of human persons. Such a vision of a university working for social justice implies and authentically requires the four essential commitments: *personal or spiritual transformation* on the part of its members; *a preferential option for the poor and marginalized*; a practice of *accompaniment or solidarity*; and a simultaneous focus on the *local and global*.

*Personal and spiritual transformation:* While work on behalf of justice does not require faith for its inspiration, we believe that work for social justice is deeply motivated by faith, and we understand faith as a key component of the solution. The Jesuit tradition recognizes that injustice is embedded in the human heart which, like social structures, must be transformed. Injustice has its roots in such weaknesses as greed, fear, indifference, and so forth. Consequently, the work of social justice requires conversion, or the transformation of persons. Understanding the spiritual roots of injustice overcomes the juxtaposition, ideological rivalry, or false dualism sometimes posed between justice and faith.

Thus, a university committed to the promotion of justice would recognize the deep spiritual roots of injustice and the need for individual commitment to the transformation of hearts and minds of those who maintain unjust structures. We must also recognize and evaluate our own participation in such structures.

*A commitment to or preference for the poor, the vulnerable, and the marginalized:* We see the work for social justice as beginning with what is known as "the preferential option for the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized." This countercultural commitment is deeply embedded in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In this faith tradition, as in many other faith traditions, the frontiers of poverty, marginalization, injustice, and inhumanity are understood as privileged spaces in which we encounter God and enter more deeply into the mystery of reality (POJ, no. 36). Since, as a university, we are committed to advancing authentic knowledge, nothing could be more appropriate than to dedicate our efforts in this direction. Moreover, the suffering of persons—especially the poor and needy—has long provided an essential source of knowledge. Through a special commitment to serve the interests and needs of those who cannot speak or act for themselves, the University demonstrates its deep commitment to the inestimable value and dignity of each human person.

As a guiding commitment or characteristic, the University should continuously ask itself if the focus of research efforts, service commitments, and teaching methods are in sync with a commitment to alleviating the conditions that entrap poor and marginalized persons.

*Accompaniment or solidarity:* A primary way of enacting this preferential option is through the practice of accompaniment. Contact, even more than concepts, might be another way of expressing this pedagogical aspiration. A firm and persevering commitment to the common good—that is, to the good of all and of each individual—requires direct involvement with and accompaniment of those who experience injustice and those at the margins. Knowledge gained through secondary sources is never as rich and authentic as that gained by direct contact and involvement with people in the realities in which they live. This is true in all fields.

It follows then that authentic work for and on behalf of those left at the margins necessitates a "walking with"—an accompaniment. Experience tells us that such accompaniment often occasions a conversion of heart. A university that is characterized

by a practice of accompaniment and solidarity demonstrates this by a particular methodological (as well as a spiritual) style in the way faculty teach, research, and serve in the local or global community.

*Local and global:* By *local and global* we refer to both spatial, geographic realities as well as ways of knowing. Both understandings must be held in fruitful tension. Local can refer to what is nearby and familiar in terms of place as well as in terms of the discipline from which one views reality. Geographically, the University cannot ignore its local realities if it claims to be genuinely interested in the plight of the poor and disenfranchised. Nor can it restrict itself to the concerns of its immediate surroundings, especially if it hopes to understand those realities in their fullness and complexity. Social structures and institutions that cause poverty, disenfranchisement, violence, and environmental destruction, for example, are usually intractable systems bent on self-preservation. They cannot be adequately understood from the perspective of one academic discipline, one historic time period, or one locality. Structures and institutions, and thus the conditions of the poor and marginalized, are global in their reach and hold, even as their impact is felt in local communities.

Thus, to understand these structures in all their complexity requires that we encounter persons in particular "localities," whether those localities are in Chicago, elsewhere in the US, or in a more distant place, who are particularly disadvantaged by these structures. (Note: The Jesuit community has long recognized this double focus, seeing as its "special mission in the Church to be 'at the frontiers,' at 'those geographical and spiritual places where others do not reach or find it difficult to reach,'" [Nicolás, 10] whether these frontiers are at home or abroad.) A university that recognizes this duality and tension should be characterized by commitments that are geographically local and global, as well as, by their interdisciplinarity, bringing the full range of its considerable intellectual talent to bear on the problems it addresses.

## **II. INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES**

Each Jesuit university is a social project in a different way, based on "the concrete social reality where it is located" (POJ, no. 132). As Loyola University Chicago envisages itself as a social project, we propose five strategic priorities to guide its efforts in creating and sustaining a more just, humane, and sustainable world in this particular place and time. Over the next five years, Loyola should seek to become recognized as a leader in: (1) *leveraging University resources to ensure underserved student success*; (2) *reimagining knowledge to solve complex societal challenges*; (3) *engaging societal challenges locally and globally*; (4) *integrating faith, reason, and justice*; and (5) *building a University community of dialogue and justice*. We hope that these five priorities—which overlap with each other at key points—provide a framework for individuals, units, and the University as a whole to envisage concrete initiatives that advance our common goal of being an agent of social transformation.

## **Leveraging University Resources to Ensure Underserved Student Success**

*Becoming a community that continues to prioritize access to education for those from underserved communities will require us to change the way we leverage University resources to ensure the academic, personal, and career success of admitted students.*

Over the past 10 years, Loyola has achieved significant success in expanding access to higher education for students of all social classes. No less than a third of our students come from first-generation families; no less than a third receive Pell grants. The anticipated launch of Arrupe College will expand access to higher education for several hundred inner-city students from college-prep programs. The Stritch School of Medicine has led the way in matriculating Dream Act students to medical school. Yet access to education is only a first step. We will only make a real difference as these students graduate, secure good jobs, and thereby begin to dismantle the structures that have obstructed their communities. Over the next five years, Loyola University Chicago must more intentionally leverage University resources—financial, personnel, technological, and social—to ensure that these students not only complete their Loyola degrees but also benefit from the comprehensive and transformative experience promised by a Jesuit education. A key focus should be reducing the burden of student debt. Loyola’s campuses should be places of safety and hospitality for those from diverse socioeconomic communities, which will require increased attention on mentoring by faculty and staff and the ethos of the campus as a whole. Technology and other state-of-the-art-methods will be critical to providing education to underserved communities locally and beyond the city. At the same time, Loyola should continue to refine its recruitment strategies to maintain its success in providing access to higher education for these communities to ensure that all units share in this success and to cultivate key underrepresented communities.

**NEXT STEP:** Each program and academic unit of the University is asked to offer creative ideas for how it might more intentionally leverage its resources for the academic programs under its control to address the financial, personal, technological, and social challenges that remain for students from underserved populations, while continuing to assess how well its recruitment strategies seek out those who are not currently served and who could benefit from a Loyola degree or program.

## **Reimagining Knowledge to Solve Complex Societal Challenges**

*Becoming a community committed to solving complex societal challenges us will require us to think differently about knowledge, solutions, our disciplines, and our reward structures.*

Twenty-first-century problems like climate change, aging societies, global security, growing economic disparities, environmental degradation, migration and the displacement of peoples, systemic poverty, homelessness, violence, and emerging infectious diseases differentially impact and further disadvantage marginalized

populations. They are also complex challenges that cannot be addressed within the confines of traditional academic disciplines. Over the next five years, Loyola University Chicago should begin to form innovative and creative approaches to producing knowledge and the transdisciplinary structures needed to support this new vision. We should create innovative pedagogies aimed at promoting collaborative and inquiry-based learning and providing students with direct engagement with social reality, with "a world of suffering and need, a broken world with many broken people in need of healing" (Nicolás, 4). We should also reimagine ways of developing cutting-edge research methodologies that get to the core of our societal challenges. This engagement should occur in local communities in Chicago, elsewhere in the US, and across the globe. Experiential pedagogies should break down the artificial silos between teaching and research as faculty develop innovative interdisciplinary, community-based research methodologies in which students participate. Such methodologies embody solidarity, as Loyola faculty and students work with communities and community partners to define research questions and educate our students. While not all research lends itself to such methods, all faculty should be encouraged to articulate the relationship between their own scholarship and social justice and to pursue the research needed to analyze the structural causes of injustice and make significant improvements in the lives of the disadvantaged. Such an integrative and experiential approach to knowledge will not only be more effective in moving toward solutions to complex global problems; it also challenges received categories and presuppositions, requires depth of thought and imagination, pushes beneath the surface, requires careful analysis, and integrates the Jesuit and Catholic tradition of the University.

NEXT STEP: Each academic unit, as well as all academic support units, are asked to describe those societal and environmental challenges which it feels most qualified to address and to identify those other disciplines within the University that must be engaged to address these challenges adequately and effectively. They should identify potential structural and institutional barriers to interdisciplinarity and identify what resources would be needed to advance these efforts.

### **Engaging Societal Challenges Globally**

*Becoming a community where faculty, staff, and students are globally engaged and where the global community is represented in our student body will require us to develop new internal structures and models that make global engagement more accessible while assuming leadership in integrating the extensive international network of Jesuit universities and other institutions.*

Global experiential engagement is an important source of knowledge and transformation—an encounter with what Fr. Nicolás calls "the real." It provides faculty, staff, and students another means of encountering, walking with, and learning from persons who live in different social and cultural realities. When properly tailored to include quality accompaniment and opportunities for substantive intellectual and personal reflection, such experiences can transform sensitivities and change lives. Over the next



five years, Loyola University Chicago should develop ways to make global experiential engagement more accessible to members of the Loyola community while assuming leadership for integrating the global network of Jesuit universities into a more cohesive agent for education and transformation. We should continue to develop relationships within our local communities in Chicago, recognizing that global societal challenges manifest locally. We should create new partnerships for learning and research with Jesuit universities outside of the US. In doing so, we will expand educational opportunities for our students; grow the transdisciplinary network of research partners for faculty working on complex societal questions; facilitate the Jesuit mission of bringing diverse worlds of discourse into dialogue; and make the resources of Loyola University Chicago available to outstanding faculty and students located elsewhere, thereby countering the inequality of knowledge distribution. The University will also strive to create classrooms that reflect the global community as diverse classrooms enhance intellectual stimulation and diversity in thought. In all these ways, global experiential engagement plays a crucial role in our institutional priority of reimagining knowledge and provides the Loyola community the opportunity to practice solidarity with neighbors both near and far.

NEXT STEPS: Each unit is asked to describe its chief programs, projects, and efforts that extend its reach in Chicago and beyond. What projects or programs could be expanded with the right resources? How can faculty and students become more globally engaged?

### **Integrating Faith, Reason, and Justice**

*Becoming a community recognized as a leader in integrating faith, reason, and justice will require us to develop robust, ongoing practices that prioritize rigorous study and charitable dialogue on the deep interconnections among those ideals.*

The Jesuit understanding of mission has always been “to be at the frontiers.” This notion of frontiers means not only geographical and spiritual places, but also “those places where ‘faith and human knowledge, faith and modern science, faith and the fight for justice’ meet” (Nicolás, 10). Thus, over the next five years, Loyola University Chicago should become a leading voice in a renewed conversation on the interrelationship between faith, reason, and social justice. This should be understood as characterized by the following: authentic faith promotes love of neighbor and rejects religion as tool of negation, exclusion, and discrimination against those who are different; the practice of hospitality embraces all faith traditions as partners in conversation, investigation, service, and life in community; all reality—and knowledge thereof—is complex and requires different ways of knowing and different methodologies, beyond those that are reductionistic and empirical. Thus, we should develop integrated structures for ongoing practices in which we engage one another (especially faculty and staff, but also undergraduates, graduate, and professional students) in meaningful conversation about how the different faith perspectives represented at Loyola, and our intellectual expertise or contributions, inspire us to work together to help the University address the global challenges of our day. In doing so, we can provide a model for other universities. More importantly, this commitment will help ensure that our individual and institutional

choices for research, our choices for new programs and initiatives, our choices for how we instruct and support our students, and our conversations with one another and our students set an ever-discerning pathway forward that seeks God in all things by addressing the world's hunger for justice and healing.

NEXT STEPS: Faculty in their academic homes and across disciplines are asked to reflect on and suggest ways in which we can deepen our commitments to an authentic search for truth, promote the sound practice of faith in action, and encourage the development of knowledge which will benefit society and particularly those at the margins. This aligns with initiatives from leading scientific organizations, like the National Science Foundation, that encourage research investigators to contemplate the broader societal impacts and ethical implications of their research. What new courses and initiatives might be needed?

### **Building a University Community of Dialogue and Justice**

*Becoming a community that understands itself as a social project requires that social justice and solidarity be instilled in the institution itself, shaping our internal structures and practices, as well as our matrices for discerning how to promote these values in all our endeavors.*

A constant criterion for evaluating Jesuit, Catholic universities is the *grad et grad*, what the students become, not only professionally and intellectually, but psychologically, morally, and spiritually as well. At Loyola, we aim for our students to become conscious, dialogical, competent, committed, compassionate persons of solidarity (*Transformative Education in the Jesuit Tradition*). This same criterion and set of characteristics should hold for all members of the university community—faculty, staff, administration, trustees, alumni, students (undergraduates, graduates, and professionals), post-docs, and more. Over the next five years, Loyola University Chicago should evaluate and refine the University's internal structures and practices to ensure that we practice social justice, accompaniment, and solidarity within our own community. One critical task is to engage in the hard work of forming communities of dialogue. Particularly given our increasingly partisan and polarized cultural context, Loyola University Chicago should provide a forum for our diverse faculty, students, staff, and administrators to learn and practice the habits of civic and public dialogue through ongoing, sustained conversation. Such dialogue also requires hospitality. Loyola must remain a place where all are welcome, even those who may not discover who we are and what we do until they have lived among us. Loyola must also continue to hire for mission—to recruit faculty and staff with expertise in major fields who also share our mission to create transformation so that knowledge becomes embedded in acts of service for social justice.

NEXT STEPS: Faculty and staff are asked to reflect on how the University might become a more just and humane place and more sensitive to the needs of one another and the environment that surrounds us. What specific projects, structures, programs would advance this effort?

## CONCLUSION

These priorities are offered as keys to moving the University to become more intentionally committed to the social justice dimension of its mission. No program or division can be excluded if the University is to truly advance this commitment. All ideas, suggestions, reflections are welcome. Following a process of dialogue and discernment of possible future directions, a synthesis of the best, most challenging, and most realistic of suggested activities will be further debated and assessed before the plan is completed.

## References

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*Transformative Education in the Jesuit Tradition*, Loyola University Chicago, 2009

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<sup>i</sup> During Fall 2013, campus-wide conversations generated significant support and consensus for social justice as the guiding vision for Loyola's next five years.

<sup>ii</sup> Consensus on these five characteristics coalesced through the reflections of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee in Spring 2014 and were refined by the President's Leadership Council in July 2014.

<sup>iii</sup> World Synod of Catholic Bishops, *Justitia in Mundo* (Justice in the World), 1971. This tradition, whose starting point is often dated to 1891 with Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, traces its roots through 2,000 years of Catholic social practice, to the Gospels and the prophetic witness of the Hebrew scriptures. This work has been supported by constant papal leadership in the writings of Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI and, most recently, Francis I. Key documents include a number of papal encyclicals—Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* (On the Development of Peoples, 1967) and *Octogesima Adviens* (A Call to Action, 1971); John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work, 1981) and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (On Social Concern, 1987), Benedict XVI's *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth, 2009)—as well as Pope Francis I's recent apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel, 2013). For a complete list of the major magisterial documents see the website of Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis: <http://www.cctwincities.org/CatholicSocialTeachingMajorDocuments>.