

STUDENT LIFE

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For Santa Clara University to succeed in developing leaders who act in solidarity with those most in need and to achieve national prominence as a Jesuit, Catholic University, we must expand our concept of student life and embrace a fuller range of student experiences. Designating student learning as central to a Santa Clara education and creating intentional connections to the greater community furthers the university's desire to support integrated education as outlined in the strategic plan. When students are challenged to consider those on the margin and are fully committed to contributing to the community, then the aspiration of a fully integrated education will be realized.

Student learning takes place at the undergraduate and graduate level in an educational environment that integrates rigorous inquiry and scholarship, creative imagination, reflective engagement with society and a commitment to fashioning a more humane and just world. (SCU Mission Statement) Involvement in activities and leadership programs provides students with opportunities to meet new friends, participate in community service, work with others around shared goals and interests, and become peer mentors.

This paper will explore how the four characteristics of a Jesuit, Catholic education outlined in Fr. Ravizza's paper are brought to life through student experiences outside of the classroom by responding to three critical questions:

1. How are the ideals of a Jesuit Catholic education brought to life through student experiences outside of the classroom?
2. How do the realities and emerging trends of student life contribute to a creative tension, which we must not only embrace but also continually adapt?
3. What path must the university pursue to enhance quality and distinctiveness?

In searching for answers to these questions, one should begin with a look at our current state of student life and identify means to expand on current efforts in light of trends and existing research. One must also examine how our creative tensions can be both advantageous and challenging in contributing to an environment in which our students can develop into leaders who embody our Jesuit Catholic ideals.

Fostering Opportunities to Live Out the Ideals of a Jesuit Catholic Education

If promoting the "glory of God and the common good" means fostering development and care for the whole person, encouraging connection with community, and developing leaders of competence, conscience and compassion [who will improve the world], then Santa Clara is on the cutting edge. Santa Clara attends to the mind and body of all students in some obvious ways, which include the programs and services offered through the counseling, health, wellness and recreation centers. Attention to the spirit of students is apparent in Campus and Resident Ministry programs, which challenge students to explore, develop and deepen their faith.

Our commitment to educating the whole person is illustrated by the living and learning environments in the Residential Learning Community (RLC) Program where students connect to a community and begin to see the connections between academic and co-curricular experiences. The connection of living and learning is achieved through common classes for freshmen and some upper-division students (taught when possible in RLC-based classrooms) and through co-curricular programming. The RLCs are an important vehicle of integrated education at Santa Clara. Already they are the principal delivery systems for DISCOVER programs, immersion trips, and yearlong community-based learning options. This structure provides the framework for students to experience service learning, reflect on their values, and seek leadership roles within the community. Sometimes, as demonstrated by the Unity RLC's urban immersion trip to San Francisco or Xavier's immersion trip to El Salvador, students are able to pursue both the "contact" and understanding of "concepts" which is the basis for understanding solidarity. Plans are in the preliminary stage for connecting the advising of undeclared students with the RLCs, and for offering a "University 101"-type course through the RLCs.

In all of these areas, students have the unique opportunity, perhaps even a responsibility, to engage in the SCU community by educating and ministering to their peers under the guidance of faculty and staff. In this way, they begin to learn responsible citizenship and start developing into leaders of competence, conscience and compassion. Leadership skills alone do not qualify our students as good leaders. It is necessary for students to act in solidarity, the second feature that should characterize a Santa Clara education.

The university demonstrates its commitment to "solidarity with those most in need" by challenging students to develop empathy with those less fortunate and to understand difference through service, immersion, and study abroad opportunities. The university offers a myriad of opportunities for students to discover their gifts and practice using their abilities to change campus and community culture, in preparation for the days when they will use their knowledge and compassion to improve the world. Our programs for formal leadership, peer education, immersion, inter-cultural education, and service are value-based involvement opportunities and create a rich environment for learning how to lead and serve in the Jesuit tradition. To be a distinctive university, all of our students should participate in an immersion experience and/or pursue the option to study abroad.

The university reinforces this ideal of solidarity by modeling it to students. Our spectrum of care serves those who have lost relatives, those who suffer from mental and physical illnesses, those who are victims of crimes and assaults, and those who are marginalized for their physical characteristics, their beliefs, and their socioeconomic status. We need to continue to provide these services to students in order for peak academic performance to be realized. Open dialogue about racial, ethnic, religious, and sexual diversity must be embraced in every aspect of a Santa Clara education. If we genuinely welcome diverse and divergent points of view, we need to provide additional resources and services for non-Catholic students, students of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students. This solidarity provides the foundation for a strong Jesuit, Catholic university community, in which students respect the institution for

carrying out the actions to support its ideals. It also provides the basis for the third characteristic of a Santa Clara education, “seeking God in all things.”

The university must challenge each student to re-examine his or her worldview in order to make meaning of the sum of his or her experiences and to find God in all things. The quality of student learning depends largely on the meaningful opportunities specifically created for it to transpire (Kuh, 2000). Or as Fr. Ravizza states, “it is not sufficient to give students direct experiences that make them want to work for justice; they also must be engaged with an intellectual tradition that is rich enough to help them appreciate the complexities and ambiguities of this work.” Students are able to reflect on their experiences with the Arrupe Center and through Campus and Resident Ministry programs. However, they must consistently be able to engage in an inner dialogue in which they can reconcile the conflicting morals and values they see in their lives and in the global community.

Embracing the Creative Tension

For the university to develop in our students the skills necessary to navigate a complex and ambiguous world, we must attend to the daily realities of our student population and their needs. The changing student demographic has increased demands on services that may not have existed in the past. This point is illustrated by the increase in number of students with disabilities, which has increased from 70 students in 1999 to 325 students in 2005. The challenges over the next five years will be to meet the diverse needs of our students and positively develop a campus climate that nourishes all aspects of a student’s life.

The current generation brings greater demands for mental health assistance based on a national increase in use of University counseling centers and psychiatric medication. In our efforts to care for the whole person, we must acknowledge those in our community who struggle to be well. At the same time we must attend to undergraduates who lack the experience to negotiate common developmental tasks such as: leaving home, break up in relationships, alcohol, and time management.

Our graduate students often work full time, have family commitments, making their needs distinct from undergraduates and therefore requiring a different response from the university.

For example, many MBA students are on campus for classes on Saturdays between 8:30 am and 3:00 pm when most university services are unavailable.

Santa Clara University encourages students to develop to their full potential as leaders.

However, since most students are here for four years or less, the benefit of the leadership talent developed in our students is often lost upon graduation. In order to capture this asset for the university, recent alumni should be identified for important roles in the campus community.

Alumni Relations and our Graduate Programs can serve as gateways for placing recent graduates in positions that provide opportunities to practice effective leadership.

Parents are playing an increasing role in managing their students’ affairs and have become a constituency not accounted for when allocating resources. For example, in disciplinary cases

involving alcohol or other drugs, the university notifies parents who often become very involved in the matter. The LA Times and the Boston Globe recently ran stories about universities' efforts to help parents stay connected to the university. This is characteristic of the "Millennial" generation, which is highly dependent upon input from parents. How parental involvement will change in the future is unclear; however, it is a very important part of today's reality.

Alcohol abuse remains the number one behavioral problem among our students affecting everything from grades to sexual assaults. Disordered eating is also on the rise and the more severe cases tax the resources of the University.

An increasing amount of resources are dedicated to alcohol education and response to high-risk drinking. Nearly 25% of college students' alcohol use resulted in academic consequences including missed classes, poor performance on exams or papers, lower grades.¹ SCU statistics show similarly disconcerting trends. During the 2003-2004 academic year, 47 students received medical attention due to their consumption of alcohol. Of those 47, 19 were transported to the hospital for potential alcohol poisoning. In the fall of 2004, 27 students received medical attention and 12 were transported to the hospital.³ To effect change on our campus culture, we must continue to develop a strategy that targets individuals, the student body as a whole, and the University and surrounding community.

Facilities are both instrumental and integral in creating a physical environment that assists in achieving academic excellence and promotes integrated education as identified in the University's 2001 Strategic Plan (#3.B). Students build community through every day interactions as witnessed in the Benson Memorial Center, Mission Church, Malley Fitness Center and Mayer Theatre and through unique campus venues such as Sobrato Commons, The Bronco, Multicultural Center, Wellness Center, and Fess Parker Studio.

As we embrace the creative tension offered by Fr. Ravizza to understand the world, we must offer a balance of classroom experiences with out-of-class experiences. We must look for ways to create opportunities for reflection and engagement among our students that distinguish the unique and distinctive "Santa Clara Experience."

The Path to Enhanced Quality and Distinctiveness

The following resources have been identified as necessary to support efforts to achieve national prominence as a Jesuit, Catholic University.

1. The University's strategic decision to migrate 'dorms' to Residential Learning Communities is a direction that only opens the door for the broader question... how do all students (especially those not living in an RLC) build community and gain long-term connectedness to SCU? Clearly the answer will be found in multiple facilities: a rejuvenated university library, a burgeoning Pat Malley Fitness Center, and ultimately a

¹ Engs RC, Diebold BA, Hansen DJ. The drinking patterns and problems of a national sample of college students, 1994. *Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education* 41(3):13-33, 1996.

³ Office of Student Life, Santa Clara University

hub for student life – which is the continued migration of Benson Memorial Center towards a fully realized ‘student union’. This will require additional square footage, e.g., second floor above Shapell Lounge and Campus Bookstore and spaces that are conducive to student and faculty interaction, as well as continued renovation of the Residential Learning Communities commons facilities to support the goals of the RLC program.

2. Physically combining the counseling and health services into a single location will provide more efficient service for students with physical and mental health needs.
3. We can create opportunities for the explicit purpose of advancing our stated mission with our students by inculcating our stated values through practical application. The development of a “University 101” course through the RLC structure would provide a context for understanding Jesuit education, the core curriculum, and integrated education as organizing structures for student experiences at SCU.
4. Parents have become a constituency not accounted for when allocating current resources. Efforts to coordinate the surge in parental involvement should include, but are not limited to, Admissions, Development, Financial Aid, Residence Life, Student Life, Campus Safety and the Registrar’s office. These departments should consider how to communicate important information to parents who are not literate or do not speak English.
5. The success of our alcohol education strategy to target individuals, the student body as a whole, and the University and surrounding community is dependent upon an increased awareness and commitment by the entire University community to addressing this issue. Our efforts should include funding a full-time Alcohol and Other Drugs Prevention Coordinator.

Access to Services

1. If SCU continues to offer classes on Saturdays, appropriate university services need to be available to students. (Early morning, evenings, weekends.)
2. Funding for psychiatric services and a nutritionist will be required to maintain services to students with physical and mental health needs.
3. Expanded resources for students with disabilities are needed to accommodate the increased demand for services.

Resources:

Kuh, G. D. (2000). Understanding campus environments. In M. J. Barr and M. K. Desler, and Associates (Eds). The handbook of student affairs administration. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Reflectors

James Briggs, Matt Cameron, Denise Carmody, Matthew Duncan, Charles Erikson, Jonathan Gray, Nikole McColum, Lisa Millora, Helen Moritz, Mario Prietto, Larry Wolfe,