

# DOSSIER

## The Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm and its Relevance for the Jesuit University

### *El paradigma pedagógico ignaciano y su relevancia actual para la universidad jesuita*

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#### ABSTRACT

The article describes the seven characteristics that should identify a Jesuit university nowadays: 1) Pedagogical practices at Jesuit universities should promote authentic dialog and reconciliation; 2) Pedagogical practices at Jesuit universities should promote human excellence in every aspect of human life; 3) Pedagogical practices at Jesuit universities should promote exploration and discovery focused on and among disciplines; 4) Programs and practices at Jesuit universities should promote exploration and intercultural appreciation; 5) Jesuit universities should contribute both in theory and in practice to the promotion of justice in society as a whole and within society's various institutions; 6) A Jesuit classroom should promote the construction of a global vision in students and professors; and 7) Internships and programs at Jesuit universities should promote authentic spiritual growth and faith development.

Based on the key approaches of the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (IPP) and having in view that this is not a prefabricated model ready to be applied, its particularities in higher education are contextualized in light of the reflections of the Society General Superiors.

The characteristics or identifiers presented motivate educational institutions to build an identity that responds to a long tradition of Jesuit education and a constant renewal of their commitment to form leaders to heal a broken world.

**Keywords:** Ignatian Pedagogy; Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm; University; Higher Education.

#### RESUMEN

*El artículo describe las siete características que deben identificar a una universidad jesuita en la actualidad: 1) las prácticas pedagógicas en las universidades jesuitas deben promover el diálogo*

*auténtico y la reconciliación; 2) las prácticas pedagógicas en las universidades jesuitas deben promover la excelencia humana en todas las esferas del quehacer humano; 3) las prácticas pedagógicas en las universidades jesuitas deben promover la exploración y el descubrimiento centrados en y entre las disciplinas; 4) los programas y prácticas de las universidades jesuitas deben promover la exploración y la apreciación intercultural; 5) las universidades jesuitas deben contribuir tanto en la teoría como en la práctica a la promoción de la justicia en la sociedad en su conjunto y en sus diversas instituciones; 6) el aula jesuita debe promover la construcción de una visión global en estudiantes y profesores, 7) las prácticas y los programas en las universidades jesuitas deben promover un auténtico crecimiento espiritual y el desarrollo de la fe.*

*Con base en los planteamientos clave del Paradigma Pedagógico Ignaciano (PPI) y la visión de que éste no es un modelo prefabricado listo para ser aplicado, se contextualizan sus particularidades en la educación superior a partir de las reflexiones de los Superiores Generales de la Compañía.*

*Las características o identificadores presentados motivan a las instituciones educativas a que construyan una identidad que responda a una larga tradición de la educación jesuita y a una constante renovación de su compromiso por formar líderes para sanar un mundo roto.*

**Palabras clave:** *Pedagogía ignaciana; Paradigma Pedagógico Ignaciano; universidad; educación superior.*

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### *Introduction*

How an educational institution thinks of its commitment to its students is, perhaps, its fundamental responsibility. How it conceives of its mission in light of that commitment to students determines the nature and purpose of its academic programs, and how those programs are presented to students, that is, how the students are invited to participate in the learning process. We propose here that there are seven characteristics or “identifiers” of the Jesuit university or post-secondary institution that, taken together, exemplify the mission and purpose of the Jesuit university. The commitment to these seven “identifiers” undergirds a Jesuit institution, that is, forms the bedrock on which a Jesuit institution builds its approach to teaching and learning and helps constitute its identity. Together, these characteristics provide the deeper underlying reasons for a pedagogy that proposes to reach, as Pope Francis has said, the head, the heart, and the hands of the student committed to its care.

### *Context*

Several years ago, Fr. Jose Mesa, SJ, Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education of the Society of

Jesus, published his edited collection of the most significant documents for understanding the history of the Society of Jesus’s work in education, both secondary and higher education (Mesa, 2017). More recently, he and a team of educators created a template for secondary schools, “*Jesuit Schools: A Living Tradition in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*”. This newer document was several years in the making by his task force of secondary education, with delegates representing a wide range of institutions throughout the secondary and primary school Jesuit network. Its aim is to “assist in the necessary discernment to find the most suitable means to accomplish faithfully and effectively the mission received, taking into account continually changing circumstance” (from Fr. Kolvenbach’s letter of December 8, 1986, commissioning the project).

Seven years later, in 1993, a new document, entitled “*Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach*, (published in Gil Coria, 2002)” authored by Peter Hans Kolvenbach, SJ, the General Superior of the Jesuits, described the set of practices characteristic of Jesuit education globally as the “*Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm*,” or the IPP. If Jesuit education is intended to form leaders distinguished by

their compassion, competence, conscience, and commitment, then Jesuit schools would benefit from having a clear description of the best ways to educate their students. The IPP rejects the more restrictive “traditional” methods of education and places the student, the learner, at the heart of the educational project and insists on implementing as many ways of learning as possible.

*JESUIT EDUCATION: A LIVING TRADITION...* (ICAJE, 2020) is also a collection of foundational documents. It includes reflections on the present challenges facing the schools, and what the document calls “global identifiers” of Jesuit schools. The “identifiers” or “characteristics” of Ignatian pedagogy represent the set of “commitments” that should ground the Jesuit school’s academic and spiritual aspirations and practices. For example, Jesuit schools, if they are to prepare leaders with the four defining characteristics—compassion, competence, conscience, and commitment—must include in their programs a call to global citizenship, intercultural activities and opportunities, academic programs that demonstrate care and reverence for all creation, and so forth. Other characteristics, such as a commitment to all persons, regardless of race, class, ethnicity, or creed, round out these “identifiers” and follow directly from Catholic Social Teaching.

Our purpose here is to take up the work begun by Fr. Mesa’s task force and to extend it into the context of university education. That is, we propose seven “identifiers” which should characterize all Jesuit institutions committed to post-secondary education and, therefore, ground their approach to teaching and learning. These “identifiers” consider the vast diversity of models and forms of higher education sponsored by the Society of Jesus. Jesuit institutions of higher education range in size of student body from a few hundred to many thousands. Some are complex universities with dozens of departments, that is, faculties and programs. Others offer a single program of studies, with a focused faculty (for example, a theology faculty) offering ministry degrees with a variety of specializations. A business school might exist within a complex uni-

versity which includes many other professional schools, or it might be a “stand alone” institution. It might even be a school sponsored by the Society but housed within a state-sponsored institution. In all, there are over 200 post-secondary Jesuit institutions. The official network of 200 institutions, the International Association of Jesuit Universities (IAJU) represents schools from approximately 65 countries, making it perhaps the most international and certainly one of the largest systems of education in the world.

Given this diversity, the question of what unites Jesuit post-secondary institutions and gives them a common purpose is of critical importance. What these institutions share, despite their legal, structural, and organizational differences, and despite the vast diversity of their academic offerings, amounts to a firm belief in the students themselves as world-transforming agents. This belief follows from a conviction that the Divine is already working in the world, and that all of us together are the instruments of the Divine, called to co-create by building a more just and sustainable world for all, especially those who have been excluded or marginalized. This is often described, or referred to, as an “Incarnational Vision”.

#### *Elaborating the Vision: Reflections from the Society’s Superiors General*

The Ignatian pedagogical vision was never intended, and never did exist, as a prefabricated “blueprint,” available to be “applied” to a worldly audience ready to receive it. Even when the Jesuits formally opened their first “university,” in Sicily’s city of Messina in the year 1548, none of the Jesuit leaders (not even Ignatius himself) had a clear idea of what the new institution would or could become. Indeed, the first Jesuit university in Messina was not even planned as a university (*studium generale*). It grew into being a university only because of the successful confluence of many different motivations, needs, and external circumstances which worked productively together to generate particular—sometimes hard-won—solutions to unique chal-

lenges regarding the new institution's funding, governance, curriculum, staffing, and student body. In other words, even the earliest Jesuit institutions of higher learning were founded, not merely through the imposition of a pre-ordained plan on a passively receptive world, but rather through the creative, context-sensitive "give and take" of thoughtful, world-affirming, loving collaboration. And yet such dynamic, open-hearted cooperation was not arbitrary or unguided. It was unqualifiedly informed by the two central Ignatian imperatives ("for the greater glory of God and for the greater help of souls"), now further specified or inflected through an enriched understanding which included "university education" among the Society's most important ministries.

Over the 450-year history of Jesuit education, the Society's understanding, and explanation of the Jesuit mission in higher education has grown and further evolved. As in previous ages, these self-understandings and explanations have been sharpened to respond to new challenges. The development of our present or contemporary "way of proceeding," that is, the general approach for the "how and why" of what we do, was set in motion by the Jesuit Superior General, Fr. Pedro Arrupe, who has been called the "Second Founder of the Society of Jesus". Arrupe became the Society's leader in May of 1965, shortly before the Second Vatican Council formally concluded in December of 1965. He and successive Superiors General have carefully built a framework for Jesuit education by expanding on the traditional aims of Jesuit education—to cultivate astute, well-trained leaders—by applying tried and true methods to our contemporary context, all in the service of making Jesuit education relevant in light of Vatican II's vision of the world and the work of the Church in it. Just like the earliest Jesuit leaders and educators, we need to attend carefully and lovingly to the world in which we find ourselves, to discern what God's calling requires of us in our unique circumstances. In the contemporary world, because of changing social circumstances, the evolving needs of society at large, and new technol-

ogies, we must, from time to time, re-evaluate how and what we teach.

Fr. Pedro Arrupe (period 1965-1983) launched this re-examination and re-articulation of the Society's purposes in its schools with his speech "Men (and Women) for Others (1973)". While many had come to think of Jesuit education as chiefly committed to rigor, discipline, and academic excellence, Arrupe proposed that the primary purpose of a Jesuit education must be the formation of the student for service to his or her fellow human beings. Excellence in all things is not a motto just for self-improvement but serves this more important purpose of forming men and women committed to putting others before self. In order to form such leaders, Jesuit educators must, therefore, reach not only the mind but also the heart. And the model for one's life is, of course, the "servant leader, Jesus".

Arrupe's successor, Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach (period 1983-2008), chose to build the vision of Jesuit education by pointing to the teaching and example of this Jesus who came to inaugurate the "Kingdom of God on earth". Working for the Kingdom involves, above all, a commitment to the promotion of justice and peace. Kolvenbach's speech at Santa Clara University in 2000 laid out a platform for Jesuit higher education grounded in a two-fold belief: not only is God active in the world; God's activity in the world includes His calling us to work for a more just and inclusive society. A Jesuit education, therefore, must cultivate in students a passion not only for helping those who are less fortunate, but also for identifying and reforming entire systems of injustice. Social analysis and a deep trust in God's Providence are the equipment that students need to make their way in a world crying for equity and fairness.

Fr. Kolvenbach's vision for Jesuit education has inspired critical reflection on how our students are shaped by the world, especially one in which our consciousness of growing inequalities is evident. How might we think about our students' deepest desires as they contemplate their futures and imagine the many ways in which they might dedicate

their lives to God's calling? How might we help them to master the tools of social analysis and critical assessment, so that they can understand and address the root causes of our unjust systems which sustain and perpetuate the poverty and violence gripping the lives of those without access to power or influence?

In his address to the leaders of Jesuit higher education at the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City, in 2010, Fr. Kolvenbach's successor, Fr. Adolfo Nicolas (2008-2016), expanded our reflection on the world of our young people by taking a critical look at the technologies that bring them that world. While the internet, he noted, affords them greater access to information, it neither teaches them how to think and reflect, nor does it offer any real depth. While aided in some ways by the new technologies, young people's awareness and their understanding can remain superficial and thus inadequate for the task of engaging the issues of justice and healing they will face as men and women with a mission. The new technologies offer enormous benefit, but they can also cripple and distort reality.

The present Fr. General, himself a former University rector, with deep roots in the struggle for justice in Latin America, took advantage of the formation of the IAJU at Loyola Castle and Basilica in 2018 to offer his own vision of the challenges that Jesuit education faces. Echoing the work of his predecessors, Fr. Arturo Sosa (2016-present) expanded on the themes of the recent General Congregation (2017) to characterize Jesuit education as a preparation of men and women for the promotion of faith and justice which, if lived out honestly and consistently, must lead to reconciliation. This call for reconciliation is addressed to all men and women, at all times and places, and it is the founding inspiration for the Society of Jesus. The complexity of systems and challenges we face, from the environment, to building democracies, to healing racial injustices, and historic grievances that have wounded our social fabric require, if they are to be addressed, a capacity to see all sides, to work for healing, and to imagine new ways forward. How we move forward

will depend to a large extent on the willingness and ability of educators within Jesuit institutions to become instruments of genuine healing and reconciliation. That will be evidenced not only in the educator's choice of the specific material to be taught, but also—and perhaps more importantly—in his or her particular style of teaching. For Sosa, the IPP also extends to our conduct as a university community and the care we show to one another, both within that community and beyond it.

### *Seven Characteristics and their Relevance for the Classroom*

How then do these reflections on the circumstances facing today's educators impact our understanding of Jesuit education today? Given the long tradition of Jesuit education and the renewal of its commitment to forming leaders for healing a broken world, we propose the following seven "characteristics" or "imperatives" of Jesuit universities as "guides" to what will constitute authentic Jesuit education and pedagogy today.

1. Pedagogical practices in Jesuit universities should promote authentic dialogue and reconciliation. This commitment requires us to address and engage diverse opinions, and to promote genuine dialogue among and between opposing sides. Some of the most daunting challenges of our day arise in political, economic, social, and religious contexts where there is widespread diversity of opinion and belief. Such diversity can help to engender new and imaginative approaches to problem-solving; but it can also lead to mutual misunderstanding or distrust. Accordingly, universities must work to foster dialogue across differences in a spirit of genuine reconciliation. Reconciliation means recognizing not only the just claims, but also the dignity and indeed lovability of persons with differing points of view. It means making a genuine attempt at healing and even at times re-envisioning our challenges and their solutions.

Universities are privileged to enjoy widespread financial and moral support from the public at large, and their faculty are enabled to pursue learning for its own sake, apart from the usual utilitarian constraints that typically prevail in other professions. Thus universities, and Jesuit universities, are uniquely obligated to serve as models of open-minded, open-hearted dialogue aimed at genuine reconciliation. The reconciliatory spirit which animates the Jesuit university finds clear articulation in the opening “Presupposition” of the *Spiritual Exercises*: “it must be presupposed that any good Christian has to be more ready to justify than to condemn a neighbor’s statement”.

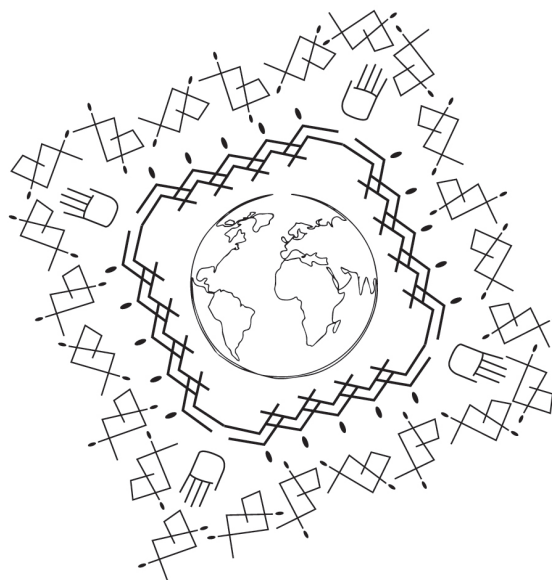
2. Pedagogical practices in Jesuit universities should promote human excellence in all spheres of human endeavor. The aim of a Jesuit education is the formation of a student who is competent, compassionate, conscientious, and committed. The promotion of human excellence depends on recognizing and nurturing each person’s talents, regardless of what those talents may be, and regardless of whether they are latent or actual, natural, or acquired. It involves an openness to continual discovery and improvement. The Jesuit university is a unique community of individuals, faculty, staff, and students, who experience their individual careers as part of a greater call to a vocation of service. The Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm recognizes the crucial distinction between the excellent and the mediocre, the skilled and the sloppy, the beautiful and the ugly; but it does not endorse any single standard or measure for determining what counts as excellent. There can be no single standard of excellence because of the immeasurably wide scope and rich diversity of the many spheres of human endeavor. Furthermore, each particular sphere remains ever open to continual discovery and improvement, and thus open to the ongoing revision and adjustment of its own standards of excellence.
3. Pedagogical practices in Jesuit universities should promote focused exploration and discovery in and across disciplines. No discipline is without its unique contribution to our understanding of the world and human life within it. If any area of inquiry is blocked or excluded from the circle of disciplines which together fuel the intellectual life of the university, then all disciplines stand to suffer. For each particular discipline is limited in its own way and becomes positively distortive if regarded as the sole or as the best means of achieving knowledge of reality. Correspondingly, scholars pursuing research in different disciplines run the risk of becoming narrow-minded, chauvinistic specialists if they are disconnected from ways of knowing beyond their own. When the university facilitates meaningful exchanges across disciplines, it helps its members to remain not only humble about their own scholarly pursuits but also open to other spheres of reality which can never be entirely indifferent to their own vocations as scholars and as human beings. Even when taken together, the various disciplines approach but never fully grasp the fullness of what can be known. Human understanding can apprehend only dimly and partially the richness and the treasure of the created universe whose very being and unity are traceable to one omni-benevolent Creator. In each field of knowledge, in each new discovery, in each grain of existence, it is possible to appreciate the fundamental wholeness of all reality, especially if our intellectual vision is illuminated by faith.
4. Programs and practices at Jesuit universities should promote intercultural exploration and appreciation. The diversity of peoples—their races, their cultures, their symbols, their beliefs—are important for understanding the essence of our human nature as well as our importance as caretakers of creation and one another. Across the globe and across millennia,

human beings have found it possible to express themselves in a wide variety of ways. Such variation within the human family has all-too-often been an occasion for people to treat one another with indifference or even disdain. But properly understood, such diversity is a cause for celebration insofar as it is a testament to human freedom and inventiveness. The Jesuit university should seek to foster the deeper understanding and wider appreciation of the human being's capacity for novelty and innovation. Jesuit universities should actively invite and engage human ingenuity in all its multiform manifestations, with a view towards valuing and cherishing the unique contributions made by others, even others who are very different from ourselves, to the local and the wider human community. This orientation towards cross-historical and cross-cultural appreciation represents the best aspirations of both classical learning and Christian humanism, two important ancestors to the modern Jesuit university. Accordingly, members of contemporary Jesuit university communities should be prepared to proclaim along with Terence that "nothing human is alien to me", and along with Pope Francis that we are "*fratelli tutti*", brothers and sisters all.

5. Jesuit universities should contribute both in theory and in practice towards the promotion of justice within society as a whole and within society's various institutions. Inequality, prejudice, and a host of human vices such as greed, avarice, complacency, and pride can be the cause of much human suffering, for individuals and for groups. Injustice is often institutionalized, and in every society, we see the effects of unjust policies and systematic discrimination. Jesuit universities should promote rigorous thinking not only about theories of human society and history, but also about the unavoidably moral, existential, and political challenges that mature persons must face as they seek to bring about goodness and justice

in their lives and communities. Such rigorous thinking enables the critical perspectives that are needed to detect, better understand, and ultimately root out the harmful policies and systems that continue to permeate human societies. Since our thinking is always informed by our doing, and our doing always informed by our thinking, it is a mistake to believe that the theory and practice of justice can be innocently divorced from one another. The Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm, strictly speaking, encourages neither contemplation as such nor action, but rather contemplation precisely in and through action ("*simul in actione*", to borrow a phrase coined by Nadal). The promotion of our shared commitment to the common good and the tenets of Catholic social teaching ground the Jesuit university's commitment to social justice. The Jesuit university's teaching and doing of justice should remain ever informed by a realistic awareness of the human being's multiform capacities for sinfulness, forgiveness, and redemption.

6. The Jesuit classroom should promote the building of a global vision in students and faculty. Communication technologies and economic forces have made the peoples of the world increasingly dependent on one another,



even at great distances, for their sustenance, their jobs, and even for their self-understandings. The various technologies and forces which bind us together can sometimes even disguise the subtle ways in which we can be changed through our interdependence. Many of the consequences of our interdependence are undeniable and probably irreversible: what happens in one part of the world can have major impact in another part of the globe; the benefits of science can be more easily shared across geographical and cultural barriers; the consequences of human tragedies can more easily impact us globally. Other consequences of our interdependence are more difficult to discern and address: automated search engine algorithms feed “more of the same” content to interest-specific audiences, so that what is “information” to one segment of the population counts as “disinformation” to another; the “friendships” that we maintain on social media are sometimes pernicious and thus not friendships at all; the internet’s ability to make us feel close and connected to others can keep us from acknowledging our deeper needs, fears, and loneliness. As the peoples of the world become more interdependent and subject to the influence of globalizing (sometimes homogenizing, sometimes division-sowing) technologies, Jesuit universities must prepare young people with a global vision that holds human dignity, fairness, and truthfulness as guiding principles. The promises and perils of globalization will affect almost every aspect of every one of our future endeavors: from our own actions to the actions of the institutions that we influence or in which we participate, from private life and family life to the more broadly shared lives of our local, regional, and worldwide enterprises.

7. Practices and programs at Jesuit universities should promote authentic spiritual growth and faith development. Our knowledge is never complete. Our skills are never fully ade-

quate. Our insight is never total. A Jesuit education should be a continuous exercise in humility and gratitude. A person of wisdom and depth is a person who acknowledges and lives in the conviction that some One who is the Author of life sustains our very existence, inspires our knowing, and grounds our actions. Jesuit universities should educate their students to become responsible, well-rounded citizens, and to become humble and grateful leaders. And, as universities, they should promote the intellectual integration of all disciplines as contributing to the truth of God’s creative action and presence in human history and creation. Jesuit universities are committed not only to the compatibility of faith and reason, but also to the mutually perfective relationship that is obtained between these two domains: the claims of faith illuminate truths that would otherwise remain opaque or hidden to reason alone, while the claims of reason enable faith to intervene realistically and effectively in our fallen world. Jesuit universities should also prepare their students to be critical and courageous as countercultural agents. The Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm is incipiently countercultural, not because secular culture needs to be replaced or destroyed, but rather because it needs to be reminded from time to time about its own self-destructive tendencies. The discoveries of the great Jesuit scientists serve as a testament to the mutual perfectiveness of faith and reason, while the lives of the Jesuit saints and martyrs show us how, at times, our deepest vocation requires us to be lovingly counter-cultural.

The Ignatian idea of “seeing God in all things” requires that we are always prepared to discover and appreciate God’s actions and presence at work in the midst of all that one experiences and does. The IPP is not reducible to any fixed doctrine or set of rules but is rather a living, growing “way of proceeding” (a phrase which, according to Nadal, goes back to Ignatius him-



self). The Ignatian “way of proceeding” is a way of engaging the world with an open mind and an open heart, with an awareness of one’s own frailty and dependence on others, and with an appreciation of the world’s complexity and richness. The Ignatian “way of proceeding” demands careful attention and reflection, and it induces the learner to be more than a mere bystander or passive recipient of information. Its aim is to transform the learner through this ongoing process of active engagement and critical reflection.

First concluding note. The impact of technology and how it has transformed the way knowledge is acquired and shared cannot be underestimated. It has altered our own identities and has introduced changes to the teacher-student relationship. If this is the case, then each of the above-mentioned characteristics of an authentic “Jesuit” classroom or learning experience will be impacted in some way.

Second concluding note. The Society of Jesus has given us four “universal apostolic preferences” (Sosa, 2019) to guide our perception and our initiatives, including our work in education. These “preferences” are calls to discernment and action. How ought we to better use the tools of Ignatian spirituality to (1) “show the way to God through the *Spiritual Exercises* and discernment”? How can we be more conscientious of (2) “walking with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice”? Do our educational programs enable us to better (3) “accompany young people in their work towards advancing a hope-filled future”? And are we using every opportunity to (4) “collaborate in the care of our Common Home”? The Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm ought to enable us to address these serious challenges.

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Fr. Garanzini graduated from Saint Louis University with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology in 1971, the same year that he entered the Society of Jesus. After spending years around the country and in Rome during his training and early years as a Jesuit, Garanzini received a doctorate in psychology and religion in 1986 from the University of California, Berkeley, and Graduate Theological Union. Later that year, he returned to Saint Louis University, teaching as an associate professor of counseling psychology, and later served in several administrative posts. In 1994, he became as academic vice president for SLU.

During his time at Loyola Chicago, Fr. Garanzini was instrumental in founding of Arrupe Junior College and the Institute for Environmental Studies. Garanzini is the author of *The Attachment Cycle: An Object Relations Approach to the Healing Ministries* (1988), *Meeting the Needs of Dysfunctional Families* (1993), *Child-Centered Schools: An Educator's Guide to Family Dysfunction* (1995), and articles in numerous journals.

In 2012, Fr. Adolfo Nicolas, General of the Society of Jesus, appointed Fr. Garanzini as Secretary of the worldwide Jesuit higher education system. He has served in this capacity until this year, 2021.

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