



JESUIT HIGHER EDUCATION FOR BUSINESS

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Preface

We engage in business in order to fulfill human needs for goods and services. Because of its ubiquitous presence across societies and the many stakeholders who are involved and impacted, business has emerged as a critical institution in our current world experience.

Business is not a morally neutral endeavor. The complex challenges of resource allocation, efficiency, risk taking, relationship building and the generation of wealth and its distribution expose the internal character and values of business participants. Historical experience attests these competing pressures can influence individuals to distort legitimate commerce and trade. An example is yielding to the pursuit of power and personal gain.

For nearly 500 years, Jesuits have encouraged future leaders through their educational programs to engage dominant cultural institutions. In this same spirit, this essay recognizes the potential for business leadership as a noble calling. We affirm the pivotal role of business in contemporary society and its impact on stakeholders, cultures, the environment and stewardship of God's resources and creation.

The Jesuit perspective, in its concern for educating the whole person, orients business education through moral and justice perspectives avoiding a singular focus on business profits. Leaders of Jesuit institutions are encouraged to challenge students, faculty, and stakeholders to champion high principles in the unfolding drama of modern business enterprise.



Jesuit Higher Education for Business

Ignatius of Loyola challenged Jesuits and their collaborators to read the signs of their times in discerning their mission and to address those institutions within society:

Where people can be reached who can cause good to spread

Where there is impact on many people

Where results can be durable

Where there is impact on the poor⁽¹⁾

Ignatius believed that God is present to history and guides human endeavors. This essay seeks to examine the role of higher education for business within the Jesuit University and what this tradition sees as distinctive in the call to business leadership.

Business as a Pivotal Societal Institution

Where there is impact on many people

Business is the institution that drives the provision of goods and services affecting the standard of living world-wide and impacting many and diverse stakeholders. Because of its centrality in the modern world crossing geographic, political, cultural and religious boundaries, business is an institution where a truly human and spiritual drama unfolds. Its service on behalf of humanity must be judged by its contribution to the dignity of persons and the common good, as well as how it operates efficiently and responsibly to meet real needs thereby improving the human condition. But hubris, greed, excessive consumerism, environmental degradation, unjust distribution of wealth or other forces can also distort the operation of business.



“I ask my students: “What are you going to do to make my world a better place?””

Taylor Keen, Creighton University





“I spent seven years at our major state university. The difference is stark. At a Jesuit University there is more of a sense of community dedicated to a bigger purpose—a mission centered calling.”

Paul Buller, Gonzaga University

Business Leadership as a Calling

Where people can be reached who can cause good to spread

In the Jesuit tradition business leadership can be a noble vocation when it is properly understood as both a charism (a gift to be exercised on behalf of others), and a calling (vocation). The Jesuit University believes that such leadership requires preparation of mind, heart, and spirit.

The complexity of modern business requires a climate where virtue flourishes as opposed to venality, careerism and greed. Through theological and religious studies and opportunities for spiritual development, Jesuit business education helps its graduates (regardless of their religious or non-religious tradition) develop an ethical and spiritual inner compass. It directs them toward cooperation with all persons of good will committed to (trans)forming business in a manner consistent with human purpose and dignity. At the same time, the Jesuit trained leader is forewarned of the reality of human imperfections and social distortions evident in business history. The Jesuit perspective shares with the student a commitment to progress in hope. It rejects any utopian model of human or institutional perfection through an understanding that business institutions and economies are created by human beings and must be changed by human beings. As part of their understanding of calling graduates are prepared for self-sacrifice in order to help secure justice for all in every sphere that business touches.

Business as Service to Humankind

Where the needs of people are met through the delivery of goods and services

Where there is impact on the poor

In modern economies business is an institution through which vast numbers of people serve the needs of others. Although business embraces multiple purposes and impacts on diverse stakeholders, in the Jesuit tradition inspiring men and women in service to others is central. Therefore, no matter what products or services their business offers, graduates of a Jesuit business school are invited to continually discern how to make underlying human needs a focus of economic effort. They are inspired to creative discovery of how greater access to goods, services and employment might be accomplished for all, especially those at the bottom of the economic pyramid who often remain outside the domain of business planning.⁽²⁾



Business as Contemporary Community

Where there is impact on many people

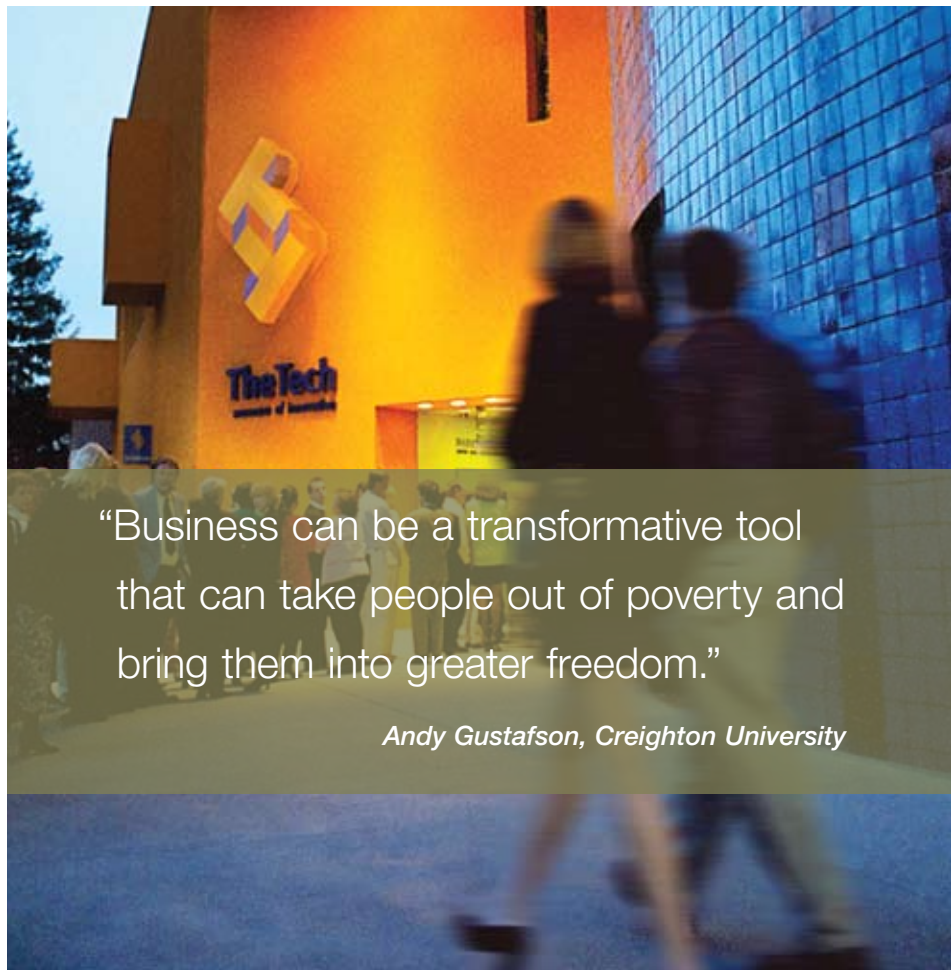
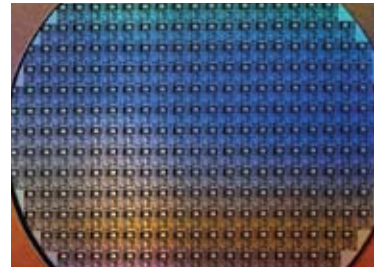
In both developed and developing economies, the contemporary business organization is a primary community for individuals during working hours. Therefore business organizations are challenged to develop healthy and just institutional cultures. In the Jesuit perspective work is natural and participation in organizations that serve meaningful human purposes is an important aspect of personhood. The graduate of a Jesuit business school is invited to recognize the dignity of individuals in the workplace by seeking to create an environment where no one is marginalized by the manner in which work is structured or by a lack of appropriate inclusion in organizational decision making. Even further, they are encouraged to be especially sensitive to groups that are disadvantaged within the organization or by its actions.

Business as a “Wealth Creating” Institution

Where the impact can be durable

The particular charism (gift and value) of business is to organize financial assets, human talent and technology within productive systems that efficiently create wealth while stewarding resources. The Jesuit graduate should be sensitive to how wealth can serve the common good. Profits make it possible to provide a fair return to investors, serve as an incentive for entrepreneurship and efficiency and are a requirement for organizational continuity. Just wages and salaries that enable the well being of employees and their families are also a priority consideration.

It is not only the creation of wealth, but also the distribution of wealth that must be a justice concern. The mal-distribution of wealth wherein the rich are getting richer and the poor getting poorer is a moral challenge. The Jesuit graduate should be aware that business must be a constructive citizen of communities in which it operates. Business should pay a fair share of taxes and collaborate where appropriate with legitimate government and other social institutions serving the common good through education, the arts and other societal services. Wealth creation and distribution require complex discernment⁽³⁾ in a global economy where effective supply chain management, marketing and distribution involve operations across national borders adding the need for sensitivity to impacts on local cultures and institutions.



“Business can be a transformative tool that can take people out of poverty and bring them into greater freedom.”

Andy Gustafson, Creighton University

“Until we come to grips with the misleading underlying philosophy of economic utilitarianism that permeates so many business courses we will fail to make important progress.”

Gene Laczniak, Marquette University



Business Education of the Whole Person

In these complex business and economic contexts the Jesuit educational tradition informs the development of future business leaders.

“What our students want and deserve includes but transcends worldly success based on marketable skills. The real measure of our Jesuit universities lies in who our students become.”⁽⁴⁾

Jesuit education seeks to educate the whole person through a carefully constructed core curriculum in the liberal arts and sciences. Building on this foundation Jesuit business education then strives for excellence in all the core disciplines associated with business studies (e.g. accounting, finance, economics, operations, information technology, marketing and management). A graduate of a Jesuit business school must be well grounded in these intellectual fields, appreciative of the truth and insight they offer, and prepared to cooperate in all that is good associated with these disciplines. In order to make discerning choices and execute decisions that are oriented to the greater good the Jesuit-trained business leader must possess the competencies that modern business disciplines offer.

The content and recommended approaches within business disciplines are also examined in relation to ethical and social justice norms so that the Jesuit student will learn to wrestle in a discerning

manner with the personal, interpersonal, organizational and global implications of contemporary business theory and practice. Further, service, community based learning and immersion experiences help the student develop experiential sensitivities to those whose economic contexts are very different from his or her own.

“Solidarity is through contact with rather than through concepts. When the heart is touched by direct experience, the mind may be challenged to change. Students must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering and engage it constructively.”⁽⁵⁾

In this manner the Jesuit business graduate is prepared to become “salt and light” working to make the structures, processes and culture of business enterprise ever more responsive to the requirements of the greater good.

Implications for Faculty

All that we have said implies that faculty in Jesuit Business Schools are invited to push to the cutting-edge. They are asked to read the signs of the time and address important emerging issues in their scholarship. They are asked to utilize exciting pedagogy to engage their students in their search for truth, and to prepare their students to be life-long learners.





Summary

Jesuit business education seeks to prepare its graduates to provide important products and services needed by humankind in an efficient and effective way through a rigorous program of studies based on foundational business disciplines. But there is more. Jesuit graduates will also be prepared to examine how business impacts all its stakeholders; people within the business organization and in the societies in which it operates. They will be expected to examine these concerns through ethical and justice lenses with concern for social and environmental impacts. In the course of studies graduates will have been given personal guidance so that their psychological and spiritual maturity will be interlaced with rigorous intellectual and skill development.⁽⁶⁾ Jesuit business graduates will be invited to approach business leadership not simply as a job (a series of tasks) or as a career (a series of positional moves and achievements), but also as a calling that challenges them to serve others in one of society's most influential institutions.

“It requires Ignatian pedagogy to connect affect and intellect achieved through self reflection.”

Joan Van Hise, Fairfield University

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- (1) Thomas Lucas, *Landmarking City, Church and Jesuit Urban Strategy*, Chapter VII, “The More Universal, the More Divine”, Chicago IL, Loyola Press, 1997 pp. 107-127
 - (2) “*Magis*”—An aspect of the Jesuit Tradition that reaches to what is more noble, courageous, compassionate, etc.
 - (3) “*Discernment*”—Decision-making that through prayer, reflection and deep listening to the voices of others leads to personal and organizational freedom to take a more noble path
 - (4) Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., *The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education*, October 6, 2000. Santa Clara Lecture.
 - (5) Op. Cit.
 - (6) “*Cura personalis*”—Care of the whole person helping each individual to reach their fullest potential

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