**The Regis Examen:**

***Engaging the Depths of Our University’s Soul***

Many people who see the term “Examen” assume they have come across a misspelling. Obviously related to such well-known English words as examine and examination, Jesuits and others who practice Ignatian spirituality treasure the precision of the Latin word and so retain it in their daily usage. For an individual committed to “finding God in all things,” it refers to the specific, crucial spiritual practice of exercising an honest, attentive, and grateful memory. Through the Examen, one encounters telling traces of the presence of God in one’s own life. For a corporate group, the aim is similar: not merely a listing and adding up of all the things we do to practice our faith, but an effort to actually experience God as present in and among us in our efforts to imagine, create, and implement ways of corporately living the presence of God.

In the spirit of this treasured practice, all the universities and colleges sponsored by the Jesuit order throughout the world were invited to engage in “an institutional Examen” to trace the efforts we have made and are making to consciously and explicitly engage in the mission of the Society of Jesus: the promotion of faith and the practice of justice that genuine faith elicits and requires. So it was that, in 2016, Regis University began the year-long practice of an institutional Examen with the aim of discovering where God is and has been present to us, and above all, to honestly ask how and where we can go farther in our practice of seeking and being found by God.

The committee charged with leading Regis’s Institutional Examen identified two concrete goals for the year-long process: (1) we wanted to be as authentic as possible to the actual demands of the Ignatian practice of Examen; (2) we wanted to ensure that the process engaged people across the whole university community. To accomplish this second goal, we created a university-wide conversation on two key questions: What aspects of university mission stir genuine gratitude in you? In what ways do you desire the university to grow in mission? On Ignatian Heritage Day (August 16, 2016), Fr. Dirk Dunfee. S.J. began the initiative by leading people in an Ignatian Examen practice and inviting attendees to a lunch and discussion of the Institutional Examen questions following the event. From August to November 2016, we engaged faculty, staff, administrators, students, and the board of trustees by holding both open sessions and focused meetings. At each meeting, a notetaker recorded comments and themes without including names, ensuring the anonymity and candor of feedback. After all of the sessions concluded, a team from the planning committee analyzed the listening session notes for emerging themes.

In preparing our Examen report, we also conducted an inventory of mission activities around the university, organized according to the AJCU document, “Some Characteristics of Jesuit Colleges and Universities.” This structure incorporated sections on leadership, academics, campus culture, service, the local church, Jesuit presence, and integrity. It is a testament to Regis’s vigorous and longstanding commitment to its Jesuit Catholic identity and mission, under the leadership of former Vice President for Mission Tom Reynolds, that each section of this report featured abundant evidence of mission activities. Considered alongside the analysis of the listening sessions, we identified emerging priorities that would preserve our strengths and allow us to grow. Some of these priorities include: more support for staff, affiliate faculty, and veteran faculty formation in Jesuit Catholic mission; greater integration of the Office of Mission with the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Excellence; more Ignatian spirituality offerings; and more support for vulnerable students.

A Peer Visiting Team came to Regis in April 2017, meeting with varied groups from across the university in both open and closed sessions. The animated participation of staff, faculty, and students in meetings with the Visiting Team demonstrated that the Regis mission lives above all in the people of Regis—in their daily work, their values, and their sense of commitment. Several visiting team members commented that they were impressed with the turnout and the passionate conversation at their sessions. The community’s participation was, for the planning committee, the strongest evidence for the vibrancy of the Jesuit Catholic mission at Regis.

In a letter to Fr. Ron Mercier, S.J., the Provincial of the U.S. Central Southern Province dated August 22, 2017, Fr. Arturo Sosa, S.J., the newly elected Superior General of the Society of Jesus, succinctly summarized his judgment regarding the Regis Examen: “I am happy to confirm the Jesuit and Catholic identity of Regis University.”

This does not end the process, of course, but launches us into a future where we continue to deepen our identity, to forcefully live out our mission, to creatively confront challenges and perplexities, to directly serve our students, to project ourselves into the concrete context where we live, and in all our activities, to do our part to build a more human and humane world where God can be encountered and God’s gift of life may flourish.