



29 November 2021
PO292/2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers of the JCS community,

The Peace of Christ as we begin the Advent season!

Re: The Future of Jesuit College of Spirituality

You have all weathered some difficult times over the last two years, and we imagine you are somewhat relieved to have reached the end of the academic year. Some of the challenges you faced resulted from the change of JCS's affiliation from the University of Divinity to Australian Catholic University. This year you officially became ACU students studying for ACU awards, but still taught by JCS, and that, as you know, had its teething problems. We are very grateful to the JCS administrative staff for all the extra work they have had to put into the transition – to Dr Zachariah Duke, who stepped in as interim Head of College at the beginning of the year; to Dr Micheál Loughnane, the Academic Dean, to Dr Sarah Cook, our Student Engagement Officer, and to Ms Elisa Cugliari, Executive Assistant. The new arrangements have meant a steep learning curve for some of the teaching staff as well, and they have risen to the challenge.

When we wrote to you in September about coming developments, we mentioned that the kind of agreement that had been entered into with ACU meant that our engagement with them was somewhat at arm's length. This resulted in a certain amount of double-handling due to there being two parallel administrative structures, and at times a lack of clarity about lines of responsibility. For reasons like these, such third-party agreements have come under close scrutiny by the Australian tertiary education regulatory body (TEQSA), and universities throughout the country are continuing to withdraw from them. Professor James Barber AM, the Chair of the JCS Council, has given us invaluable advice based on his years of leadership experience in university administration both in Australia and overseas.

JCS is not large enough to function as a degree-granting entity independently of a larger institution. Therefore, in order to preserve and promote the ministry of training spiritual directors and specialists in ministry supervision, the Society of Jesus in Australia needs to find a way to ensure stability and financial sustainability for that ministry well into the future. This means developing further the existing relationship with ACU, so that we are not just 'third-parties' or 'providers' to one another, but genuine partners in ministry.

The two JCS courses of Master of Spiritual Direction and Graduate Diploma in Supervision have now been fully adopted by ACU's Faculty of Philosophy and Theology, where they will be overseen by Associate Professor Jamie Calder SJ, who has taught previously at JCS and Pilgrim. Associate Professor Robyn Horner and Dr Christiaan Jacobs-Vandeger, both of ACU, who have been serving on the JCS Council, are also involved with

this transition. This will help ensure a continuity of vision, as will the continuing involvement of key teaching staff of the two programs: Dr Cecilia Francis, Sr Therese Carroll RSJ, Dr Micheál Loughnane and Dr Michael Smith SJ, who has been a prime mover in the development of programmes for training in spiritual direction for many years.

The Arrupe® accreditation for givers of the Spiritual Exercises is offered by the Australian Province of the Society of Jesus separately from the MSD or Grad Dip awards. It will not be transferred to ACU, since it is a program of formation and inculturation into the Ignatian vision and necessarily involves observations and judgements about a candidate's spiritual maturity and ministerial gifts—such evaluations are not appropriate to an academic degree programme. Students of the MSD award will still be able to apply to the Arrupe® Program, which will be distinct from, but concomitant with, the ACU courses of study. It will offer more mentoring, community building and practicum possibilities than the academic programme can, and will collaborate with Jesuit and Ignatian Spirituality Australia (JISA) in order to integrate candidates into the broadening circle of those women and men around the country who give the Spiritual Exercises and who are offering spiritual direction in the Ignatian tradition. The unit 'Supervised Giving of the Exercises' will still be offered to continuing students who choose it in the MSD programme this year. However, in future it will be part of the Arrupe® Program. This will enable us to reduce the cost to students of this key formation element, and to offer more flexibility for it than is possible in a semester-based degree programme.

From January 2022 the Arrupe® Program will be housed for the time being in The Loyola Institute, a new Jesuit research collaborative that is in the process of concluding a partnership agreement with ACU. The Coordinator of the Arrupe® Program will be Dr Micheál Loughnane, who will soon inform you of details about offerings and procedures. We are very grateful to him for agreeing to bring his experience and skills in this area to the new structuring of the ministry of training spiritual directors in the Ignatian tradition.

The promise of subsidies to students transferring from UD to ACU will continue to be honoured. Beginning next year those reimbursements will be handled by The Loyola Institute. Requests for this year's subsidies should be made to JCS.

As a result of the restructuring of this ministry, Jesuit College of Spirituality as an institution will be closing at the end of the year. Several factors—not least regulatory requirements and financial constraints—have left us with little alternative. However, we hope we have been able to reassure you that almost all of those who have made JCS what it is will be continuing to guide and staff this ministry in the future. The Society of Jesus will continue to sustain the Arrupe® Program so as to support you in the training and formation in which you are engaged. ACU and ourselves hope that in the coming years the MSD programme will be able to grow and become more firmly established in the university.

Yours in Christ,



Fr Quyen Vu, SJ
Provincial



Fr Daniel Madigan, SJ
Delegate for Higher Education