Alumni voice concerns about modernity of school

Secularization, page 1

ni, this is not enough.

The objecting alumni worry that the college has become too secular, beginning in 1970 and continuing today. In 1970, the College's core curriculum was dropped for a few years, and when it was reinstated, the number of religion and philosophy courses required for graduation was significantly reduced. Today, a Holy Cross student can graduate without ever having been taught any of the teachings of the Catholic Church. Because the religion requirement is much more lax today, and the department of religious studies offers a broad spectrum of courses, a student need not ever take a Christian religion course.

The letter complains that half or more of the faculty is non-Catholic. The authors called the professors "good people, but symbolic of the change." Another complaint concerns the fact that in the month of October, formerly a time honoring the Virgin Mary, the college now celebrates a week dedicated to Gays, Lesbians, and Bisexuals. The point of the letter, as summed up in the concluding paragraph, is to "help the college turn back from secularization."

When asked for comment on the issue raised by this group of alumni, College President Father Michael C. McFarland, SJ, called the letter's claims "absurd." He pointed out that the four alumni who wrote it misinterpreted a criticism made by the Jesuit Superior General, Peter Hans Kolvenback, SJ, that "for some (Jesuit) universities, it is probably too late to restore their Catholic character."

According to Fr. McFarland, this quote was most likely "taken out of context," since the Jesuit Superior General has expressed much support for Jesuit universities, and very little criticism. The fact remains that education is one of the main objectives of the Jesuit order, and it is certainly not limited to religious education.

According to Fr. McFarland's mission statement of the Jesuit tradition in the Liberal Arts, as posted on the college website, "Jesuit education is not meant to program graduates to act in a certain way," but is rather directed towards producing graduates who are "independent, well-educated, and committed to higher ideals."

Although the climate of the school was vastly different in the 1950's and 1960's, when rigid discipline, dress codes, and of mass were compulsory, the changes that the school has taken since have not diminished the College's commitment to education. Even though the statement admits that "we cannot fully grasp our world in all its depth or without reference to God," it also states that learning is to be valued on all levels. According to the mission of Jesuit education, "subjects do not have to have a narrow moral or theological reference to be worth pursuing." Thus one can see justification for the move away from an overload of religion and philosophy, those on campus maintaining the tenets of Jesuit education.

Rob Heinimann '04 feels that "at a school which embraces a Jesuit identity I think it is important that students make an active attempt to make God a more integral part of their lives."

The commitment to serve others is evident in the Holy Cross community.

Various service groups exist on campus, and students give their time to others in the Worcester community, nationally, and abroad. In the spring of 2001, ten percent of the student body spent their spring break building houses in impoverished areas for Habitat for Humanity, a record-breaking portion of the school.

Other service activities include Student Programs for Urban Development (SPUD) and various charities, in which a large majority of the student body regularly participates.

Although the alumni who wrote the letter state that they are "proud of the widely recognized academic achievements, the Wellesley atmosphere, the heritage shared by the students, their service to others," they also state that is why they want to "preserve its Jesuit character" and "help the College to turn back from secularization."

It is reported that many other alumni from earlier class years have agreed with the sentiments expressed in the letter, but those on campus tend to disagree. Many admit that the College needs to move along with the times, and that the changes in the culture of the country have provoked the changes in the culture of the student body here at Holy Cross.

Jesuit education is meant to display an "openness to experimentation and change," and the changes that have occurred have only followed the path of change in the rest of the world. Matt Hayes '03 feels that "change is a good thing. It's nice to hold on to the past, but when adhering to old traditions impedes progress, it becomes necessary for a school to adapt." If Holy Cross were to strictly adhere to tradition, women would not be part of the student body, all students would wear pants and ties to class daily, and daily mass attendance would be mandatory. In the 21st century, the climate of the country and the world are not the same as they were in 1945, and consequently neither is life at Holy Cross.

Get to know the Wheeler 2 RA

Who's who, page 4

French and Accounting. I am currently looking for an internship in Accounting for the summer. I am also going, with four other students, to an Andersen leadership weekend. I think that the weekend will be a good experience and will help me in my search for an internship. I need to get experience in the accounting field. After I graduate I want to teach accounting. Then I want to teach kindergarten. Finally, I want to teach elementary school French.

For the small amount of time that Meg is not preoccupied with helping Holy Cross' community, or West Virginia's communities, she gets really into music and aerobics. She said, "I love Janet Jackson! I love to go to concerts and to dance. I am also a die-hard kick-boxing fan. I also started a Wheeler 2 intramural volleyball team. We had a lot of fun!"

Meg's family has played a large role in her life and her character. She said, "My cousins are my best friends!" With her genuine and good-hearted nature, there is no wonder that Meg is close with her family. She is our “mother away from home” on the floor.