Holy Cross awarded prestigious Lilly Grant

BY VICTORIA MCCABE
CRUSADER NEWS STAFF

Holy Cross was recently awarded a $2 million grant by Lilly Endowment Inc., the largest foundation grant that the school has ever received. According to an official press release issued by the college, Holy Cross is one of 28 U.S. colleges and universities to receive a Lilly grant, to be used “to create or enhance programs enabling young people to draw upon the resources of religious wisdom as they consider their vocational choices.”

After Holy Cross was invited to apply for a grant during the second of three selection rounds, college president the Rev. Michael C. McFarland, S.J., appointed a task force of faculty and staff members to develop a proposal to submit to the foundation. According to David O’Brien, a professor in the Center for Religion, Ethics and Culture, the task force consulted with members of the student body, faculty, staff, alumni and experts with interest in the idea of vocation and then decided to place emphasis on discernment, or reflective practice.

“We drew upon the experience of the college; its dedication to a liberal arts education, the First-Year Program, its extensive retreats, its commitment to assisting people to find careers in ministry. We consulted all of our tradition and came up with a plan,” said O’Brien.

In its proposal to Lilly Endowment Inc., entitled “Cultivating Habits of Discernment: The Lilly Vocation Discernment Initiative,” the task force outlined a multi-faceted initiative consisting of four major courses of action that it felt would best serve the college’s needs.

The first goal of the initiative focuses on integrating the idea of reflective practice, or spiritual reflection, into school-sponsored activities through several means and will be overseen by the Office of Student Affairs. The first year of pupil fall orientation will be extended by a day” classes will start on a Wednesday next year instead of a Tuesday” to allow for extra time to emphasize the importance of student service and of engaging in spiritual and vocational reflection. The college will also begin the gradual introduction of a campus-wide convocation day, during which the entire college community can engage in reflective practice. The goal of this part of the plan, according to O’Brien, is to “get everyone thinking more clearly about the larger question asked each year by the First-Year Program, ‘How then shall we live?’ Seeking the answer to this question will hopefully aid all members of the Holy Cross community to discover their life’s calling.”

The second goal of the initiative is to integrate spiritual and vocational themes into the curriculum and to make money available for creative initiatives by individual members of the faculty and staff to be used to meet those ends.

Extended orientations, seminars and workshops on mentoring and advising will be offered for faculty under the third section of the proposal, which seeks to offer faculty and staff a variety of strategies to help bring issues of spiritual and vocational reflection into their course material.

The fourth part of the initiative focuses on the extension and expansion of the retreat programs, internships and mentoring programs offered by the college. This will be accomplished by exploring a variety of avenues, including an increase in the number of retreats offered, the creation of a retreat examining the themes of family and work, a spiritual direction program open to the retreats, and additional cross-campus development. The expansion of internships and mentoring positions offered will call for the collaboration of Student Programs for Urban Development (SPUD) and the Office of Summer Internships.

The initiatives will be implemented by members of different administrative departments. Jacqueline Peterson, vice president of student affairs, Stephen Ainaly, dean of the college, and Kim McCant, director of the Chaplain’s Office, will have key roles in the execution of specific parts of the program and in the attempt to achieve a greater integration between the social, the academic and the spiritual.

Founded in 1937, Lilly Endowment Inc. is a private family foundation that supports religious and educational causes. According to O’Brien, this grant falls under the foundation’s “Program on the Theological Exploration of Vocation.”

The three goals of this particular program are to motivate church-related schools to encourage students to consider vocational service, religious or secular, to bring theological and spiritual resources to play a role in all students’ consideration and understanding of their life’s work, and to develop a community that is supportive of the first two initiatives.

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College to rehabilitate Cookson Park

BY JESSICA MYERS
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Continuing with its efforts to reach out and help in the Worcester community, Holy Cross has become involved with a new project: the rehabilitation of Cookson Park. Named after the mayor of Worcester when the park was purchased in 1936, Cookson Park consists of 26.5 acres that border the area where many students live off campus. The park was virtually abandoned after poor conditions caused Little League to be suspended, and has grown derelict after nearly two decades of being ignored. Holy Cross has taken an active role in spearheading efforts to improve the existing park.

The city proposed to research the possibility of restoring the park and approached Holy Cross with the hopes that it might become a joint effort. The college provided the mone- tary backing needed in order to hire a consultant to perform a feasibility study. State aid for such projects is minimal; recently much of such funding has been diverted to Boston’s notorious “Big Dig” project, so the involvement of a third party was necessary to provide the necessary funds. The study found that the park was worth the investment of rehabilitation, and since then the City of Worcester’s Parks Department has put together a plan. In its master plan for Cookson Park, the Parks Department outlined its goals, which included a desire to, “design an attractive, ecologically sensitive park setting that improves the quality of life for Worcester residents and enhances the scenic and economic values of abutter and neighborhood properties.”

According to Holy Cross’ Vice President of Student Affairs, Jacqueline Peterson, Holy Cross will continue to play a role in the development of the park. Holy Cross Cares Day, scheduled for March 23, will involve a project that will prepare the land for further development.

Projects will still extend to other organizations, but a bulk of the participants will be involved with the park clean-up. Students, faculty, staff, and alumni will all “help with the clean-up needs they have,” said Peterson. Once the park has been sufficiently cleaned, the city will proceed to make changes. Despite the park’s 70 year existence, Peterson commented that “no comprehensive design has ever been completed.”

This is another aspect where Holy Cross students may be able to play a role. Seeing as two of the stated goals of the park are to maintain an ecological habitat and to consider certain needs such as trails and parking, Peterson hopes that Worcester officials will work “with faculty and students in environmental studies to design a plan.” Current plans include foot trails of varying degrees of difficulty.