

HOW BOARDS
OF TRUSTEES
MAINTAIN
THE MISSIONS
IN PROVINCE
SCHOOLS

It's not *Outsourcing*...



IT'S JUST after three o'clock on a brisk December afternoon when Barbara Bennie, the mother of three St. Xavier High School students (the older two have graduated, the youngest is a senior at the school), makes her way through the front doors of St. X's sprawling Finneytown facility.

Moments later, at 3:08, the last class period of the day adjourns and students flood into the hallway.

As she picks her way through the crowds of St. X students, many of whom are a full head taller, Ms. Bennie doesn't exactly look like the guardian of the school's mission.

But she is.

Yes, that's right, the St. X mom who's been volunteering as a fundraiser, event planner, and bookstore employee at the Finneytown campus since her oldest son, Jonathan, enrolled there in 1996, is a guardian of the fabled school's mission. And she's just arrived for the December board of trustees meeting. She and

It's Entrusting

by George Kearney



Board members from all five Province high schools gathered at St. Ignatius College Prep in fall 2004. They're listed here along with their school affiliation (B=Brebeuf; C=Cristo Rey; L=Loyola Academy; SI=St. Ignatius; SX=St. Xavier).

Front row: Sr. Sheila Marie Hart, SC, (L), Rosemary Croghan (L/C), Patti Halloran (B), Sr. Norma Rocklage, OSF (B), Joe Folzenlogen, SJ (B);

Second row: Jeff Hensley (B), Bob Huffman (L), Janet Arnold (B), Michael Garanzini, SJ (L), Andy Sweeny (SX), Kevin McGoff (B), Pat Culley (SX), Barbara Bennie (SX), Ernie Vargo (B), Edward Schmidt, SJ, Provincial;

Third row: Chuck Thompson, Chicago Province director of Ignatian Programs, Anthony Barbato (SI), Peter Gomsak, Jr. (SX) William Kunkel (SI), Peg Anderson (C), Pat Fairbanks, SJ (B), Michael Twyman (B), Michael Christiana, SJ (B), Janet Clark (B), Barb Perry (SI);

Fourth row: Morna Patrick (B), Tim Mooney (SX), Steve Hils (SX), Sherm Reynolds (L), Paul Mueller, SJ (C), John Libens, SJ (SI), Pat McGrath, SJ (C), Jim Stoeger, SJ, Provincial Assistant for Secondary Education, Dave Mueller (SX), Myron Kilgore (SX);

Fifth row: Jim Gartland, SJ (C), Ralph Nardini (SX), Paul Purcell (C), Ben Hawley, SJ (B), Tom Bumol (B), Tim Reilly (SX), Walter Deye, SJ (SX), Joseph Starshak (SI), Brian Paulson, SJ (SI), John Chandler (SI).

the 17 others who make up St. X's board are charged with the responsibility of overseeing, maintaining, and enriching the mission of the school, not to mention ensuring its financial viability. The same is true at the Province's other high schools—Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory, Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, Loyola Academy, and St.

Ignatius College Prep—and two universities, Loyola University Chicago and Xavier University in Cincinnati.

The idea of a board isn't a new one, says Fr. James A. Stoeger, SJ, provincial assistant for secondary education. "As institutions chartered by the state, Jesuit schools always had boards. Before 1970, though, the boards were

pretty much made up of just Jesuits, usually the president, principal, rector, and sometimes a few more."

In 1970 that changed.

To say why, exactly, it changed is impossible. A substantial number of Jesuits had, late in the 1960s, opted to leave the Society. The doors of the Church had been flung open during



Barbara Bennie, St. X board member, in the hallways at St. X with Ricky Baylis ('09) and Kevin Jackson ('08), says it's an honor to serve on the school's board.

Vatican II. Fewer men were entering. In 1970, the Church itself was still very much in flux. Jesuit schools were growing rapidly. And the business of running a school—whether a high school or a university—was becoming ever more complex. More lay employees meant larger budgets and benefits. Almost overnight phrases like “asset management,” “strategic planning,” “capital campaign,” and “risk management” had become part of the vocabulary of Jesuit school administrators.

Around that time, Chicago Province schools formalized the role of the boards and began inviting men and women to join. While many of them were able to make immediate contributions to the financial and legal workings of the school, Fr. Stoeger says, they're asked to do much more than just financial planning. “Ultimately, they're responsible

for the operation and policies of the school. They're responsible for ensuring the mission of the place. Really, the entire school is entrusted to the board.”

Service through Collaboration

It may seem odd to some that the Jesuits would be willing to entrust the mission of their schools to non-Jesuits, but it makes perfect sense for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the fact that those who become board members have a deep abiding respect for Jesuit education and welcome the opportunity to become involved.

Mr. William Kunkel, a 1974 graduate of St. Ignatius College Prep who's now a partner specializing in corporate law at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, is a perfect example. He's currently in his sixth year on St. Ignatius's board of trustees and will

become the board chair later this fall. “Formational,” is the word he uses to describe his four years as a student at St. Ignatius. “The chance to come into the city and be with such a diverse group of people, and be challenged educationally and spiritually was a life-changing event for me.” After Ignatius, he went on to Creighton, the Jesuit university in Omaha, NE, before pursuing a career in law. “I was thrilled,” says Mr. Kunkel, “when I was approached about serving on the board.”

Barbara Bennie says she, too, was flattered to be invited to serve on St. X's board, though she admits the invitation made her nervous. Unlike Mr. Kunkel, she did not attend a Jesuit school. Neither did her husband, a Cincinnati attorney. Eventually though, she agreed to do it because, she says, of her “love for the school.”

Fr. General Peter Hans Kolven-

bach, SJ, the Superior General of the Jesuits, offered another reason for the Jesuits' willingness to partner with boards in his October, 2004, address to Creighton University: "While our diminished numbers can discourage us at times, we embrace the new vitality that has come to our ministries with the gifts of our lay partners." Fr. General was quick to add that the Society hasn't turned to the laity just because its numbers are down. He pointed out that St. Ignatius, throughout his entire life, never lost contact with the laity. "From the beginning, his friends, both women and men, housed him, cared for him when he was sick, and supported his undertakings. In return, Ignatius shared his friendship and the great gift of the Spiritual Exercises, which he urged them to share with others."

"Moving beyond simply inviting lay persons to join Jesuits in Jesuit sponsored works," Fr. General said, "requires a different perspective for both Jesuits and lay partners in mission." To illustrate how that could happen, he spoke of the two meanings of the word "our." "In linguistics we know that 'our,' 'us,' can be exclusive—we only—and can be inclusive—we all. We have to pass from an exclusive use of 'our parish,' 'our school' to an inclusive use. It is 'ours' now, referring to a larger group, because it is a mission for which all of us—Jesuit and lay—are co-responsible."

The Jesuits still have much to contribute to this enterprise, said Fr. General, who said, "As our Jesuit contribution to this common enterprise we have pledged to offer what we are and what we have received: our spiritual and apostolic inheritance, our educational resources, and our friendship."

Chicago Province Efforts

Before joining St. Ignatius's board, Mr. Kunkel says he hadn't given the school's Jesuit identity "much thought at all. It never occurred to me that maintaining the Jesuit character of the school would be an issue."

But there are far fewer Jesuits at Ignatius today than there were in the 1970s when Mr. Kunkel was a student, and the boards at Jesuit schools are grappling with the question of how they can keep their schools Jesuit and Ignatian when there are fewer and fewer Jesuits in the hallways and classrooms.

Provincial Edward W. Schmidt, SJ, says it's easy to see how important laypeople are to the educational work of the Chicago Province. "Over the last thirty years, the number of Jesuits in every one of the Province schools, except Cristo Rey, which is only eight years old, has fallen dramatically. Yet the quality of each of the schools has risen. Our schools are offering wonderful educational opportunities to thousands of young people. We're also offering our spirituality and an education that, we hope, will challenge them to become leaders in service. We rely on laypeople to make these schools a reality. The scope of membership on the board represents a deep sense of ownership. This ownership is a legal reality but is also far more powerful. The boards have bought into, have come to 'own' the mission, the ideals, the traditions, the future of the schools.

"We, as a Province, are looking for ways to serve the laypeople with whom we work. We have programs for teachers in Province schools, and we're also reaching out to assist in what ways we can the trustees who are governing our schools. In all of these programs, we're extending our spirituality to our partners. Our spirituality is who we are. It's what defines our schools. We want to give that to those at the board level so they can ensure that it remains a part of each of our schools. As long as it does, our schools will continue to be Jesuit."

In 2002, the Province, which had long provided the Ignatian Themes Workshop for faculty and staff at Province schools, initiated a series of programs for trustees. An Ignatian pilgrimage to Spain and Rome was offered. And in 2002, for the first time, the Province gathered trustees from

all of the Province's five high schools for a meeting. Fr. Bradley Schaeffer, SJ, president of the Jesuit Conference, addressed the group about the importance of fostering Jesuit identity in Province schools. Fr. Stoeger has continued to bring this group together every year for day-long sessions in which trustees from different schools explain what's happening at their schools. The Province also offers various Ignatian resources to the trustees and the schools through these meetings.

In return, Ignatius shared his friendship and the great gift of the Spiritual Exercises, which he urged them to share with others.

—Fr. General Peter Hans-Kolvenbach, SJ

In his address at Creighton, Fr. General said that formation, both for Jesuits and laypeople, is critical to the lay-Jesuit partnership. "We Jesuits should ensure, for those partners who freely choose to take up such an invitation, that laity who collaborate in Jesuit apostolates can expect from us a specific formation in Ignatian values, help in discernment of apostolic priorities and objectives, and practical strategies for their realization."

"The Chicago Province," says Fr. Schmidt, "will continue to make every effort to offer a number of formation opportunities to our lay partners, particularly to our board members, in whom we entrust so much."

And the Province will continue to expect from its boards what it's gotten for the last 35 years: selfless, capable, faithful, and honest guidance that will help each school advance confidently into the new millennium. ■