

Fairfield University's

Diversity  
&  
Inclusive  
Excellence  
Narrative!



# PREFACE

President  
Mark R. Nemec





Grounded in these values -- of open inquiry, humility, and the dignity of every individual -- we offer this narrative both as:

- a. an exercise in common reflection, keeping in mind the words of James Baldwin: "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced," and,
- b. as an instrument for aspiration, responsive to the call of Rev. Arturo Sosa, S.J., Superior General of the Society of Jesus, in the most recent Apostolic preferences for works of the Society to accompany our youth toward a hope-filled future.

In this, an Ignatian Year (May 2021-July 31, 2022), we offer this narrative to further our work as "contemplatives in action" as well as to enhance activities well underway. Our commitment to radical hospitality in service of racial, social, and economic justice is present in many initiatives, but perhaps most notably in our ongoing effort to advance access and affordability, and with a recognition that our goal is not simply to recruit a broader community of students, but rather to recruit, retain, graduate, place, and engage a community of students — with the support of faculty and staff — that is reflective of the rich tapestry of humankind and that celebrates the dignity of every individual. AMDG. All for the Greater Glory of God.



INTRODUCTION

# Radical Hospitality





Radical hospitality, the fourth pillar, involves the practice of equally welcoming, and being welcomed by, one another with keen attention to those on the margins of society, in keeping with the apostolic preferences of the Society of Jesus. Remembering, welcoming, and belonging make up the three sequential steps in radical hospitality and frame each of the following chapters: *Remembering* calls us to look back to our historical and traditional roots. *Welcoming* involves reflecting on the past, and moving from this reflection toward understanding, and accountability for how well we, as a University, include diverse peoples in our present context. *Belonging* looks forward by responding to current strengths of, and limits to, our ongoing efforts toward cultivating a culture of inclusiveness founded on a respect for the richness of diversities that constitute the University community.

*The magis*, which former Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Rev. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., defined as



## CHAPTER ONE

# Where We Have Been — Remembering





Fairfield, as a Jesuit Catholic university, belongs within a 500-year continuum of Jesuit educational and spiritual traditions meant to transform individuals by unlocking their full potential so that they can repair certain fissures in our world. We draw on a tradition beginning in 1548 with the founding of St. Ignatius College in Messina, Italy, which reflects how the Society began to adopt education as an avenue of mission. Pedro de Ribadeneira, S.J., explained the purpose of Jesuit schools as *institutio puerorum, reformatio mundi*, meaning “the proper education of our youth will mean improvement of our world.” The Society, by 1560, recognized schools as their primary mission. By 1773, the Jesuits had established more than 800 academic institutions to create the largest international educational network that the world had ever seen.

Fairfield University joined this network as the all-male, predominately white and Catholic, Fairfield College and Preparatory School in 1942, while World War II ravaged the globe. This moment of origin locates our institution within Catholic education’s long tradition in the United States. Catholic immigrants in the 19th century were among those who became targets of discrimination. This is the era of the Chinese Exclusion Act, signs for “No Irish Need Apply,” discrimination against Italian Americans, and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. Nativism, racism, and class struggles subjected many new Americans to serious, often life-threatening challenges. Partially in response to such discrimination, immigrants banded together in their churches, and through aid societies and fraternal organizations. These institutions wove together a societal web to serve and protect vulnerable communities by opening hospitals and orphanages. They also built high schools, colleges, and universities to advance Catholic families through an education that would form leaders who would strengthen their communities, nation, and faith.

The Jesuits identified Fairfield as home to Fairfield University as Connecticut was then one of the nation’s most diverse states. Second generation immigrants clustered in urban centers such as the neighboring city of Bridgeport. This industrial hub bustled with workers who assembled small appliances at General Electric, manufactured munitions at Remington Arms, built sewing machines at Singer Manufacturing, and produced corsets at the Crown Corset Company, among other heavy industries that were then operating in the state. The founding Jesuits anticipated that this population would ultimately need to be served by a university.

Opening in 1947, Fairfield University offered educational opportunities for first-generation immigrant men and returning veterans. Colleges and universities at that time generally remained closed to women. A closer look at the first four years from 1947-51, ending with the year that Fairfield graduated its pioneer class, reveals a more diverse narrative.







Fairfield, and Perry Kirk became the first advisor to minority students. Larri Mazon joined Fairfield in 1983 as counselor to minority students, later becoming the director of the Office of Minority Relations in 1988, the precursor to today's [Office of Student Diversity and Multicultural Affairs](#) (SDMA).

The [Black Studies Program](#), established in 1994 is "devoted to scholarship on the histories, political and cultural movements, institution-







## CHAPTER TWO

# Where We Are Now — Welcoming







groundwork for our curricular, co-curricular, and community-oriented initiatives.

Three pillars of our Diversity and Inclusive Excellence Mission Statement — inclusive excellence, a diverse community, and global engagement — organize these initiatives to help us discern the impact of what we are doing now, as we continue to chart our journey toward the fourth pillar of radical hospitality.



## Inclusive Excellence

This pillar animates our academic mission as we strive to educate through engaging with the broadest possible range of dynamic ideas, perspectives, and identities as necessary for achieving the highest standards of learning in an ever-changing world.

Delivering a dynamic curriculum engaged with the world's diverse peoples and ideas starts with the *Magis* Core Curriculum that was implemented in 2018 to create a shared learning experience for all Fairfield students. Overall, the Core Curriculum advances Fairfield's commitment to *the magis* as it translates aspects of our Jesuit Catholic tradition into learning outcomes relevant for today's college graduates. Courses in the Core are animated by three signature elements: Writing Across the Curriculum, Interdisciplinary Study, and Social Justice. The Social Justice element of the *Magis* Core focuses on examining social justice through the Ignatian lens to engage students in identifying "values, beliefs, and practices of multiple cultures, worldviews, or perspectives," including their own and asking "critical questions about assumptions, biases, or worldviews." One of the two required higher level Social Justice courses "must focus on race



each semester that take an experiential approach to teaching and learning that links academic study to community-engaged work. Fairfield strives to build sustainable and reciprocal community partnerships based on a commitment to solidarity and collaboration with marginalized and vulnerable people.

First-Year Experience (FYE), a co-curricular seminar for all first-year students, covers various topics including an introduction to our Jesuit values, the importance of creating an inclusive community,



on the work of celebrated photographer



## A Diverse Community

The second pillar distinguishes a Jesuit education as we strive to welcome individuals from the fullest range of social, economic, racial, cultural, national, and religious backgrounds possible. Building our diverse community begins with recruiting students, staff, administrators, trustees, and faculty to join us at Fairfield University, and then supporting them in their personal and professional development to meet an ever-changing world — and our students — continually where they are.





and values of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Other initiatives include participating in the Ignatian Solidarity Network's 21-Day Ignatian Racial Equity Challenge and the MAAC Black History Month Campaign.

Fairfield University Student Association (FUSA) established a Diversity and Inclusion Board in April 2016 to address issues of diversity and student concerns about campus climate, and to advocate for and with students of color. In 2020, the Diversity and Inclusion Board created a larger Student Diversity Council to identify issues of diversity and inequality and recommend strategies for combating marginalization. FUSA supports a range of [affinity-based student clubs](#), such as the Alliance: LGBTQ+ and Ally Group, the Asian Student Association, the Black Student Union, the Muslim Student Association, the Latinx Student Union, and Performing for Change, which are all coordinated through SDMA's umbrella organization, Fairfield United.



retreat for members of the LGBTQ community, and supported the 21-Day Ignatian Racial Equity Challenge. The Murphy Center for Ignatian Spirituality recently launched the MCIS Women's Initiative to assist women in their spiritual journey.

Bringing and welcoming diverse staff and









## CHAPTER THREE

# Where We Want To Go – Belonging



Looking to the future, Fairfield aspires to ensure that all members of our campus community feel that they belong at Fairfield and consider it to be their home. We acknowledge that our current campus demographics do not reflect the diversity of our region, much less our nation or the world, and, as such, are not where we want them to be. As a student-centric, values-based, outcome-focused institution, Fairfield is called to prepare our students to be 21st century leaders in a complex world rich with diverse peoples and ways of knowing and being. To do so, we are called to recruit, admit, retain, graduate, place, and engage diverse, underrepresented, and first-generation college students.

To ensure that students, staff, faculty, and administrators of all backgrounds and experiences belong as full members in our community,

# we are committed to the following:

## Initiative #1

Identify, attract, admit, retain, graduate, place, and engage a diverse student body.

## Initiative #2

Identify, attract, hire, promote, develop, and retain a diverse faculty and staff.

## Initiative #3

Preparing students, faculty, and staff for full engagement and leadership in diverse communities on and beyond our campus.

## Initiative #4:

Commit to continuous improvement on diversity and inclusive excellence.



## Initiative #1

Identify, attract, admit, retain, graduate, place,  
and engage a diverse student body.

Fairfield will continue to expand student access to higher education  
with a focus on diversity and



Engage our alumni in the Fairfield community and advance our underrepresented students. We will increase membership in the Alumni of Color Network and collaborate with them to create pathways for alumni of color to mentor and support students of color.

The Fairfield Bellarmine campus (which welcomed its first class in the fall of 2023









Invite our community to participate in spiritual growth and learning opportunities offered through the Murphy Center for Ignatian Spirituality, Campus Ministry, the Bennett Center for Judaic Studies, and the Center for Catholic Studies. We will develop further our commitment to interfaith religious dialogues and community-building.

Create a University-wide learning pilot program grounded in our Jesuit Catholic tradition that offers the opportunity to engage our members in a process that cultivates a shared understanding of, and commitment to, our mission of diversity and inclusive excellence. Grounded in radical hospitality, this program will focus on the richness of diversity as necessary to recognizing the dignity of each individual and developing an inclusive community that strives for belonging.

!





CONCLUSION

Reaching for  
the *Magis*



