



**Digital Commons@**  
Loyola Marymount University  
LMU Loyola Law School

Journal of Catholic Education

---

Volume 24 | Issue 1

Article 3


---

7-2021

## The Creation of the Regis Jesuit High School Girls Division: Same Sex Education for Young Women in American Catholic Jesuit Secondary Education

Sajit U. Kabadi Ph.D.  
*Regis Jesuit High School*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/ce>

 Part of the [Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons](#), [Other Education Commons](#), and the [Religious Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kabadi, S. U. (2021). The Creation of the Regis Jesuit High School Girls Division: Same Sex Education for Young Women in American Catholic Jesuit Secondary Education. *Journal of Catholic Education*, 24 (1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.15365/joce.2401032021>

This Article is brought to you for free with open access by the School of Education at Digital Commons at Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for publication in *Journal of Catholic Education* by the journal's editorial board and has been published on the web by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons at Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information about Digital Commons, please contact [digitalcommons@lmu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@lmu.edu). To contact the editorial board of *Journal of Catholic Education*, please email [CatholicEdJournal@lmu.edu](mailto:CatholicEdJournal@lmu.edu).

---

## The Creation of the Regis Jesuit High School Girls Division: Same Sex Education for Young Women in American Catholic Jesuit Secondary Education

### Cover Page Footnote

Dr. Sajit Kabadi is the Assistant Principal for Mission, Ministry, and Diversity at Regis Jesuit High School. During the creation of the girls division he served on the transition committee, was diversity director of the institution and later on served on the Board of Trustees. He is also an adjunct professor in Secondary Education at Metropolitan State University. His areas of scholarship focus on the Catholic, Jesuit Mission and issues of social justice, diversity, and inclusion.

*Journal of Catholic Education*

Spring 2021, Volume 24, Issue 1, 39-61

This work is licensed under CCBY 4.0.

<https://doi.org/10.15365/joce.2401032021>



## The Creation of the Regis Jesuit High School Girls Division: Single-Sex Education for Young Women in American Catholic Jesuit Secondary Education

Sajit U. Kabadi<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Findings from a historiographic case study are reported. Qualitative data was collected from a series of interviews and cultural artifacts exploring the history of the creation of the Regis Jesuit High School, Girls Division- the first American all girls Catholic Jesuit high school. The study traces the process of how Regis Jesuit became a co-divisional campus educating both women and men in same sex classes utilizing Ignatian Strategic Planning conceptual framework that emphasizes the Jesuit concept of Magis while exploring its impact on the historical and contemporary role that women play in the Jesuit mission.

**Keywords:** Women Leadership, Catholic Jesuit Education, Ignatian Strategic Planning

This article reports findings from a qualitative historiographic case study exploring the history of the creation of the Regis Jesuit High School, Girls Division—the first all-girls Catholic Jesuit high school in the United States. Regis Jesuit is in Colorado about a half hour drive southeast of Denver. It was founded as an all-boys Catholic Jesuit high school and college known simply as “Regis” in 1877 in Las Vegas, New Mexico before moving to Denver, Colorado in 1888 (“Regis Jesuit High School,” n.d.). Today, the Regis Jesuit campus consists of two buildings of single-sex high school education for young men and women with coeducational extracurricular opportunities outside of school hours involving both divisions. Regis Jesuit educates approximately 750 young women and 900 young men each year (“Regis Jesuit High School,” n.d.).

This article focuses on the creation of the Regis Jesuit Girls' Division. It explores the key people involved, the origins of the innovative ideas that came to fruition, the pivotal events, and decisions leading up to its creation in the fall of 2003. The data for this article were analyzed

---

1 Regis Jesuit High School

---

through a theoretical framework of Ignatian Strategic Planning with the Jesuit Magis as the integral component to address the following questions:

- What were the factors that contributed to Regis Jesuit High School creating an all-girls Jesuit education?
- How did key constituents create a new tradition of same sex Jesuit high school education for young women?
- What has been the impact of the girls' division on Regis Jesuit pertaining to the role of women in overall American Catholic, Jesuit Secondary education?

### **Literature Review**

#### **American Catholic Same Sex Education**

Single-sex education tended to originate due to a lack of access to education for women. This systemic sexism has also often been linked to religious and cultural traditions. Consequently, in America, beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as women advocated for equitable access to education, single-sex educational institutions began to emerge. As the emergence of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) provided access to African Americans, many all-women colleges and schools were created during the same time. Within Catholic education, the idea of separating the sexes was due in large part to moral issues and stigmas with dated questionable ideas and motives. Catholic hierarchical leadership run by men contended that coeducational institutions would promote sexual promiscuity and amoral sexual behavior (LePore & Warren, 1988). These notions continued right up until the 1950s when the Sacred Congregation of the Affairs of Religious reiterated the Catholic Church's long-standing policy against secondary school coeducation. In its 1957 *Instruction on Coeducation*, the Congregation concluded:

False also and harmful to Christian education is the so-called method of "coeducation." This too, by many of its supporters, is founded upon naturalism and the denial of original sin; but by all, upon a deplorable confusion of ideas that mistakes a leveling promiscuity and equality, for the legitimate association of the sexes. (Frison, 1959, p. 1)

By 1983, only about one quarter of Catholic high schools were all girls' schools, and about one fifth were boys' schools, (Bryk et al., 1993). This shift in Catholic education mirrored the general public school shift to coeducation driven by economics and societal norms. In the 1990s and early 2000s, the dialogue regarding single-sex education regained momentum. Findings from a 1993 study titled, *Failing in Fairness: How America's Schools Cheat Girls* concluded that boys were called on eight times more often than girls and were complemented more frequently by their teachers. According to this study, boys were also encouraged to work more independently than girls (Sadker, 1994; Sadker & Sadker, 2014). While this study revealed the sexism in coeducational schools, in terms of educational results the data has and continues to be inconclusive. As of the 2017-2018 school year, there were approximately 780 all-boys private schools and 650 all-girls

private schools (Broughman et al., 2019). Those that support Catholic single-sex education will point to slight uptick in girls' academic scores, higher career aspirations, increased feelings of empowerment and willingness to participate (Lee & Bryk, 1986). According to Sax (2009), while the benefits of single-sex education are fairly small for girls, the slight upticks were in areas traditionally biased towards men. Thus, single-sex education could help close some of the gender gaps that exist within the cultural landscape. There is a notion that single-sex education works effectively with underrepresented or underserved students; however, findings prove inconclusive (Pahlke et al., 2014). Little sound data were found indicating that single-sex education was beneficial for boys. Recent anecdotal narratives point to some all-boys schools contributing to toxic masculinity in some boys, while some point to all-boys schools allowing boys to speak more openly about feminism and gender issues in a healthy way. Williams (2016) posited that segregation of populations of any type contributes to false stereotypes.

### **Women and the Jesuit Mission**

Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, maintained many friends and confidants who were women. He encouraged them in terms of their personal Catholic Jesuit Spirituality. He provided them the opportunity to make the Spiritual Exercises, a core tenet of Jesuit spirituality that he created. He provided women the opportunity to serve in Jesuit Apostolates i.e. schools, shelters, etc. Catholic women were mostly in the background not in the forefront of the Catholic Church, who subscribed to the norms of the time in Europe. Single unmarried Catholic women who were not part of a Catholic religious congregation were cloistered or isolated. They were often confined to monastic life or serving the Catholic Church far from public view Fullam, 1999; Mattingly, 2016). These practices were sanctioned by the Catholic Church and adopted by the Jesuits. The Jesuit mission sought to help women in trouble, but did not directly address the systemic oppression that women experienced. They tended to follow the conventions of the time (Boryczka & Petrino, 2012; Fullam, 1999).

There were notable exceptions. The exception Ignatius made for women apart from being cloistered was in terms of fund-raising and promotion of the Jesuit order. Ignatius Loyola worked with several wealthy powerful women on many church projects. These women caused him to seriously consider some of them as potential members of the Society of Jesus. One woman named Isabel Rosser, whose husband had passed away in 1541, along with two other women, headed to Rome to meet Loyola, with the intention of working for him as official members of the Society. Loyola put Rosser in charge of the Martha House, a house he had founded to care for prostitutes. She filed a petition with Pope Paul III for permission to be admitted into the Society as a "least member." The Pope initially accepted this offer. Rosser and her two female companions took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience- the same vows that the Jesuit priests and brothers take to this day to join the order. After a year had passed, Ignatius noted the political, cultural climate in Europe at the time. In the midst of the inquisition and the potential controversies that allowing women to be Jesuits could cause to the vitality of the Jesuit order, he released the three women

from their vows and Rosser would go on to become a Franciscan nun (Boryczka & Petrino, 2012; Fullam, 1999; Rahner, 2007).

Another such instance occurred when the second daughter of emperor Charles of Spain, Juana, married to the heir to the throne of Portugal, became widowed in 1554. Shortly thereafter, she appealed to Ignatius and sought entrance into the Jesuit order. Due to the political and religious complexity involved, as chronicled in the previous example, it was discreetly agreed that she be admitted, but kept secret. According to Hugo Rahner's *St. Ignatius Loyola: Letters to Women* (2007), Ignatius personally oversaw Juana's Jesuit training and her progress. She exerted great political influence throughout Spain while promoting the Jesuit mission. When she passed away at the age of 38, she died as a Jesuit, the only known woman with this distinction (Fullam, 1999; Rahner, 2007; Schroth, 2007). Shortly before his death in 1556, Ignatius issued a final decree approved by Pope Paul III maintaining the Jesuits as solely a male order (Boryczka & Petrino, 2012), which remains to this day.

### **Decree 14 of the 34<sup>th</sup> Jesuit Congregation, Rome 1995**

It was not until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century that issues of inclusion, equity, and justice for women were officially stated as integral to the Catholic Jesuit mission. This process was slow and took place throughout several Jesuit Congregations. The role of women within the Jesuit order first received brief mention in 1983 at the 33<sup>th</sup> General Congregation; however, it was at the 34<sup>th</sup> General Congregation in March of 1995 that the role of women became a major area of emphasis in the Jesuit mission (Curia of the Superior General, 1995). From the 34<sup>th</sup> Congregation, the 14<sup>th</sup> decree was passed, laying out in detail the degree to which the oppression of women had existed within the Jesuit order and its apostolates since the inception of the Catholic religious order in 1540. This oppression included:

- Not providing enough educational opportunities for young girls and women.
- Contributing to a disproportionate burden placed on women in the taking care of their families.
- Less wages for the work of women in Jesuit apostolates.
- Limiting the access of women to be positions of influence in Jesuit apostolates.
- Outright violent acts committed against women.

Through this prayer and reflection, the Jesuits acknowledged their role in being an integral part of "a civil and ecclesial tradition that has offended women" and stated that "we have contributed to a form of clericalism which has reinforced male domination with an ostensibly divine sanction" (Curia of the Superior General, 1995, p. 59). The 34<sup>th</sup> General Congregation established two strategies in proceeding forward:

1. Teach the equality of women in all contexts in all Jesuit ministries particularly in the field of education worldwide.
2. Teach and advocate against all forms of discrimination and bias within the Catholic Jesuit education of men and women.

Decree 14 presented specific strategies for Jesuits apostolates to stand in closer solidarity with women by being more inclusive of them in the following ways:

- Teaching the equality of men and women in all contexts.
- Supporting liberation movements that fight against all forms of oppression of women, including their exclusion in political and public life.
- Fighting against all forms of violence committed towards women.
- Appreciating and recognizing the presence of women and their contribution to Jesuit ministries and institutions.
- Including women in consultation and decision-making processes more intentionally in influencing the Jesuit mission.
- Respectful cooperation and collaboration with women on shared projects.
- Use of appropriate and inclusive language in official Jesuit speech and Jesuit official documents.
- Promotion of the education of women and the elimination of all form of discrimination between men and women.

In terms of ordination, the Jesuits demurred, contending that further issues have yet to be acquired and that more research and learning in these areas is required to enhance the social justice mission of the order (Curia of the Superior General, 1995; Boryczka & Petrino, 2012).

### **Aftermath of the Decree 14**

Jesuit institutions, which had begun as exclusively male, slowly began to include more and more women. Once the numbers changed, attitudes would have to follow often through intentional systemic action steps as suggested by Decree 14, but also unique to the particular Jesuit institution, ministry, or apostolate requiring further facilitation and trainings (Boryczka & Petrino, 2012). Following decree 14, American Jesuit Universities such as Marquette and Loyola University established commissions to address the issues and vision from the 34<sup>th</sup> General Congregation regarding the role of women at their institutions. At Loyola Chicago, for example, this commission explored the role of women within their institution forming three recommendations:

1. Recruitment and retention of women for senior leadership positions, including designing programs to mentor women for these positions;
2. Establishment of a permanent gender equity commission to oversee implementation and assessment of these recruitment and retention processes;
3. Work life balance exploration, including at maternity and paternity leave polices and resources such as child care (Boryczka & Petrino, 2012).

Today Loyola University Chicago's president is a woman, Dr. Jo Ann Rooney.

In American Jesuit Secondary Education, the number of women on high school faculties began to increase slowly, as did the number of women in leadership roles. In 2013, of the 50,000 Jesuit high school students being educated in 59 Catholic American Jesuit high schools, 23 of them are co-educational. Within these schools, 47% of the faculty are female and 41% of the professional

staff at these schools are women. As of 2013, out of 59 schools, there were 11 Jesuit high schools who had female principals and two with female presidents. Out of the 112 assistant principal positions, 31 were female. Out of 54 deans of discipline, 15 were women with this number growing as Jesuit high schools, particularly coeducational schools, saw the need for both a male and female dean of discipline (Bouillette, 2013; Hobbs, 2016; Jesuit Schools Network, 2017).

## Methodology

### Historiography

Historiography was the main methodology of this study. The qualitative data for this story were collected through interviews, including with the founding Principal of Regis Jesuit High School, Girls Division, Gretchen Kessler. Along with Kessler, two people figured prominently and were interviewed multiple times, President Walter Sidney S.J. and Principal/Vice President Rick Sullivan. Both Sidney and Sullivan were integrally involved in the entire planning and creation of the Girls Division. Special mention should go to Gerald "Bud" Laber, the chair of the Regis Jesuit High School Board of Trustees at the time, and Susan Resnick, who coordinated the transition effort and served as the first Academic Assistant Principal of the Girls Division. There were also numerous historical cultural artifacts in the form of photographs and important documents that were part of the qualitative data collection.

### Theoretical Framework: The Jesuit Magis in Ignatian Strategic Planning

*Magis* is the Latin word which translates in English as "the more" (Geger, 2012; Martin, 2010; Rahner, 1973; Thibodeaux, 2010; Yu, 2014). Jesuit classes, institutes, scholarships, student services, fundraising arms, and other organizations all tend to make some reference to the Magis as an integral aspect of their mission or work. It is a concept that was never attributed directly to the founder of the order, Ignatius Loyola. Magis is believed to have been directly derived from 20<sup>th</sup> century Jesuit Theologian/Philosopher Karl Rahner. Rahner discusses magis as possessing both Jesuit indifference, which refers to an openness to God's providence as well as a desire to pursue "the more" in terms of one's relationship with God (Fleming, 2008; Geger, 2012). Years later, it appeared in 1975 in an official decree of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Jesuit General Congregation (General Congregation 32, 1975/2009) and has become commonplace in important Jesuit documents since. Superior General at the time, Pedro Arrupe, described Magis as exploring how one constantly discerns how one can serve God in a greater deeper way (Burke, 2004). In General Congregation 32, Magis was defined "the ever more."

Seeking the Jesuit Magis through apostolic discernment is integral for Jesuit institutions particularly in terms of long-term institutional strategic planning and visioning. Provost Emeritus of Regis University, Dr. Alan Service, incorporates the Jesuit concept of Magis in the nuts and bolts of Jesuit institutional strategic planning or as he terms it, Ignatian Strategic planning (Service, 2015). The four major aspects of Ignatian Strategic Planning are:



- Institutional Mission: Ignatian Strategic Planning starts and ends with reiterating the mission of the organization and/or its reason for being.
- Context: The idea of learning as much as possible about the environment in which the mission of the institution resides and is being implemented. This involves not only the successful functioning of facilities and their sustainability, but more importantly, the people involved and being served.
- Resource allocation in terms of personnel or people, first and foremost, followed by other resources in terms of goods, facilities, and finances is always part of the strategic visioning.
- The long term sustainability of Ignatian Strategic Planning: The goal is that all strategic planning ultimately leads to future Ignatian Strategic Planning in the generations to come for the institution.

Ignatian Strategic Planning is the mission of the organization or apostolate's reason for being (Service, 2015). This study will utilize these four aspects of Ignatian Strategic Planning to analyze the planning process, sustainability, and legacy in creating the Regis Jesuit Girls Division.

### **Data Results: A Historiography of the Regis Jesuit Girls Division**

#### **Articulation of a Need**

For centuries, Jesuit high school education in the United States had been strictly for males. Regis Jesuit High School fit this mold as a Jesuit high school that had been educating young men since 1877. In 1998, several parents, whose children had attended local Denver Catholic grade schools and accompanied by former Denver Catholic School Principals, Bill Moore and Thoy Smith, approached Regis Jesuit Principal Rick Sullivan and President Walter Sidney. They wanted to discuss the prospects of providing a Catholic high school education for young women. They expressed their concern for the lack of accessibility of Catholic high school education for young women particularly in the southern part of the city of Denver. They initially proposed the idea of Regis Jesuit going coeducational. During this time in Denver, Holy Family Catholic High School, a Catholic coed high school was building a new facility, but it was in North Denver on the other side of town. Near Regis Jesuit, there was St. Mary's Academy, an all-girls Catholic High School sponsored by the Sisters of Loretto, but they only admitted about 250 girls total at the time and were not going to increase their enrollment numbers. According to these parents, there was a need to provide a Catholic high school education for up to 600 more girls in the Denver area.

Jeff Howard, a teacher/administrator for both the boys' and girls' division and an alum of Regis Jesuit, pointed out that in the late 1980s, when Regis Jesuit High School was in North Denver, there was an all-girls Catholic high school, Marycrest, located right down the street. Marycrest students and staff often interacted with Regis Jesuit students, using the Regis campus for events. In 1989, Marycrest was facing closure, sparking dialogue about enrolling the Marycrest students at Regis Jesuit to boost the school's own sagging enrollment numbers at the time. According to Howard, this idea was quickly shunned as there was no desire from most Regis Jesuit constitu-

ents to go co-ed. Soon after, Regis Jesuit moved to South Denver to boost their enrollment numbers and become more sustainable, which they succeeded in doing. In 1998, both President Sidney and Principal Sullivan were intrigued by the idea proposed by these parents, but going coed was completely out of the question as it had been in 1989. Due to the substantial increase in enrollment, the school facilities were already at full capacity.

In 1996, after Regis Jesuit purchased additional land on their campus, parents inquired about the prospects of using this land to educate young women. Despite this recent purchase of land, Regis Jesuit was not ready to proceed on this major endeavor. They were still transitioning and adjusting from being a small urban Catholic high school closely associated with the Regis University to an independent institution working with a broader clientele that extended to all parts of Denver. Regis was still getting acquainted with its new location and the southern part of the city, which was rapidly expanding. There was still debt that had to be covered from the move south and tuition rates were increasing as were faculty and staff salaries. After some consideration and consultation with the Board of Trustees, it was concluded that the timing for Regis Jesuit was not right. While the thought of including young high school women was notable, it was deemed not sustainable for Regis Jesuit at the time. Though the initial answer was no, Sidney and Sullivan remained intrigued by the idea. They wished the small parent group luck in their goal and specifically told them to keep in touch with Principal Sullivan keeping him apprised of their progress.

Undeterred, this small group of parents along with Principals Moore and Smith continued their pursuit. They moved on to discuss these possibilities with Archbishop of Denver at the time, Most Reverend Charles Chaput, and Superintendent of Denver Catholic Schools, Betsy Boyle. The 1995 Denver Archdiocesan strategic plan for Catholic schools had indeed called for the creation of a Catholic girls or co-ed Catholic high school in the southeast metro area. Both Chaput and Boyle agreed there was a need to provide greater accessibility of a Catholic high school education for girls, but again the timing for them was not right. At the time, the Archdiocese was occupied by overseeing transitions of both their Archdiocesan sponsored Catholic high schools, Bishop Machebeuf and Holy Family. Both schools were in the process of moving to another location seeking to max out their enrollment. The Archdiocese could not afford to take on another ambitious endeavor at the time.

At this time, this parent group also approached the Colorado Springs Archdiocese about building an all-girls Catholic school, which would be located relatively close to Regis Jesuit. After some time had passed, Rick Sullivan met with Thoy Smith to get an update on their progress with this possibility. Sullivan was still intrigued by the idea and was now also aware of the potential implications another Catholic high school near Regis could have on their own enrollment. The parent group had initially come to Regis offering to pay rent to for their recently purchased land to start all-girls Catholic high school. They intended it to be a private, Catholic school, but not necessarily a Jesuit school. Now the possible new girls' Catholic high school would require not only the land owned now by Regis Jesuit, but also some of their operating facilities such as the chapel, gym etc.

Once again Sullivan, Sidney, and the Regis Board had some conversations considering this possibility. They quickly realized there simply was not enough space for another separate all-girls school and once again reiterated that the idea of going co-ed was out of question to the parent group.

There was also the emergent thought by many on the board, President Sidney, Principal Sullivan and others that since it would be on Regis Jesuit's campus that it should be sponsored by the Jesuits. It was in the context of these ongoing discussions in late 1998 and early 1999 when Rick Sullivan mentioned the idea of a same sex co-divisional model for girls on the same campus as the boys. When President Sidney was approached with this idea of a co-divisional model, he was open to it. He also made explicitly clear that Regis Jesuit needed to be open to the needs of the Archdiocese and the larger Denver Catholic community, which was granted.

### **The Evolving of an Idea to Address the Need**

Shortly, thereafter, beginning in 1999, Fr. Sidney, Principal Sullivan, and the Board Chair, Gerald (Bud) Laber embarked on what would be an extensive ongoing institutional dialogue with the many constituents of the Regis Jesuit Community regarding the start of an all-girls Jesuit high school. This dialogue would include parents, alumni, faculty, staff, donors, and friends. During these conversations, the Regis Jesuit Board of Trustees established a small group of board members to work with the original group of parents on a formal proposal that would be presented to the rest of the board in the spring of 1999. The proposal contained plans for a co-divisional model with the creation of an all-girls division on the same campus with the boys' division. Both divisions would be sponsored by the Jesuits and consist of one school. Part of the presentation included the results of a feasibility study conducted by the Meitler Consultants who upon request by the Board of Trustees, conducted an extensive demographic and demand study to see if there was indeed a need for a Catholic high school for young women. The findings included:

- Southeast Denver Metropolitan area where Regis Jesuit is located is the fastest growing area in Denver.
- Regis Jesuit should expect an additional enrollment of 700 young women.
- Total cost would be approximately \$25 million for a new building to account for an additional 780 young women and 850 young men.
- There would be initially a negative cash flow (deficit) of over \$380,000 during the first year of the girls' division followed by a deficit of over \$180,000 in the second year.

This proposal presented to Board of Trustees in the spring of 1999 was approved and the plan was to proceed forward. In accordance, the Board decided to expand the function of its Governance and Structure Committee to fully delve into the many aspects that would be required in creating a girls' division. The Governance and Structure committee would be primarily focused on this purpose from 1999-2001. It would consist of several sub committees, which would continue in some form or another until the start of the Girls' Division School in 2003.

Amid this committee work, information gathering, budgeting conversations, and focus groups, the Regis Board of Trustees began an extensive spiritual discernment process that would last for

several months culminating in the summer of 1999 on whether to embark on this ambitious venture. This spiritual discernment was led by Fr. Vince Hubley. After this extensive discernment, it was concluded and ratified by the Board of Trustees at the board retreat in summer of 1999 that:

1. There was indeed a need to educate young women in Catholic Jesuit education and this need had been expressed by Catholic parents, local Catholic school leaders, and the Catholic Archdiocese.
2. It felt providential that God seemed to be providing an opportunity for Regis Jesuit given the recent purchase of land, the need expressed to them directly by the parents, the quality of the academic program of Regis Jesuit, and the visionary people involved to pursue this endeavor.

Given these findings and after much dialogue and prayer, the board decided to move forward under the leadership of Board Chair Bud Laber, President Wally Sidney, and Principal Rick Sullivan.

### **Renewal of the Mission and Proceeding Forward**

Throughout the year 2000, information gathering and the focus group/survey feedback continued. The totality of results was catalogued and presented at the annual Board of Trustees Retreat in the summer of 2000. In addition to these results, the Governance and Structure Committee lead a review of issues of governance and structure related to the opening of a Catholic Jesuit girls division, but also the Catholic, Jesuit identity of the entire institution moving forward. This review, led by the Jesuit Secondary Educational Association President at the time, Dr. Bernard Bouillette, presented the 10 characteristics of the Catholic Jesuit Identity of Regis Jesuit High School. These include: finding God in all things, cura personalis (care of the person), transforming the world, Christ as the model for all human life, love is shown in deeds, ministry of teaching, the Magis, the greater good, an emphasis on the community/companionship in living the mission, reflective decision makers and following the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm.

The Regis Governance and Structure Committee looked to create a roadmap that would ultimately lead to the definition, structure, and governance for a Regis Jesuit All-Girls Division. The key overarching questions this committee would take on was first, whether boys and girls learn differently, and if so how? Secondly, would the Regis Jesuit community accept possible changes in school culture that might come about from the results of question #1? Mindful of the 10 characteristics of Jesuit education, the committee set out to establish a working set of guidelines dealing with specific issues of governance and structure in planning the Girls Division. These guidelines included that the current mission statement of Regis Jesuit would be the same for the girls' division. In addition, there would remain one Board of Trustees and one President of the entire institution. The school name would be solely Regis Jesuit High School, but a further descriptor could be considered as a possible addition; this addition would later become the term "division." Another guideline was that the overall logistics and governing structures of the Girls' and Boys' Divisions would be the same. For example, the cost for a student to attend either division would be the same. The most challenging guideline at this time for the committee had to do with school culture and

climate. The guideline agreed upon was that the culture, or climate, at both divisions would be very similar.

In terms of curriculum, both divisions would work towards alignment, but some divergence to address the unique learning needs of either division based on gender would be considered. At the time, the committee and subcommittees revisited this issue many times, but were reluctant to expand on it further. The consensus at the time was to defer to the Principals and their faculties, leaving it to their future discretion. The committee would add to this guideline stating that the girls' division "must create its own unique culture that assists young women in achieving their full potential within the Catholic, Jesuit tradition." The committee would in large part succeed in being faithful to these working guidelines in subsequent subcommittee work.

The Governance and Structure Committee was an umbrella to several subcommittees delegated with specific tasks. These subcommittees collected information and filed reports back to the governance/structure committee and the board of trustees. Each subcommittee addressed specific aspects of the girls' division and the co-divisional model. They collected and sifted through focus group data summary of reactions to a potential girls' division distributed to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, parents, faculty, alumni, and donors. Additional targeted feedback was provided from a select group of current Regis Jesuit male students, alumni, current and past parents, current staff, and a group of young high school age women.

There was an education subcommittee that focused on planning the girls' division learning climate, educational philosophy, and other related topics. There was a social interaction subcommittee that focused on vision of possible social interaction between the two divisions. These subcommittees explored such questions as how shared facilities would affect social interaction between boys and girls, and in what ways, particularly regarding learning outcomes. Based on these data, three criteria for social interaction were determined. Formal social interaction sanctioned by the school among the two divisions needed to be true to Ignatian ideals, demonstrate a willingness to innovate as more research was collected, and had to directly affect the education of all the students involved in a positive way. Furthermore, the subcommittee would defer to faculty/staff of both divisions how these three ideals translated into the day-to-day experience of the school.

Another subcommittee focused on communication between the divisions, specifically between staff members. This subcommittee looked at administrative structure to determine a possible chain of command. At the time, it concluded that an interschool advisory council of administrators, faculty, and students be formed to help advise the two divisions on areas of cooperation and mutual interest. This subcommittee expected that in areas of music, theatre, dance, and other extracurricular involving both boys and girls that there would be multiple opportunities to consolidate resources. It was envisioned by this subcommittee that the advisory council along with leadership of both divisions needed to maximize the full benefits of single-sex education while also capitalizing on the co-divisional model. This subcommittee made no additional recommendations on socialization, leaving that to the school leadership and staff. The planned interschool advisory council did not take shape, though later a management team was assembled. Unlike this vision of the council that would have consisted of primarily students and faculty, this management team

consisted of the President, Principals of each division, the Chief Financial Officer, and a newly created position, Vice President. This Management team would convene weekly and the Vice President would oversee the meeting agenda and run the meeting.

### **Final Approvals, More Planning, and Personnel Changes**

In the fall of 2000, the Board of Trustees began to give serious consideration to possible personnel changes and possible additions needed to oversee this entire process of the girls' division and the co-divisional model to its completion. Subsequently, it was decided that a point person was needed to spearhead this entire effort. Rick Sullivan left the Principal position of the Boys Division to take on this role full-time beginning in January 2001. Sullivan's official title would be Director of Planning and Implementation. Board Chair Laber would devote his full attention to the campaign and to assist Sullivan in overseeing the extensive committee work. In addition, there were two other significant contributors that were added and played major roles in this process. Patrick Murray would join Sidney, Laber, and Sullivan in overseeing the fundraising campaign. He would be integral to its success. Patrick Murray was a Regis Jesuit alum, a strong proponent of Denver Catholic Education, and fully supported the initiative of starting a Catholic school for young women. Murray would serve in a fulltime capacity assisting Laber and Sullivan primarily in the fundraising process. Murray's daughter would become part of the first graduating class of young women at Regis Jesuit in 2007. Murray would later join the Board of Trustees succeeding Laber as Board Chair in 2007. Also in 2002, former Assistant Principal Susan Resnick would serve as the chief liaison person. Resnick previously had been the school's first Assistant Principal of faculty support working for Principal Sullivan. She had been instrumental in creating departments of diversity and special needs for the students. She would leave her post as Assistant Principal to oversee the day-to-day operations planning of the girls' division until a fulltime principal of the girls' division was hired.

A case statement summarizing the committee findings, accompanied by a letter of approval from the Denver Catholic Archdiocese, and the overall proposal to start a Regis Jesuit Girls Division was presented to the Jesuit Missouri Province and its Provincial at the time, Fr. Frank Reale in the spring of 2001. The Case Statement was sent to Rome on behalf of the Regis Jesuit High School Board of Trustees and Board of Members. It was a recommendation to the Jesuit Superior General in Rome, Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach, "that Regis Jesuit be granted permission to expand its educational mission to include young women. A co-divisional arrangement would include separate schools for boys and girls." The case statement made explicitly clear that Regis Jesuit would remain one institution with one board of members, one board of trustees, and one president. The schools (later became known as divisions) would operate as two separate and distinct entities with each school having one principal, administrative team, faculty, and staff. It stipulated that the new Girls Division would adhere to the principles of Catholic Jesuit education and to the tradition of Regis Jesuit. It also clearly stipulated the importance for the Girls Division to create its own unique culture for young women learners within the Catholic Jesuit tradition.

The Provincial approved it and then submitted it to Rome for review and approval by the Jesuit Superior General, Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach. The official approval was sent back the summer of

2001. The Jesuit Province agreed to provide a financial donation to the creation of the new school (girls division) but would not provide additional personnel support; this would need to come initially come from the current Regis Jesuit high school staff working with the boys. The Meitler Study indicated there would be a significant financial deficit, but this would be absorbed by existing cash reserves and operating surpluses foreseen in future years given expected increases in student enrollment and rising tuition costs. The kickoff of fundraising campaign for the Girls Division, would launch in the fall of 2002. In the fall of 2001, with all these mechanisms in motion, attention shifted to the nationwide search for the hiring of the inaugural Principal of the Girls Division.

### **The First Principal of the Girls Division**

In the fall of 2001, Regis Jesuit was looking for not one, but two Principals to lead each division. Since Rick had moved on to oversee the creation of the girls' division, Charlie Saulino, long time Academic Vice Principal, had served as interim Principal since January of 2001. After a search process, Charlie would accept the role of full time Principal of the boys' division in January 2002.

The hiring process for the Principal of the girls' division would be an extensive process. Rick Sullivan sent out letters to all the Jesuit high schools seeking out possible recommendations of candidates. He also made specific inquiries reaching out to a few strong candidates sending them personalized letters. Gretchen Kessler, who at that time was a Vice Principal for Canisius High School in Buffalo New York, received one of these letters. In interviews for this study, Kessler recalled:

In the fall of 2001 I received word of the GD opening and put it by my computer without giving it much thought. I then received a second letter from Regis Jesuit and a personal note from Rick Sullivan encouraging me to apply. I really at this point had no intention of moving from Buffalo, but was struck by this letter.

Along with two other candidates, Kessler visited Regis Jesuit in the fall of 2001 and interviewed for the position. Kessler's father had taught at Canisius for 42 years until he passed away when she was 18. Both of Kessler's parents instilled a love for Catholic Jesuit education and strongly desired it for her, but no options were available at the time. Kessler attended the next best thing, an all-girls Catholic High School named Holy Angels Academy, an all-girls Catholic high school run by the Sacred Heart nuns. She would soon follow in her father's footsteps teaching at Canisius as one of the very few female faculty at the school. As an educator at Canisius, Kessler taught Spanish, served as Department Chair before becoming Assistant Principal. Along with her teaching, Kessler had an expertise in curriculum development. She created the summer curriculum institute at Canisius, which is now also a mainstay at Regis Jesuit. During her time at Canisius, she was one of only four women working at the school at the time and its first and only female administrator.

Kessler was drawn to the Girls Division and Regis Jesuit because she went back to her own experience at Holy Angels Academy. As a high school student, Kessler recalls being introverted, hard-working, and excelling at leadership. She wanted to be a part of leading that experience for young high school age women in a Catholic, Jesuit environment. She wanted to teach in all-girls environment that fostered relationship-building and emphasized healthy self-esteem. She envisioned a place where the girls realize “they are beautiful children of a loving God both inside and out.” She envisioned a place where young women realized that they were, in fact, worth an elite Jesuit high school education and had a lot to offer in this world.

It is not easy to be a teenager in today's world. There is too much emphasis on the physical by the media, and magazines with the images that are depicted. Nobody can live up to this.

Both Rick and Fr. Sidney appreciated her knowledge, experience, and most importantly love of Jesuit education. Fr. Sidney recalled this in interviews for this study.

She was a woman of strong faith, a clear idea of Jesuit education, able administrator/leader, and incredible insight into hiring. She was the focal part of the school and stood out. The rest was history.

Everyone interviewed for this historiography emphasized the importance of Kessler to the success of the girls' division. The feelings expressed were and continue to this day to be mutual. Kessler recalls her initial reactions when visiting Regis Jesuit for the first time.

When I interviewed at Regis, I remember thinking everyone was so nice and genuine. I spent a week and despite a migraine headache had a wonderful experience. Two weeks later around Fr. Wally Sidney called me around Christmas time and offered me the position. I was shocked.

Kessler had a lot to consider in taking on this position at Regis Jesuit. First and foremost, she wanted to bring her mother to visit. Peg Kessler, Kessler's mother, was and continues to be the major inspiration in her life. Peg stayed home to raise Gretchen until she was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and then went back to school to get her masters degree in library science. Peg would go on to become head of the largest library branch in the county in Buffalo. When Kessler was offered the Principal position at Regis Jesuit, Peg was in her 80s and had spent her entire life in Buffalo. She lived with Gretchen and any move to Colorado would include her. Kessler brought her mother to Regis Jesuit shortly after the offer she received from Fr. Sidney. Peg instantly loved Regis and Colorado. On the flight home, she told Gretchen that it was worth pursuing and making the major move. Gaining her mother's blessings along with speaking to her very close circle of friends helped clinch her decision. Shortly thereafter, Kessler contacted Fr. Sidney accepting the offer to become the founding Principal of the Girls Division. Kessler recalls that “...everything fell in to place with mom on board.” Kessler saw coming to Regis Jesuit as integral to the Jesuit mission and an opportunity to do something important for high school girls.



### **Final Stages of Planning, Surprises, and Anticipation**

With Kessler on board as the final key piece, the pace towards starting the girls' division accelerated. Shortly after Kessler's hiring, final approval was given by the Board of Trustees to start the girls' division in the fall of 2003. In May of 2002, in addition to the government and structure committee, three transition committees were formed that worked till the start of the first school year in August 2003. Kessler worked from Buffalo with the transition committees with the help of Susan Resnick, who chaired the committees until Kessler moved to Colorado in March of 2003. These three transition committees were the final major piece of planning for the girls' division. There was a faculty transition committee that consisted of ten to fifteen staff moving from the boys' division to start the girls' division and be part of the original faculty and staff. This transition committee focused on the day-to-day operations of the school. They focused on curriculum, class scheduling, creating an advisement period, future hiring for the Jesuit mission, and admissions. The second transition committee consisted of Board members, parents, and advocates that focused on school excellence looking at the long-term vision of the girls' division; they introduced ideas and aspects that would be unique to the girls' division. They looked at creating an annual leadership day for women, community mentoring opportunities, and possible women's foundation luncheon etc. Finally, a third transition committee consisted of a "think tank" group consisting of experts and consultants focusing on best practices for educating young women. This transition committee provided current research and resources for the Regis Jesuit community. Like previous committee work, these transition committees were central hubs delegating key tasks to subsequent subcommittees. These subcommittees dealt with specific issues of academics, athletics, student life, the meaning of co-divisionality, budget, and the search for a temporary off campus site.

As in previous committee setups, at the first transition committee meeting on May, 2002 an additional document called Assumptions for Planning was created. There would be several manifestations of this document, but they were consistent in their assumptions, which included:

- A thorough regular curriculum driven advisement period would be created for the girls.
- To ensure greater formation efforts class sizes would be between 15-25 young women.
- A four-year program focusing on the five parts of the Jesuit graduate at graduation document would be created.
- In terms of faculty development, a large grant fund would be created for additional education and professional development for faculty and staff.
- Also, in terms of faculty/staff development, a library of resources for professional development would be created and maintained.
- There would be a mentoring program for first and second year teachers.

These transition committees also addressed key questions of budget, staffing, student enrollment, and site selection beginning in May 2002. Conclusions from the Meitler consultants and initial enrollment numbers would determine the timeline of the construction of the new building for the Girls Division. Enrollment numbers would be based not only on the ability of the admissions office to recruit young women, but also in working closely with the other Catholic high schools in

the area in terms of their enrollment numbers. Regis Jesuit did not want to take students from the other local Catholic high schools. Along with determining the proper enrollment number of a first-year class, there was a need to discern the issue of likely student transfers to the girls' division from other schools. The transition committees and the Board determined that first year and second year girls would form the first two classes of Regis Jesuit girls' division beginning in the fall of 2003. The first-year class consisted of 130 girls and the second-year class consisted of 40 girls.

The determination of class size set up the schedule for construction of the new building. Since the enrollment number of the boys' division would initially be significantly higher than the girls' division and since the boys were already maximizing the capacity of the current building, the board approved the motion that the new building would be for the young men. The current building for the boys would become the new girls' division with extensive renovation and updates. The construction of this new building would begin in the fall of 2003, which meant that the first year of the girls' division would have to be on a separate site. After initial engagement with the Johnson and Wales campus in Denver and a few other locations, St. Catherine, a Greek Orthodox Church, was selected as the temporary site for the existence of girls' division's first year. It was located in the Denver Tech Center area approximately 15 minutes away from Regis Jesuit's home campus. They would move onto campus assuming the old boys' division building the very next year for the 2004-2005 school year.

Another key issue the transition committee addressed was staffing for the new girls Division. The case statement made to the Jesuit Province and Superior General in Rome clearly stated that while a financial contribution would be made that no additional staffing other than the Principal would be provided. This meant that staffing would have to come from within the Regis Jesuit institution specifically from the boys' division. As mentioned, Susan Resnick and Rick Sullivan quickly transitioned from their administrative positions. In addition, approximately ten faculty and staff from the boys' division would make the jump. It was imperative that this group led by Kessler were unified in vision and mission in creating this legacy of providing young women a traditional Catholic, Jesuit education.

### **The Idea Comes to Fruition**

“We are on a mission from God”

- Gretchen Kessler

These were the first words of the founding Principal of the Regis Jesuit High School Girls Division, in her first state of the school address to all staff in August of 2003 in the John Francis Regis Chapel. It would be a mantra that Kessler and many in the Regis Jesuit Community would reiterate throughout that inaugural year of the Regis Jesuit Girls Division. The first year of the Regis Jesuit High School Girls Division began in the fall of 2003 at St. Catherine's Greek Orthodox Church while the new building was being built on Regis Jesuit's campus. The off-campus location of the girls' division was both a challenge and strength. While it created challenges of communal unity and identity for the entire campus, it also gave the new girls' division the opportunity to start their

own unique traditions. Due to the logistics of St. Catherine's, there was no passing class passing bell, which is a tradition that continued for many years at the girls' division. The small number of staff and students that first year allowed the entire girls' division community to have daily prayer every day together-something that happens today with the larger girls' division community. Due to the lack of office space, the faculty and staff became a close community. This allowed everyone to contribute significantly to the vision of what the girls' division would eventually become in its permanent location.

When they did move into the building in the summer of 2004, the walls were repainted, benches were put in all the hallways along with new carpeting. Slogans focusing on sisterhood and the empowerment of girls were printed in throughout the hallways of the school. Office space was redesigned to maintain the unique close-knit community feel of the staff from the previous building.

Due to the larger enrollment and burgeoning of the Regis Jesuit Community and benefactors, a state of the art performing arts theatre was built in the center of the campus in 2014. This theatre, known as the Steele Center, was created right in the middle of the girls' and boys' divisions serving as a bridge between the two. This building located right in the center of campus would allow for boys and girls to interact with each other during informal times during the school day as well as provide a formal meeting place where they would congregate. As of the culmination of the 2016-2017 school year, Regis Jesuit High continues to thrive with its co-divisional model educating approximately 1600 young men and women a year with a faculty and staff of more than 150.

### **Data Analysis**

Why would Regis Jesuit ever get involved with educating young women after 125 year tradition of forming young men? The answer lies in understanding the Magis of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits.

- Walter Sidney, SJ

Magis often calls for an openness to engage an outside perspective. The creation of the girls' division began with a small group of parents approaching the Principal and President of Regis Jesuit with a specific request. This request came from the outside community and at the time, was not in the periphery of the institutional vision. It was Magis that caused the School President, Principal, Board Chair and many others to consider the request. Even when it was determined the timing was not right for Regis Jesuit to pursue this several times, they maintained an ongoing dialogue with this small group of parents. They remained open to possibility and kept the door open.

Magis also called for Regis Jesuit to have an intentional collective apostolic discernment process within the institution regarding this opportunity. This extensive discernment process consisted of information gathering, ongoing dialogue, and prayer as a community. It required patience, good will, and good faith among all its key constituents. It needed to be inclusive of all viewpoints. This process of institutional dialogue for a communal discernment was essential in the pursuing the Magis for Regis Jesuit. The process of conversations at Regis Jesuit took place in the form of

focus groups, surveys, committee, and subcommittee work that required tireless efforts, patience, and care for the people involved.

Finally, Magis within Ignatian Strategic Planning involved risks and challenges that called for a deeper faith and reliance on the providence of God for Regis Jesuit. Regis Jesuit's risks in creating a girls' division were considerable. It included questioning whether the timing was right in terms of enrollment and financial sustainability. Rick Sullivan, Wally Sidney, and Bud Laber were cognizant of this throughout this process. They remained engaged and kept the focus of the need alive until the timing turned out to be right for Regis Jesuit to pursue it. Another risk was the co-divisional model and its practical soundness from a managerial standpoint. How would the institution function with two Principals and as a larger campus with essentially two buildings? Another risk was the transformative effect that a girls' division would have on the entire Regis Jesuit community culture and how this transition would commence. Perhaps the most significant risk was embarking on an idea that no one involved was certain where it was going and if Regis Jesuit could make it succeed. There were many Jesuit coeducational high schools, but not an all-girls division. Regis Jesuit would have to look outward for expertise while looking to interweave the Jesuit tradition. Magis often calls for an openness and vulnerability often requiring an even deeper collective patient trust. Regis was open to this with each other in its community, but also by including people from outside of the immediate Regis Jesuit community.

As with any seismic change, there was tremendous enthusiasm to this transformation by many, but also reticence by some. There was a need to keep the faith of everyone involved persistent by constantly reiterating the articulated purpose and progress being made in pursuit of it. In accordance with the Ignatian Strategic Planning framework, President Sidney clearly stated that an integral aspect of the mission of Regis Jesuit High School was to always consider the needs of the community beyond Regis Jesuit, including the larger Catholic community in Denver and the needs of the Archdiocese. The larger Catholic community articulated a clear need to provide young women more opportunities to receive a Catholic education. For Regis Jesuit, this involved providing young women access to the same Catholic, Jesuit education as the boys.

A key aspect of Ignatian Strategic Planning is to be well informed of the context of the situation or in Pedro Arrupe's words, "the signs of the times" (Burke, 2004). Determining the context of the situation involves clearly and precisely identifying the need. The initial small group of parents did their homework in contacting the Denver Archdiocese who was concurred with the need but could not at the time invest in it. They also called other Catholic high schools in Denver. All of whom expressed enthusiasm for the idea, but themselves could not provide an immediate assistance. Inspired by this persistence, Regis Jesuit realized this need and wanted to be part of the solution.

Another key aspect in determining context is funding and allocation of resources. In 1998, Regis Jesuit and other Denver Catholic entities including the Archdiocese did not have the necessary funding to invest in this endeavor. The timing was not right for Regis Jesuit either in 1998, however as events proceeded this initial conclusion started to evolve. The idea of the magis is being open to engage in endeavors that might not initially work, but to keep at it and be faithful to the process. While Regis' answer was initially no to a girls' school, they continued the dialogue both within and

outside of the institution. From this openness came the idea of the co-divisional model. Planning can be time-consuming, but with patience, grace, and faith in the providence of God unexpected and wonderful surprises can occur. By the middle of 1999, Regis Jesuit determined the need more specifically, had an idea of a possible model that could fully utilize the recently purchased land, and proceeded forward.

Allocation of resources involved not only funding, but also staffing and community outreach efforts. The co-divisional model allowed Regis Jesuit to maximize the use of their staffing resources to create a separate girls' division, but not a separate Catholic Jesuit high school. The innovative idea of the co-divisional model in which two divisions would share some of the facilities and staffing was the best of both worlds as articulated in interviews for this study by Fr. Sidney.

From the very beginning, I had no doubt it would succeed. The first day of the GD with outstanding leadership and a great, enthusiastic staff. Everyone followed Gretchen, she showed the way. I had a tremendous faith in the mission and God's providence on this. We were able to trust in something larger. We had outstanding leadership from our board chair Bud Laber who spearheaded the first campaign in the history of Regis Jesuit High School.

Long term sustainability is an important consideration of Ignatian Strategic Planning; this requires a persistent and enduring faith. This faith requires a humility to believe in the rightness of the mission and rely on grace amid a long process that can often consist of many starts and stops. Humility calls for an openness to new ideas and diverse perspectives always being prudent mindful simultaneously of the short and long vision as things progress or digress. This was exemplified in the planning right from the onset as committees and subcommittees were open to leaving some key issues unresolved deferring to the fact that they simply did not know the answer until the school started. Some within Regis Jesuit wanted a clearly articulated policy that was approved by the Board of Trustees on the specifics of what the co-divisional model would be, particularly regarding the single-sex education piece. Regis Jesuit leadership spearheaded by President Sidney demurred from drafting such policies. He wanted to keep issues open for future leaders and staff to make determinations as he articulates here.

While some on the board wanted to pass a resolution to enforce this in perpetuity- same sex co-divisional model. Many including me strongly disagreed. As Ignatius said what we see today is one thing, but we always have to be open to the future. The fear of becoming coed.

Fr. Sidney and the leadership believed in the rightness of the mission and were humble enough to realize that challenges would arise resulting in future changes. An example of this was when in 2009, due to budget and staffing reasons, it was agreed that there would be a small number of classes at Regis Jesuit that would be coeducational. These classes known as co-institutional continue to this day and are essential to the success of the students and the sustainability of the school. In this and other instance, there was need for future leadership to have the freedom to change or revise initial planning. This humility led to a greater faith in the realization that the larger mission, providing the first ever single-sex Catholic, Jesuit high school for young women, was the priority.

---

### Findings and Implications

Regis Jesuit's mission to provide an education for young women in a single-sex classroom environment has proven economically and culturally transformative. Recently, Regis Jesuit purchased another block of land and are looking to expand its athletic facilities and build a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) Center. Its debt has been minimized, its endowment has grown, and it is embarking on another strategic planning process. A signature aspect of this long-term strategic planning will be on exploring and achieving single-sex educational excellence.

The cultural transformation of Regis Jesuit since the girls' division has been challenging at times. From the onset of the planning process, there was resistance expressed by some, who did not want to see any changes to the over 100-year old tradition of Regis Jesuit educating solely young men. This resistance came from some alumni, parents and even some faculty. Along with concerns about changing the tradition, fiscal instability and questions of the direction of the institutional mission were also scrutinized.

There were also issues of sexism percolating. Until the girls' division, Regis Jesuit, like most Jesuit institutions, had been a male dominated environment. This included not only educating solely young men, but leadership run primarily by white males; this demographic breakdown was true throughout the leadership, staff, board, etc. until the 1990s. According to former Dean and Assistant Principal, Mr. Jeff Howard, there were women who worked at Regis Jesuit from religious orders, but very few lay women right up till the 1990s. Howard, who started as a faculty member during this time, recalls the first woman faculty member who had a baby and returned to work afterwards did not take place until his time. The first woman administrator at Regis Jesuit would happen shortly thereafter with the selection of Susan Resnick as Assistant Principal for Faculty and Curriculum. The history of sexism within the Jesuits and the overall Catholic Church has been chronicled, and unfortunately persists. The higher levels of Jesuit Provincial and School Administrative leadership within Jesuit secondary education continues to lack representation from women, particularly in formal leadership positions. At these levels, certain people have been creative and innovative in including women's voices; this is not a long-term answer as it is not equitable nor just. The inclusion of women and the legacy of GC 34 calls for greater efforts on the part of leadership of Jesuit secondary education to address these inequities as some Jesuit higher education institutions are attempting.

Following the creation of the Regis Jesuit Girls Division, the female representation at every level of Regis Jesuit High School in both buildings has increased. Today there are more women that work at Regis Jesuit than men, and since 2018 greater equity among leadership positions. In the fall of 2016, a gender equity working group was created that meets monthly to address issues of gender equity. Many women alumna from Regis Jesuit have either returned to Regis Jesuit to teach or gone to another Jesuit high school to teach. Until the start of the girls' school, one of the Southern Central Jesuit Province signature volunteer programs, the Alum Service Corp Program, had never had a woman participant. Today, there are several women that participate every year in this program not just at Regis Jesuit, but at other Jesuit high schools in the Province. The legacy of

Regis Jesuit High School Girls Division continues to grow, but its impact as it relates to the role of women within the Jesuit Charism is a much-needed blessing.

Like the cultural transformation of Regis Jesuit, the co-divisional managerial model is also a work in progress. Many of the original leaders and creators of the co-divisional model were prescient in their cautious view of how it would function. It contributed to uncertainty in how the model was to be interpreted by faculty and staff of both divisions at times creating a tension between the two divisions and constraining to streamlined communication between the two divisions.

In 2016, Regis Jesuit President David Card posited to the Regis Jesuit Community the questions: are the current organizational structure and decision-making processes of Regis Jesuit High School optimal for accomplishing the school's mission? And if not, how can they be improved? That same year, a steering committee of Regis Jesuit faculty, administrators, and board members were assembled with consultant, Jack Peterson, to conduct additional information gathering in the hopes of working towards submitting a conclusive recommendation regarding the organizational structure of the co-divisional model. During this same time, both Principals, including Kessler, stepped down. The Boys' Principal at the time, Alan Carruthers, assumed the Presidency of another Jesuit high school while Kessler moved into the Regis Jesuit Advancement/ Alumni Office.

In December of 2017, the steering committee produced their recommendations, which were ratified by President Card and the Board. A new educational leadership council (ELC) would be assembled with one Principal overseeing both the girls and the boys. Two Division Heads and two Deans would oversee and manage day-to-day operations specific to each division more commonly known today as buildings. Five Assistant Principals overseeing areas of Academics, Mission, Student Life, Student Services, Curriculum/Faculty of both boys and girls would be part of this new ELC. In addition, academic departments would combine into single departments chaired by one person for both divisions with an intentional effort to have more teachers teach both boys and girls. As of 2018-2019, there are over 70 teachers at Regis Jesuit who teach both boys' and girls' single-sex classes.

Regis Jesuit Girls Division remains the only single-sex girls' Jesuit high school in the United States (Jesuit Schools Network, 2017). Future studies could explore why there have not been more Jesuit educational opportunities provided for young women nationwide beyond Regis Jesuit. Future studies could also explore more specifically, evolving Jesuit attitudes towards the advancement of women within their institutions. Finally, further research is needed on the benefits and challenges to same sex education overall. Is single-sex education still an effective and beneficial educational model for either young men or women in today's 21<sup>st</sup> century world? How does it fit the values of the Jesuit mission of justice?

---

### Conclusion

“Planning is about people.” (Service, 2015)

When pursuing the magis and institutional change, it is essential to have innovative leaders who are fearless and open. Regis Jesuit was fortunate in this regard. Rick Sullivan was willing to leave behind being Principal to oversee the creation/sustainability of the girls' division. Gretchen Kessler courageously left her lifelong home in Buffalo and her administrative position at Canisius High School to move to Colorado to become Principal. Board Chair Bud Laber and Pat Murray gave up their day-to-day employment to fully invest in the campaign to raise money for the new building. President Wally Sidney was willing to oversee the entire process. These people trusted the providence of God in letting go of other priorities to faithfully pursue this goal. The singularity of purpose and focus on the mission was always kept at the forefront, which was to provide greater accessibility for young women to a Catholic Jesuit high school education. Regis Jesuit High School is a solid case study of institutional Ignatian Strategic Planning, which seeks the Jesuit Magis in its processes, in achieving its goals, and perhaps most importantly in a deeper depth of understanding of the Catholic, Jesuit Mission.

### References

- Boryczka, J. M., & Petrino, E. A. (2012). *Jesuit and feminist education : Intersections in teaching and learning in the twenty-first century*. Fordham University Press.
- Bouillette, B. (2013). *Courageous journeys*. Paper presented at the Jesuit Secondary Educational Association Diversity Directors Conference, Portland, Oregon.
- Broughman, S. P., Kincel, B., Peterson, J. (2019). *Characteristics of private schools in the United States: Results from the 2017-18 Private School Universe Survey (NCES 2019-071)*. National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019071.pdf>
- Bryk, A. S., Lee, V. E., & Holland, P. B. (1993). *Catholic schools and the common good*. Harvard University Press.
- Burke, K. (Ed.). (2004). *Pedro Arrupe: Essential writings*. Orbis Books, Maryknoll.
- Curia of the Superior General. (1995). Decrees of General Congregation 34: Since the restored society 15. <https://jesuit.org/mt/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2017/06/CG34-Decrees-ENG.pdf>
- Fleming, D. L. (2008). *What is Ignatian spirituality?* Loyola Press.
- Fullam, L. (1999). Juana, S.J.: The past (and future?) status of women in the Society of Jesus. *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 31(5), 1-39.
- Frison, B. M. (1959). *Coeducation in Catholic schools: A commentary on the instruction on coeducation*. Commentarium Pro Religiosis.
- Geger, B. T. (2012). What magis really means and why it matters. *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal*, 1(2), 16-31. <http://epublications.regis.edu/jhe/vol1/iss2/16>
- Hobbs, B. (2016). *Jesuit Schools Network annual report*. Washington, DC: Jesuit Schools Network.
- Jesuit Schools Network. (2017). Retrieved June 12, 2017, from Jesuit Schools Network <https://www.jesuitschoolsnetwork.org/>



- Lee, V. E., & Bryk, A. S. (1986). Effects of single-sex secondary schools on student achievement and attitudes. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 78(5), 381-95. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.78.5.381>
- LePore, P. C., & Warren, J. R. (1997). A comparison of single-sex and coeducational Catholic secondary schooling: Evidence from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988. *American Educational Research Journal*, 34, 3, 485-511. <https://doi.org/10.3102%2F00028312034003485>
- Martin, J. (2010). *The Jesuit guide to (almost) everything : A spirituality for real life*. HarperOne.
- Mattingly, C. (2016). *Secret habits : Catholic literacy education for women in the early nineteenth century*. Southern Illinois University Press.
- General Congregation 32. (1975/2009). Section I, decree 4: Our mission today: The service of faith and the promotion of justice. In J. Padberg (Ed.), *Jesuit life & mission today: The decrees and accompanying documents of the 31<sup>st</sup>-35<sup>th</sup> General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (pp. 298-316). Institute of Jesuit Sources. [https://jesuitportal.bc.edu/research/documents/1975\\_decree4gc32/](https://jesuitportal.bc.edu/research/documents/1975_decree4gc32/)
- Pahlke, E., Hyde, J. S., & Allison, C. M. (2014). The effects of single-sex compared with coeducational schooling on students' performance and attitudes: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 140(4), 1042-72. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035740>
- Rahner, H. (Ed.). (2007). *St. Ignatius Loyola: Letters to women*. Crossword Publishing.
- Rahner, K. (1973). *Spiritual exercises*. Sheed & Ward.
- Regis Jesuit High School. (n.d.). Retrieved May, 23, 2017, from <https://www.regisjesuit.com/>
- Sadker, M. (1993). *Failing at fairness*. Touchstone Books
- Sadker, D., & Sadker, M. (2014). *Failing at fairness: How America's schools cheat girls*. Scribner.
- Sax, L. J., (with Arms, E., Woodruff, M., Riggers, T., & Eagan, K.). (2009). *Women graduates of single-sex and coeducational high schools: Differences in their characteristics and the transition to college*. The Sudikoff Family Institute for Education and New Media, UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. [https://heri.ucla.edu/PDFs/Sax\\_FINAL%20REPORT\\_Sing\\_1Fo2B4.pdf](https://heri.ucla.edu/PDFs/Sax_FINAL%20REPORT_Sing_1Fo2B4.pdf)
- Schroth, R. A. (2007). *The American jesuits: A history*. New York University Press.
- Service, A. L. (2015). Mission and magis: Strategic planning in the constitutions of the Society of Jesus. *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal*, 4(2), 15-27. <http://epublications.regis.edu/jhe/vol4/iss2/11>
- Thibodeaux, M. E. (2010). *God's voice within : The Ignatian way to discover God's will*. Loyola Press.
- Williams, J. (2016). *The separation solution?: Single-sex education and the new politics of gender equality*. University of California Press.
- Yu, D. (October 9, 2014). "A word St. Ignatius did not use": Jesuit Father Timothy Kesicki delivers Loyola club speech. Retrieved July 2015, from <http://jesuits.org/news-detail?TN=NEWS-20141009035419>

### Author Biography

**Dr. Sajit Kabadi** is currently the Assistant Principal for Mission, Ministry, and Diversity at Regis Jesuit High School. He has been a part of the Regis Jesuit community for more than twenty years previously as a Theology teacher, Diversity director, and Board of Trustee. He has more than three decades in Catholic, Jesuit education at five different Jesuit institutions. He is a graduate of the Ignatian Leadership Seminars. He has a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Innovation and is an Adjunct Professor at several higher educational institutions in the Denver area. He is married to a High School American History Teacher also in Catholic, Jesuit Education. They have three daughters.