Why does education cost so much?
Music, the universal language

Clarinetist Cydney Pierce and flutist Kathleen Corbett, above, perform with the Pep Band. Members earn no credit, no pay and play because they love it. The Gonzaga Choir including (from left) Clara Galan, Robert Carr, Benjamin Brown (rear) and Jake McGhie sang an eclectic repertoire this year, from familiar masterpieces to cutting-edge 21st century composers.
Savoring the spirit of Gonzaga

By Father Robert J. Spitzer, S. J.
President

The best part about being president is seeing people at their best — filled with faith, care, affection, generosity, service, professionalism, talent beyond measure — and the list goes on. With Trustees, Regents, administrators, faculty, students, staff, alumni, benefactors and friends like you, there can be little doubt that Gonzaga will prosper in mission, academics, facilities, scholarship, student life and ethos far into the future.

During this upcoming time of transition, I will try to thank all of you individually and collectively for the friendship you have extended to me and above all for the service you have given to Gonzaga which has led to the remarkable progress we have made throughout the last 10 years. I also will make an announcement about my future mission. But I would like to defer all of that until next year.

In the interval I would like to continue my reflections on Jesuit education, particularly with respect to the spiritual life that it inspired within me.

Saint Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, espoused the ideal of becoming “contemplatives in action.” He was convinced that contemplation (the deep awareness and appropriation of the unconditional love of God) should affect our actions, and that our actions need to be brought back to contemplation. During my student years at Gonzaga I learned about five essential pillars which ground and give substance to this Ignatian ideal. These pillars were fortified during my years of Jesuit formation and apostolic work which resulted in a recently published book, “Five Pillars of the Spiritual Life: A Practical Guide for Active People” (Ignatius Press 2008). It is my sincere hope that every graduate of Gonzaga will have an experience similar to my own – an experience which not only opened my heart and mind to the unlimited horizon of God’s love, but also imparted the substance of peace and joy not only opened my heart and mind to the unlimited horizon of God’s love, but also imparted the substance of peace and joy.

In the upcoming issues of Gonzaga Quarterly, I will share some of my experiences at Gonzaga that relate to these five pillars and give a reflection about how this has developed during my 34 years as a Jesuit.

There are many graces of the Holy Eucharist: peace, forgiveness, a sense of unity in the Church and transformation.

The grace of transformation became quite apparent to me during my time at Gonzaga. I decided in my sophomore year to begin attending daily Mass because my friend, Bert Martinez, asked me “What are you doing for Lent?” I replied, “Giving up sweets.” He indicated, “Well, I’m not giving up anything – I’m going to do something positive – I’m going to daily Mass.” That really got me intrigued, not only because I didn’t want to give up sweets, but also because I derived great benefit from the Sunday Masses at Gonzaga. After Lent was over, I really did not want to stop attending daily Mass — I was hooked.

I was not at the same level of humility and generosity as my friends (indeed, I had some deep-seated utilitarian, egotistical and materialistic tendencies). Nevertheless, I felt attracted to the Eucharist through my faith. After about a year, my friends began to comment that I “had really changed.” I told them (quite sincerely) that I had not – I was “the same old person.” It seemed I was the only one who had not noticed the gradual but cumulative change that had occurred in my heart. I had always said that rationality could be trusted but the emotions could not. This had the unfortunate effect of producing affective and social immaturity, but I nevertheless thought it to be true. Now, in retrospect, I attribute my discovery and re-appropriation of my heart to the gradual transformative influence of the Holy Eucharist. I do not consider this incredible life-giving discovery to have arisen out of normal maturation (I was anything but normal); nor do I attribute it to something desired or willed (because I really did not want a heart — I did not trust my emotions). Rather, I believe that the Eucharist battered my heart, or perhaps better, prepared my heart for the simple exposure to the Word of God, and to the love of God manifest through others at Mass. Slowly but surely Christ’s presence and love turned me toward the grace to which I could not bring myself. I received a heart, not a completed heart, but “the foundational heart” opening upon a deeper and deeper appropriation of the unconditional love which is the purpose of my life.

Stay tuned in the next issue for some Gonzaga revelations about spontaneous prayer.
On Campus

Jesuits on the move
This winter, Father Pat Lee, S.J., participated in the 35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus in Rome at which the new Father General Adolfo Nicolas was named. In July, Fr. Lee, vice president for Mission, will become the provincial of the Oregon Province. Lee’s selection for the post reflects the high regard in which he is held by Jesuits across the province, said Father John Whitney, S.J., present provincial. Father Rick Ganz, director of University ministry, is interim vice president for Mission, and a search committee has been convened.

Also departing from Gonzaga are Father John Mossi, S.J., who taught religious studies at Gonzaga for 16 years, Father Michael Moynahan, S.J., who served most recently as rector of Gonzaga’s Jesuit Community, and Brother Pat McCarthy, B.S.C., who worked five years in Gonzaga’s counseling office. Fr. Mossi will return to his home province in California and Fr. Moynahan will take sabbatical. Br. McCarthy is returning to his native Australia, and Father Steve Kuder, S.J., is the newly named rector.

Nelles leads Trustees
Donald P. Nelles (’59), Bellevue, Wash., has been elected chair of the Gonzaga University Board of Trustees. Nelles is a retired partner of Ernst and Young in Seattle, and now runs Nelco in Bellevue. John J. Luger, Bellevue, Wash., president of JDL Enterprises, has been elected vice chair of the Board. Harry H. Sladich (’59), Spokane, has been elected secretary, and Michael J. Casey (’70, ’78 J.D.), assistant secretary.

New members elected to the Board of Trustees are Paul W. Bracich (’70), Shoreline, Wash., Kevin D. McQuilkin (’83), New Canaan, Conn., and Robert H. Tomlinson, Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. Bracich is a partner in KPMG in Seattle. McQuilkin is managing director of global banking for Deutsche Bank Securities, Inc. Tomlinson was the founder of Tomlinson Reality, and runs Tomlinson Consulting.

Students earn national role
Ilaria Ghattas and Tsega Gaim have been named to the American Association of University Women Student Advisory Council.

Gaim, who graduated in May, is a Howard Hughes Medical Institute grant puts GU sciences ‘on the map’
Gonzaga University has received a $1.2 million grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, and is one of 44 institutions nationwide to be honored in the $60 million grant program. The funding is expected to transform Gonzaga’s already successful science programs and nearly triple undergraduate research opportunities.

“Being awarded an HHMI grant is like having our basketball team go off to the ‘Big Dance.’ This puts Gonzaga on the map,” said biology Professor Nancy Staub. “Our undergraduates will benefit because many more research opportunities will be available. To train our students to be scientists they really need to do science and our HHMI grant will allow more students to do this in a meaningful way. We will now have a critical mass of student researchers both during the academic year and the summer. With the addition of two new faculty members in biology and chemistry we will be able to offer courses and research opportunities, in emerging fields, such as in computational biology.”

With the University’s recent growth, students interested in research have until now outnumbered the spots for interns. The HHMI grant will push the existing 20-25 research opportunities to more than 60 per year.

“The undergraduate years are vital to attracting and retaining students who will be the future of science,” said HHMI President Thomas Cech. “We want students to experience science as the creative, challenging and rewarding endeavor that it is.”

The grant also will provide for research stipends for undergraduates during the summer and the academic year; create new courses in quantitative biology, genomics and scientific writing; allow for the hiring of a research coordinator and for the training of all existing faculty in computational sciences; and will bring Gonzaga students and hands-on experiments into the region’s K-12 classrooms, especially in the low-income classrooms in Spokane and in regional Native American communities, where efforts to increase scientific literacy and college admissions will pay large dividends.

HHMI invited 224 colleges with a track record of preparing undergraduate students for research careers to submit proposals for these grants.

Madonnastock
This annual music festival runs from noon to midnight. Twelve straight hours of music? Absolutely. By mid-April, students are ready to set aside their studies for a day. Here Alex Dumke of Germany, bass guitarist of Fighting Failure, a five-man alternative and acoustic rock band, plays to the crowd.

Hanne Zak photo
Dedication of St. Ignatius
Father Robert J. Spitzer, S.J., above right, enjoys a moment with sculptor George Carlson, center, and Aloysius Mullally during the statue's dedication, while students, faculty and friends of the University examine the monument which now graces the main entrance of College Hall (formerly the Administration Building).

Spitzer writes new book
Published by St. Ignatius Press, "Five Pillars of the Spiritual Life: A Practical Guide to Prayer for Active People," is the newest book by Father Robert J. Spitzer, S.J. This volume draws on retreats and seminars Fr. Spitzer has given and offers a practical yet rich guide for helping busy people develop a regular and deeper prayer life.

Also newly released is "Spiritual Leadership: The Quest for Integrity" by Leonard Doohan, professor emeritus of religious studies and former dean of graduate studies. Paulist Press published Doohan’s 15th book, describing it as "a spirituality of leadership written for those individuals who want to integrate their leadership with the values of their lives."

Opportunities in Africa
Eighteen new student internships will result from two grants totaling $118,200 given by the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust’s Vision & Call Program. Most of the internships will place students in Africa over the next two summers, where Gonzaga has ongoing programs. In Zambia, students will work with local bee-keepers, helping them to work toward self-sustainability. In Benin, students will participate in WATER (Water for Africa: Technology, Education and Reciprocity) Project. Several other internships will create positions on campus.

Faculty of the Year
Exemplary Faculty Awards honored 10 professors this spring. Tenured honoraries include Wayne Pomerleau, philosophy; David Cleary, chemistry; Mia Bertignolli, biology; Brian Clayton, philosophy; and Pat McCormick, religious studies.

Non-tenured honored faculty include: Kirk Besmer, philosophy; Andrew Goldman, history; Heather Easterling, English; John Villalpando, math; and William Hayes, sociology and criminal justice.

Awarded emeritus status on the occasion of their retirement were Sandra Wilson, doctoral leadership studies; James Dallen, religious studies; Bud Hazel, communications arts; and Jim Vache, law.

McCulloh remains AVP
Thayne McCulloh will remain interim AVP for two more years, Father Robert J. Spitzer, S.J. announced this spring. McCulloh, who served as vice president for administration and planning from 2004 until his appointment as interim AVP last year.

Earlier this year, a search committee had identified three finalists for the AVP post. However, with 2008-09 is Fr. Spitzer’s final year as president, Fr. Spitzer asked McCulloh to remain in the post, where his continued strong performance will offer valuable service for faculty and the University.

Highest honors
Gonzaga’s highest honor, the DeSmet Medal, was bestowed on Harry Magnuson at the 2008 undergraduate commencement on May 12. Magnuson is Gonzaga’s longest serving Trustee, generous benefactor and adviser for almost every facet of the University. Receiving honorary doctor of law degrees were undergraduate speaker Father Gary Smith, S.J., a former street priest serving the homeless and disadvantaged of Portland, Ore., currently serving at the Jesuit Refugee Service in Uganda; Mark Pigott, CEO of PACCAR; and MSG (Retired) Tom Williams who led and mentored hundreds of ROTC cadets at Gonzaga.

Honored at the School of Law commencement were graduation speaker Justice Mary Schroeder of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, honorary degree; John Clute, former dean and current professor of the School of Law, the DeSmet Medal; Don and Va Lena Curran, Trustee and Regent, 2008 Law Medal; and James E. Rogers, CEO of Sunbelt Communications, honorary degree.

The graduate commencement ceremony honored speaker Justice Debra Stephens, Washington State Supreme Court justice, honorary degree; and Joan Dixon, S.N.J.M., retired Gonzaga University professor in School of Education, honorary degree.

Debate heavyweights
Gonzaga debaters Nick Bormann and Grace Saez advanced to the final 16 teams at the National Debate Tournament in March. Bormann and Saez, who will be seniors this fall, also gained national honors earlier in the year, with Borman, a philosophy major, named to the All-American team and Saez, an applied communications major, named to the Academic All-American team.

“Grace and Nick have been on our top team all season and they both deserve the honor,” said debate coach Glen Frappier.

“Twenty debaters nationwide are chosen to each of these teams. We’re extremely proud of both these students.”
Factors contributing to the current cost of education:

- Maintaining student-teacher ratio of 12-to-1
- Expanding service learning opportunities
- Technology, from wireless campus to multi-media classrooms
- Medical insurance
- Utility costs

Factors helping to mitigate the current cost of education:

- Nearly $4 million in grants during ‘07-08
- Alumni support
- Benefactors’ funding of new academic buildings
- Income from new residence halls, which over time pays off construction costs
Dollar Wise

By Peter Tormey

Everything about college used to be so much simpler. Students and parents held more modest expectations. Undergraduate curricula were simpler too, with fewer options. The “health center” was the nearest hospital, a fitness center was the campus gymnasium, and a typewriter was the most high-tech learning tool. Finances were simpler, too, particularly at Gonzaga University where the majority of employees, the Jesuits, returned much of their wages to the University “for the good of the order.”

Still, the bills got paid – often through divine providence or the goodwill of alumni who'd benefitted from the University. Gonzaga developed its singular culture and personality and earned the gratitude of so many alumni by making finances work for students, their families and the University. Through the years, Gonzaga delivered the four-centuries-old Jesuit education that treats each student with tremendous personal care – cura personalis – reinforced through small classes and professors who focus on students first.

My, how things change

Today, while the heart of Jesuit education remains constant, much else is different on campus.

“Expectations change over time and certainly the expectations of families and students have changed quite a bit,” said Chuck Murphy, Gonzaga’s vice president for finance. “Now we are expected to have fitness centers, health centers, computer labs, counseling and support for students with disabilities. They all are considered standard fare and if you don’t have them, you’re at both a real, and competitive, disadvantage.”

Colleges large and small, public and private, cater to student needs. They must – to remain vital in today’s marketplace. It costs a lot to provide a robust array of academic programs, state-of-the-art lab equipment, an on-site food service, student apartments, a “wireless campus” with online access indoors and outdoors, and academic and psychological counseling to help students with the stresses of school and modern society.

Professionals of all stripes work for today’s Gonzaga. The University employs 350 faculty and 640 staff. The combined salaries of GU’s 41 active working Jesuits no longer comes close to paying the bills. Gonzaga has increased faculty by approximately 70 in the past decade, and the hiring continues as the second freshman class to top 1,000 students is expected in September.

Like almost every college in America, Gonzaga raised its tuition this year. Gonzaga’s full-time, undergraduate tuition will

### Tuition Increases 2001-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tuition in Dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>$18,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
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<tr>
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<td>$20,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>$21,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gonzaga’s tuition in 2001-02 was $18,300. This graphic shows the pattern of tuition increases for GU and five peer institutions since then.
Tuition and fees make up the bulk of most universities’ revenue. Listed in the table above are the amounts unfunded student aid Gonzaga and peer institutions provided in fiscal year 2007; the amount of revenue received from tuition and fees; the percentages of tuition and fees revenue allocated to student aid; and each institution’s total endowment. In general, schools with larger endowments are able to use less revenue from tuition and fees for student aid.

## Gonzaga and Peer Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Total Endowment ($)</th>
<th>Tuition Fees (%)</th>
<th>Tuition Fees ($M)</th>
<th>Student Aid (%)</th>
<th>Student Aid ($M)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gonzaga</td>
<td>151.2M</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>157.0M</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>16.4M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle University</td>
<td>117.0M</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>137.0M</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>16.0M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emory University</td>
<td>144.0M</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>214.0M</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>20.4M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of San Francisco</td>
<td>144.0M</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>204.0M</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>20.4M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Portland</td>
<td>117.0M</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>167.0M</td>
<td>16.0M</td>
<td>16.0M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle University</td>
<td>$154M</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>$231M</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>$231M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Tuition and fees data from the 2007-08 annual report for each institution. (2) Endowment data from the 2007 fiscal year report for each institution. (3) Scholarships and grants — excluding athletic scholarships and tuition waivers — totaled more than $34.4 million in aid in 2007. That same year, external scholarships (such as Kiwanis Club and Rotary) — totaled more than $3.5 million.

## Growth a factor

Gonzaga’s undergraduate enrollment has grown from 2,791 students in 1997 to an anticipated 4,300 this fall. In that time, Gonzaga has built five new academic buildings or additions, renovated six academic buildings (including College Hall), added eight new student facilities and built three new residence halls and an apartment complex to accommodate 900 additional students. Additionally, by this fall Gonzaga will have opened both phases of the Kennedy Apartments, which accommodate 421 juniors and seniors in furnished apartments complete with dishwashers and air conditioning — amenities expected by some students and parents.

## Bound by non-profit status

The increasing costs of higher education at all U.S. colleges and universities have become a high-profile issue nationwide. Nonprofit, private institutions as well as state schools have been implicated in concerns about excessive spending. “Gonzaga is a nonprofit organization,” said Thayne McCulloh, interim academic vice president. “We are not in this work to make money for its own sake. I worry that the public has been led to believe to some degree that colleges are becoming greedy and that higher education is out of touch with reality. We are not only obligated by our mission but by our non-profit status to live within our means.”

## Why he’s a donor

For Larry Guthrie, establishing an endowed scholarship accomplished two important goals. “I wanted to do something to honor my mother and I wanted to make a difference for others,” said Guthrie, who earned his economics degree from Gonzaga.

Guthrie’s mother, Gertrude, took several classes at Gonzaga in the late 1930s and early 1940s as part of her nursing education through Sacred Heart Hospital and always spoke highly of the University. “I’m part of the baby boomer generation and one of the main things we talk about is having access to quality health care,” said Guthrie. “In order to have that, we must be willing to invest in good people. That’s really the nuts-and-bolts of it.”

Guthrie set up a scholarship to benefit upper-division nursing students. “By the time students are that far into the program, they’ve obviously made a commitment and I like to think I’m helping them along the way,” he said. “I love hearing from the students about how the scholarship helped them accomplish their goals. Gonzaga helped me have a good life and taught me how to be in harmony with the natural laws,” Guthrie said. “This is one real way I can do that.”

## Gonzaga contains costs best, offers strong student aid

Over the past five years, Gonzaga’s Trustees have raised tuition the least (average annual increase of 5.35 percent) among its top five private competitors. Gonzaga also remains committed to funding student aid at a competitive level. In general, schools with larger endowments are able to use a smaller percentage of annual revenue to assist in funding student aid. All but one of Gonzaga’s top five private competitors have larger endowments than Gonzaga.

Gonzaga’s ability to contain costs and raise prices modestly were noticed by U.S. News & World Report in fall 2007 when it named Gonzaga the No. 2 best value in the West.

There is more good news. Gonzaga will return nearly $13 million from its 2008-09 operating budget to freshmen scholarships and grants, and more than $40 million in financial aid to all students in 2008-09. Gonzaga’s 2007-08 gross budget of $180 million ensured that more than 95 percent of students received financial aid. Institutional scholarships and grants — excluding athletic scholarships and tuition waivers — totaled more than $34.4 million in aid in 2007. That same year, external scholarships (such as Kiwanis Club and Rotary) — totaled more than $3.5 million.

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McCulloh compared the challenges of operating the University to the running of a small city. Gonzaga owns the infrastructure for everything from data networks and garbage removal to utilities in this community.

“When people think of the costs associated with owning and operating your own city, I think the cost of Gonzaga can be better understood,” McCulloh said.

“The fantastic thing that emerges is that for what we charge, what we provide is incredible,” McCulloh said. “We allow those who seek it access to something that is unique and formative and very much worth the money.”

McCulloh shared a story that underscores what he views as the key difference between Gonzaga and most other schools. He once advised an extraordinary student who wanted to be a physician but was torn between going to Florence, a GU study abroad program, and staying on campus to study hard.

“I said, ‘You should go to Florence but do something while you are there that will appeal to medical schools when you apply,’” McCulloh recalled. “He volunteered in the Florentine Ambulance Service and when the time came he was admitted to seven medical schools. He was able to do both: show that he could have a good time and experience things and be serious about caring for people.”

A sacred trust

Although future tuition increases are likely inevitable, McCulloh said the stewards of Gonzaga’s future will do everything to continue to scrutinize costs and keep tuition down.

Gonzaga never forgets the vast sums students and parents spend for and keep tuition down.

“In my lifetime,” McCulloh said, “I have seen tuition triple. No university should ever forget the vast sums students and parents spend for that education.”

“Gonzaga wants everyone to know that when it comes to financial aid, nothing is out of reach,” McCulloh said. “Gonzaga offered me the best financial aid package. It turned out that attending Gonzaga is less expensive than a nearby state school.”

As a freshman, Fales’ financial aid package covered everything except room and board. But when her family’s financial situation took a dire turn at the start of her sophomore year, Fales started to worry. “I thought I’d have to enroll somewhere else,” Fales said. “But my supervisor told me all I needed to do was re-file my FAFSA.”

The FAFSA is each student’s portal to higher education affordability. Once Fales re-filed, she learned that not only would all of her education costs be covered, but she had enough to cover books and supplies – and even put a bit into her savings account.

What piece of advice does Fales offer others? “Even though private schools cost more money, they have more money available to you than state schools,” she said. “Places like Gonzaga really go out of their way to try to help students like me.”

Meeting her needs

S
he might be a sophomore, but Emily Fales can proclaim a post-graduate knowledge in the world of financial aid. As a work-study student in Gonzaga’s Financial Aid office, Fales can talk the talk from Free Application For Federal Student Aid – or FAFSA – to Stafford and Perkins.

Fales wants everyone to know that although she might be a sophomore, she is versed in the financial aid world. “Gonzaga must have made sure they paid their FAFSA on time,” she explained. “They even re-filed my FAFSA.”

The FAFSA is a student’s gateway to financial aid and students who re-file their FAFSA after the deadline are not eligible for aid.

What is an endowment?

A
n endowment is a perpetual savings account that is funded by gifts of cash, securities and/or real property. A gift to establish an endowment can be spread over three to five years. The principal and most earnings are invested. Only a small amount of income is spent each year.

In the realm of higher education, the rule of thumb is that a university’s endowment should be five times the size of its operating budget. And although Gonzaga’s endowment has grown by more than 70 percent since 1998, it still doesn’t meet that standard. In order to do that, Gonzaga’s endowment should stand at around $569 million instead of its current $152 million. Compare that to Harvard, which boasts the healthiest endowment in the world, at an impressive $34.6 billion – and no, that’s not a typo – it really is “billion.”

How does Gonzaga’s endowment affect financial aid? “Greatly,” said Darlene Hendrickson, Gonzaga’s financial aid director. “The greater the endowment, the more scholarships we can offer.”

A parent’s perspective

C
ollege is expensive. As a single mother who works full-time as a hospital nurse in Olympia, Jan Wick is reminded of that every month as she writes out another check to “Gonzaga University” for her youngest child, Courtney, who will be a junior.

“It’s like making an extra mortgage payment every month, but I really wanted her to have this opportunity,” Wick said. She works a lot of overtime and weekends – “just a ton of hours.” New car in her budget? Not this year, and no travel plans, either. Courtney’s two brothers attended the U.S. Air Force Academy, for which no tuition is charged. When it came time to decide where Courtney should apply – financial demands or not – Gonzaga was the best fit.

“It’s so important to me to do this,” Wick said. “I thought, if I can get her into the right environment, she’s going to do well. And Gonzaga is everything that everyone thinks it is.”

Emily Fales (’10) is a chemistry major.

Jan Wick with daughter Courtney (’10)
Passion and personality

What causes one student to plunge into biomechanical engineering and another to soar with intercultural ingenuity?

By Sabrina Jones and Marny Lombard

One day in the first grade, Jeff Rosick was sent to the principal’s office. His offense? Singing too much in class. Today, Rosick is a graduate of Gonzaga whose most recent CD features music he wrote for GU theater productions during his senior year.

There are many paths to finding one’s passion, whether it’s a reflective process of discernment or a thunder-clap decision. This particular group of Gonzaga students has one thing in common: Each has a clear passion, but most have more than one. Languages and physics. Engineering and music. Triathlons and medicine.

“One of the things that I try to teach is passion and finding your passion,” said Father John Mossi, S.J., who taught religious studies here for 16 years. “For some students, it takes a while to find the location where your little boat will catch the wind.”

How does he help students who are still looking for that direction?

“You have to love your students. You have to challenge them, too, but most of all you have to love them. For some of us, passion happens later in life. Many times people connect with their passion in their 30s, or even their 40s,” Fr. Mossi said.

Here are eight Gonzaga students who have found their passion:

Katie Bates spent six months last year at a university in South Africa, where the student population was black. It was her first experience as a minority, but the students were so welcoming.

“I realized how different the experience is for international or ethnic students at Gonzaga, and I thought I could have some impact on that.” When she got home, Bates co-founded the Global Café, which monthly invites someone representing a different ethnicity or faith to speak at a dinner for students.

Phillip White began studying Latin while an Army helicopter mechanic in Afghanistan. “When the weather was fair, we would work 12 hours a day. When the weather was poor, helicopters couldn’t fly, so I had a lot of free time then. Even when I was working 12 hours a day, it was a relief to get back to the tent, and open up my Wheelock’s Latin text for half an hour in the evening.” At Gonzaga, White dug into physics, kept up with his Latin, took some Greek and began studying Hebrew. For graduate school, he is off to Montana Tech to pursue a master’s in geophysics.

Bethany Pete grew up on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation in Nevada, involved in pow-wow dancing, leadership, academics and more. In February, this freshman attended the Public Policy and Leadership Conference at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. Her trip East showed how many opportunities she’ll have to choose from after graduating. “I really want to study law and to give my people a better voice in the courtroom.”

Ann Kilzer’s passions include computer science and art, specifically printmaking. “Printmaking is very technical and scientific – I guess that’s why I like it so much. Like computer science, I get to do a lot of tinkering and problem solving.” Kilzer has been accepted at one of the top computer science doctoral programs nationwide, the University of Texas in Austin.

Justin Platon wants to race triathlons full-time. And find new ways to educate athletes about nutrition and training for triathlons. Start a sports marketing firm for up and coming triathletes. Earn both an M.D. and M.B.A. Transform the nation’s health care system. In a nutshell, he says, “I’m very goal-oriented and I encourage others to pursue their passion, too.”

Erica Young has studied flute for 12 years, but biomechanical engineering also inspires her. Two different worlds? Not entirely. Young points out that in musical annotation, notes and measures are both number-based. Her goal? A doctorate in bio mechanical engineering. “I’m interested in things like creating smart prostheses, artificial organs or regenerating soft tissue. Nanotechnology will take us a long way in those directions. But music came first for me and it will stay in my life,” Young said.

“When I first came to Gonzaga,” Jillian Girard said, “I planned on majoring in biology to get me on track for medical school. But my passion started taking a different path as I enrolled in Spanish language courses and in my discussions with Father Michael Connolly (in political science classes). Even though my major has changed, I still plan to go to graduate school in ecology.”

Janay Johnson comes from an area of San Francisco “where there weren’t a lot of expectations for young people. When I was 16, I started interviewing people in my neighborhood. The interviews were aired on a local radio station and people started noticing. I’ve always been a talker, so I was thrilled when I discovered a degree-broadcasting—that valued the attribute. It makes my heart happy.” This outgoing young woman also plays rugby. She tried it by accident and found that she loves the rough and tumble of the sport.
If you haven’t visited campus in a while, come and see us. Here’s a glimpse of what you’ll find.
McCarthey Athletic Center has packed 6,000 fans for every home game since 2004.

Foley Center library still has books, but electronic retrieval tools have brought the world to GU.

Science’s Hughes Hall expanded in 2003, creating new labs and offices, and a new north wing is in the planning stages. McCarthey’s east concourse has been the site of receptions and dinners, with outdoor views to the east.

The Foley Quad is a springtime playground for students itching for a study break.

The new PACCAR Center for Applied Sciences will be complete and open for classes this fall.
James J. McCarthy (’66) and Richard Cizik walked together in the night. It was 3 a.m., Aug. 28, 2007, and the two men were visiting Shishmaref, an Alaskan village on a fragile island near the Arctic Circle. The skies danced with shooting stars, the northern lights and a lunar eclipse.

“What an incredible privilege that I would be walking on the sands of this 400-year-old village with the most esteemed scientist in America. From my vantage point, the heavens are declaring the glory of God, and yet here was Jim explaining the science of the heavens to me. It was incredible,” Cizik said.

The science of the oceans...
What are the odds?

McCarthy is a Gonzaga alumnus, a scientist and Harvard University professor, while Cizik graduated from Spokane’s Whitworth College in 1973 and represents the National Association of Evangelicals as vice president for governmental affairs. These two came together through the Scientists and Evangelicals Initiative. Last summer, five scientists and five pastors from the group visited Shishmaref on a tour of Alaska the effects of climate change.

First, consider McCarthy himself. He is a biological oceanographer, and his research looks at the interplay between plankton, the smallest creatures of the sea, and nitrogen, one of the most common chemical elements on Earth. Here’s a telling trait: Even as an undergraduate at Gonzaga – thriving on organic chemistry with Father Timothy O’Leary, S.J., or aquatic biology with Assistant Professor William Barry – McCarthy resisted specialization. He wanted to study not just biology, not just chemistry, or geology – but all of them together and their interacting cycles. His work, his instinct to work at the intersections of the sciences and his passion for sharing knowledge have all put him at the national forefront of work on climate change.

Presidential science

“We’re hoping for a debate among the presidential candidates in which their positions on scientific issues such as energy, AIDS research and climate change can be spelled out in more detail,” McCarthy said in an interview earlier this year. That McCarthy began his one-year term as president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science during one of the most important presidential elections in decades is not lost on him. At the AAAS national convention last winter, with more than 6,000 scientists attending, the excitement at the chance of a more scientifically friendly White House administration was palpable, McCarthy said.

“If you’d asked me four years ago whether, in the 2008 election, any candidate would be saying we should...
intense storms, deepening droughts, loss of ice in the Arctic and the Antarctic, these changes are occurring faster than scientists predicted five or 10 years ago. “The word ‘rapid’ is very prominent in titles of scientific papers describing what’s happening in the Arctic and Antarctic, with rapid ice loss, rapid warming and rapid changes in ecosystems.” McCarthy speaks of edginess in the scientific community and a growing expectation among scientists that climate changes in coming years will include a lot of surprises.

Call to action
So how does one spark constructive action? This conundrum puts us at another of those intersections that have captured McCarthy’s attention: the interface between the natural sciences, the social sciences and government policy. At Harvard, he has been one of the
architects of an undergraduate degree program in Environmental Science and Public Policy. He now chairs this program, which gives students a dual grounding and is intended to help future attorneys, businesspeople, politicians and others make sound decisions about the use of scientific information.

“How do we use science in the policy-making process? And understand that it’s not just a one-way street. The policy process also needs to influence the direction of scientific research, to ensure that products of scientific research are relevant to societal needs, when this is the intent of the research.”

By now, if you have a mental image of a scientist rising from his stool, setting aside his microscope and emerging from a sterile lab to share important knowledge, not just with the researcher down the hall, but with the world – you’re not far off-base. And if you’ve mentally cued up Richard Strauss’ “Thus Spoke Zarathustra” from the soundtrack of Space Odyssey 2001, you may have an inkling, not of McCarthy’s individual role, but of the sea change that he believes is under way.

“Just having scientific knowledge is not enough. You have to understand social systems to know how that knowledge can be most effectively used.” McCarthy uses Third World countries’ one-time resistance to immunizations as an example of how tricky intercultural communications efforts can be.

Common ground

Two years ago, McCarthy and other scientists began talks with the leaders of the National Association of Evangelicals. Their ongoing work developed into the Scientists and Evangelicals Initiative. The two groups may seem oddly paired, but McCarthy describes a surprising amount of common ground.

“When a pastor in one of their churches invited us to evaluate his information kit on climate science, that’s incredibly encouraging, and when you begin to get the gist of their thinking that you don’t honor the Creator by trashing His gift, that’s a sound basis for a good working relationship,” McCarthy said. The evangelicals’ group represents 30 million Americans, potentially an important block of voters.

He and Rich Cizik of the NAE share ties to the Pacific Northwest. McCarthy grew up 50 miles southwest of Eugene in Sweet Home, Ore. Cizik’s family farmed in Quincy and owned an orchard in Wenatchee.

McCarthy, Cizik and their colleagues spent three days in Shishmaref, which is home to 600 Inupiat or Eskimo. With the sea ice melting earlier, hunters struggle to find polar bear and walrus. Thawing permafrost is allowing the ocean to wash away the island. A 1998 study found that Shishmaref was losing between five and 15 feet of land per year. Four years later, the villagers voted to relocate their homes and school 10 miles over the winter ice to the mainland. Nearly two dozen houses have collapsed through erosion of land, and there are still no easy answers about where to find the many millions of dollars that relocation would cost. Photographs from last summer’s visit show an excavator at water’s edge, pushing boulders into a seawall, and wary-eyed Shishmaref elders, microphone in hand, describing to the visitors how their lives have changed.

McCarthy does not sound hopeful about stabilization of the Arctic climate any time soon. But he does find a note of hope in the sense of altruism that he sees among his Harvard students. As is true of Gonzaga students today, many of McCarthy’s students head off to teach in Americorps or take on other projects based on a common good. McCarthy also sees an exciting future for young scientists today.

“Extraordinary opportunities abound today in all aspects of science. In the fields where I work, the earth sciences broadly defined, there’s never been a more exciting time. A lot of what we know today about the urgency of the climate change problem has been discovered in the last 20 years. These are still fields that are full of chances for discovery. Just look at the power of molecular tools in biology; there are so many ways of looking at a problem today that we didn’t have just 10 or 20 years ago, and new and exciting discoveries are being made all the time. As a scientist I can’t imagine why someone wouldn’t find this absolutely fascinating.”

What is climate change expected to mean?

Many scientists use computer models to predict future global warming or climate change. Precise predictions are not possible as the future depends partly on what actions human beings choose to take. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007), the range of already observed and anticipated effects includes:

- Increased droughts in the western U.S. and other regions of the world
- Increased precipitation in many part of the world
- Extinction of species
- Changing habitat for species
- Warming temperatures, particularly during winters
- Increase in severe weather events
- Rising ocean levels, eventually endangering low-lying cities in developing countries
Walk-ons play a different game

By Sarah Reijonen

Sophomore Jason Hallerman likes to get his hands dirty. Always has. So it was no surprise that this Seattle native rolled up his sleeves when he arrived on campus a year and a half ago and tried out for the Bulldog baseball team, one of several non-recruited athletes who wanted a chance to play Division I sports.

He didn’t make it his first try, but after healing an injured shoulder, he tried again last fall and made the team as a walk-on, or a non-scholarship player.

“The rest of the team, they’re all good guys,” Hallerman said. “Right away I was kind of intimidated. But as I started to meet them, I started to make some really good friends... I love it here. Both the school aspect and the baseball team. I wouldn’t take it back.”

Every year standout high school athletes, many who have never been seen by college coaches, participate in open try-outs for the chance to make a college team. There’s never any guarantee of playing time. For some successful walk-ons, they may never see a minute of game action. But the joy of many of them is the team experience and the knowledge that their contributions as a “practice player” contribute to the team’s success.

Amanda Brown was an accomplished high school basketball player in Sacramento, Calif., who wasn’t ready to give up athletics when she arrived at Gonzaga in fall 2006. She joined the men’s crew team and started as a coxswain. But she felt like a fish out of water on the water, for her heart was still on the basketball court.

Midway through her freshman year, Brown approached assistant basketball coach Lisa Mispley Fortier, who had already seen her playing rat ball with the guys, and was impressed with Brown’s toughness and work ethic.

“My freshman year I loved playing basketball and I kind of thought going down to the gym would be good enough, but it wasn’t competitive enough and I missed the team aspect;” Brown said. So when she called Mispley Fortier to ask the coach to give her a look at open gym, little did Brown know that she had already caught Mispley Fortier’s eye.

“She has developed herself into a great shooter, and being such a hard worker helps her tremendously,” Mispley Fortier said. So Brown donned No. 20 and not only earned a spot on the bench, but saw some playing time as a sophomore.

A few minutes within an entire season may seem minimal to some, but a huge accomplishment for someone who was not recruited. “We usually get between five and eight walk-ons to try out and we usually invite one or less to join the team;” Mispley Fortier said. “Usually they cut themselves. It’s too hard.”

Not only are the minutes of playing time exciting, but they add up to a heap of memories. Brown’s favorite moment was being a part of Gonzaga’s first women’s basketball team to make the NCAA Tournament, in 2007.

Brown appeared in 15 games this past year. “It’s a great feeling, especially when you can share it with a great group of girls.”

Andrew Sorenson, perhaps Gonzaga’s most noticed walk-on, has not only enjoyed the fruits of playing on the men’s basketball team in the past two NCAA tournaments, but has felt the love of Bulldog followers. Sorenson stole the hearts of Zag fans with his ear-to-ear grin and team-centric attitude last season. It was not unusual for this junior, who tried out and failed as a freshman, but made the team last two years as a walk-on, to be greeted with chants of his last name from the Kennel Club when the game outcome had been all-but-settled. Two thousand students chanting “SOR-EN-SON” was a chill-sender.

It’s too soon to know if Hallerman can make that kind of mark. He sat out with an elbow injury two seasons ago and did not see playing time this season. But he has faith that his day will come on the mound for the Zags.

Bulldog Bites

■ Junior Jeremy Pargo was named the West Coast Conference basketball Player of the Year, senior David Pendergraft and sophomore Matt Bouldin were named All-WCC, freshmen Austin Daye and Steven Gray made the WCC All-Freshman team, and Coach Mark Few was named WCC co-Coach of the Year. Gonzaga (25-8) won the WCC regular season title and lost to Davidson in the first round of the NCAA Tournament, the Zags’ 10th straight appearance.

■ Women’s basketball swept the WCC individual honors after claiming its fourth straight regular-season title, posting a 25-9 record. Sophomore Heather Bowman was WCC Player of the Year, junior Jami Bjorklund Defensive Player of the Year, freshman Courtney VanderSloot the conference’s top newcomer, and Kelly Graves WCC Coach of the Year. GU beat Cal-Davis and lost at Colorado in the Women’s National Invitation Tournament (WNIT).

■ Bjorklund (3.94 GPA, business) was named to the ESPN The Magazine Academic All-District Team for the second-straight year. Men’s basketball will continue to be aired on KHQ and FSN Northwest through the 2009-10 season when not televised by another entity. KHQ-TV will carry games in the Inland Northwest while FSN covers a five-state region of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Alaska. This coming season will mark the fourth straight time Gonzaga has had every men’s game televised.

■ Gonzaga had seven student-athletes named to the 2007 WCC Fall All-Academic teams: Kelsey Goddard (3.42 GPA, physical education), Christine Soma (3.84, public relations) and Lauren Zuckerman (3.92, accounting) in women’s soccer; college Journal (3.83, mechanical engineering) and Tye Perdido (3.20, religious studies) in men’s soccer; men’s cross country runner Colby Litzenberger (3.55, civil engineering); and volleyball’s Becky Jones (3.44, psychology/criminal justice).

■ The Student-Athlete Advisory Committee’s annual book drive netted 650 books and $1,000 that were donated to children in the Spokane area.

■ Jennifer Mountain (’91), former three-time All-WCC first-team selection and assistant women’s basketball coach for the past seven years, was selected in April as head women’s coach at Santa Clara University.

■ Assistant women’s basketball coach Lisa Mispley Fortier has given 30 inches to Locks of Love, which provides authentic hairpieces to children under age 18 who have suffered long-term medical hair loss. Gonzaga guard Amanda Brown and senior guard Michelle Elliott also transitioned to a bob for the cause.
Justin Wylie ('96) named his Va Piano Vineyards in Walla Walla in honor of what he learned in Florence. Va piano, of course, means ‘go slowly’ in Italian. For Wylie, the phrase captures something important about the European culture that he inhaled, about the value of art and wine in a culture that prizes time with family, friends and a simpler way of life.

Ask Wylie to pick out a memory from his year in Florence, and he tells of sitting on the beach one early morning with six friends, sharing cheese, a baguette and wine, enjoying their friendship, the ocean and the architecture of the nearby village. That unhurried celebration of life is what he longed to bring home to Walla Walla.

Va Piano centers around a Tuscan-styled home on 22 acres of vineyards. The business is both a successful, small-to-moderate wine producer and the means through which he and his wife Liz savor that close-to-the-hearth family life.

The actual ‘going slowly’ isn’t always easy for Wylie, the entrepreneur. Tremendous investment of time is required to establish a vineyard and winery.

“After you plant, it takes three years to produce a crop, and at that point your vines are still very young. They’re not fully developed as far as flavors go,” Wylie explains. “You want to wait until the sixth or seventh leaf (the vintner’s term for year) to make wine from that vineyard. Then you have two years in the barrel and a year in the bottle before you can sell it. Then you have the cycle of selling before you receive the money. Gosh, everything to do with wine is long term. It’s all 5- or 10-year planning. And I’m there now, I’m finally over the hump.” In the next 10 years, Wylie hopes to build on the reputation of his early Syrahs and Cabernet Sauvignons, which have won accolades.

A marketing major, Wylie entered the winemaking business as a hobby, bottling small lots in his garage, experimenting and learning with friends. When he built the commercial facility, he included space for those friends, effectively creating a business incubator for wineries. As those start-ups prospered and left the Va Piano nest, Wylie expanded, happy to use the extra capacity.

Gonzaga University and Father Bruno Segatta, who served 23 years in Student Affairs and was an art teacher in the Florence Program, remain an intrinsic part of Wylie’s life. Va Piano has created a Cabernet in honor of Gonzaga University. Named “Aloysius” for St. Aloysius Gonzaga, this fine wine is due for release this summer. Va Piano also produces a red wine named Bruno’s Blend and offers Fr. Bruno’s artwork for sale. See www.vapianovineyards.com for more information.
As if she just discovered America

L a Donna Sales (’07) remembers hearing her first words of Spanish. She was getting off the school bus one day in middle school and though she heard just a sentence, she fell in love. Spanish felt like something foreign—almost secret.

So much has changed since then. This articulate young woman grew up in rural Tennessee where life choices were narrow. Sales wanted more than that. Gonzaga, for her, was a venture into the unknown. Admitted as an Ignatian Leadership Scholar, she struggled her first year. But her efforts were met and matched by extraordinary care from professors and others on campus. Among them, political science Associate Professor Laura Brunell, Associate Professor Joe Albert of the Comprehensive Leadership Program, then-Vice President for Administration and Planning Thayne McCulloh “made it a point to engage me and to show me a side of Gonzaga that I wouldn’t have otherwise seen.”

Now Sales is studying Latin American studies at Georgetown University as a Pickering Graduate Foreign Affairs Fellow. This prestigious fellowship is open to 20 graduate students each year. Funded by the U.S. Department of State, the fellowship is designed to draw individuals of all ethnicities into the study of international affairs.

Sales is interested in varied facets of Afro-Latin issues, including Brazil’s culture and history: race and ethnic relations, as well as media representations of black female sexuality in Brazil, and the black political movements in Brazil in the 1920s and 30s.

At Georgetown, she’s learning to deal with a new level of academic work and research. She’s learning, too, about blazing a trail for others. Earlier this year, Sales was profiled in a Georgetown newsletter. An undergrad who read about her work asked to meet Sales.

“I said let’s sit down and have coffee. We were having what I thought was a normal conversation, but she looked at me as if I’d just discovered America, with that much amazement on her face,” Sales said. “That was a moment when I could step back and say, ‘With my research, I have a responsibility to the people who are following behind me.’”
Leo Finnegan has run Challenge Races in Issaquah, Sammamish and Oak Harbor. He plans to bring the event to Spokane on July 6.

When you receive a new issue of GONZAGA QUARTERLY, many of you turn straight to the Alumni News. You look to see who's gotten engaged, married or promoted, who is home from the Peace Corps or has become a new parent. Yet our Alumni News is not as robust as we would like. Though we hate to admit it, reaching out to GONZAGA QUARTERLY sometimes takes a backseat to reaching your car mechanic. Or your toddler.

So we're seeking volunteer Class Secretaries to help gather news from their friends and classmates. We're betting that every class includes someone who cares passionately about connecting with friends, handles email with ease, and would enjoy writing up their classmates' news. If that's you, you're an ideal candidate.

If you're interested in learning more or wish to recommend someone who would make a great Class Secretary, please email us at gonzaga@gonzaga.edu.

‘Thank you, God, for letting me ride in the race cars’

Leo Finnegan ('59) began coaching Special Olympics baseball and basketball 25 years ago. But he wanted to do more. Out of his five children, two of his boys got involved in soapbox car racing. His middle child, Tim, was born with developmental disabilities. So when the two younger boys went to nationals, Tim went along, but his lack of fine-motor skills kept him on the sidelines.

Giving Tim and other disabled children the thrill of soapbox derby racing was a challenge that perplexed Finnegan until he heard about customized derby cars with dual seating. Thus was born the Challenge Race – soapbox derby racing for children with mental and physical disabilities, driven by trained 11- to 13-year-old volunteers. The drivers have an active steering wheel and brakes; the passengers, an unconnected yet realistic steering wheel.

On the soapbox derby hill in Issaquah, where Finnegan lives, the cars reach up to 17 mph. “That may not sound very fast,” Finnegan said, “but when you're about four inches off the ground and you see each little pebble in the pavement going by, you think you're going about 200 miles an hour.”

The ‘special children’ aren’t the only ones who benefit. On race day, every child rides down the hill at least three times. Soon any perceived dividing line between the young drivers and their passengers is gone. The volunteers “will never again look at a person with disabilities as they might have without this experience,” Finnegan said.

One year, an autistic girl got to race. She was not a particularly verbal child, but each night her mother said prayers with her. Only occasionally would the little girl utter a word. On the night of the Challenge Race, though, she added her own prayer: “Thank you, God, for letting me ride in the race cars today.” To this day, Finnegan chokes up telling this story.

Finnegan is retired from Puget Sound Power, where he was director of power plant engineering and construction. He finds retirement challenging and exciting. His experience at Gonzaga has always motivated him to help others.
Reunion weekend in October
Join your 1968, 1978, 1983, 1988 and 1998 classmates for a fun weekend back on campus. The 2008 Reunion Weekend will be Oct. 3-5. The Alumni Association will host a program including a combined class dinner on the floor of the original Kennel. For questions or more information visit www.gonzaga.edu/alumni or call Mike at 509.323.4232.

Service projects aplenty
Alumni chapters ranging from Seattle, Tacoma, Dallas-Ft Worth, Anchorage to Boise answered the call to carry out service projects in April. Projects ranged from working on low-income houses through Rebuilding Together to cleaning up the highways. Seattle’s event attracted more than 70 volunteers.

Athletic director honored guest at BayArea Forum
More than 50 alumni gathered to hear GU Athletic Director Mike Roth and Assistant Director of Business Operations Jared Hertz speak at the BayArea Chapter’s spring business forum.

Mark your calendars
June 14, Alumni/Friends Golf Tournament, Moses Lake, Wash.
July 14, Alumni/Friends Golf Tournament, Denver
July 21, Erik Hanson Memorial Golf Tournament, Meadowood Golf Course, Liberty Lake, Wash.
Sept. 14, Twin Cities Chapter Launch with Fr. Spitzer
Sept. 27, Los Angeles Chapter Launch with Fr. Spitzer

Boston Globe highlights Gonzaga chapter
A Boston Globe article on March 20 acknowledged alumni groups that loyally gather to watch their basketball teams. The piece highlighted Gonzaga’s Boston Chapter and quoted president Mike Tilford. Other active clubs mentioned were Duke, UNC, and Notre Dame. Congrats Boston Chapter.

New alumni Web site
The Alumni Association is falling in line with today’s technology! To better serve our loyal friends and alums we plan to launch a new Web site this summer.
Life and Death

“Man is like a caged animal that meekly submits to captivity. Let him rather defy his biological jailers and demand freedom from his genetic prison.”

—Simon Young, Designer Evolution

By Father Tim Clancy, S.J.
Director of Honors Program

I led a discussion last winter on the prospect of radical developments in biotechnology that could extend the human life span indefinitely. The occasion was a Theology on Tap session, geared toward seniors and other older students.

“Trans-humanists” are saying that medical technology may soon reach the point where aging could be treated more as a disease to be cured than a reality to confront. Not that we would live forever. People would still eventually die from some freak accident or by catching some new virus we had yet to develop the vaccine for, by getting shot by a jealous husband or in battle defending our country. Some, perhaps more, would die by choice. But what if we could manipulate our genes to switch off the aging process? What if we invented nanobots we could inject into our bodies to continuously repair and replace defective cells? What if we could live with the vim and vigor of 20-somethings until our luck runs out?

At one point in the Theology on Tap discussion, a student in her early 30s told the group that she had recently been diagnosed with terminal liver cancer. She talked about the ups and downs, the good days and bad days that come with such a prognosis. But she also argued strongly against this project to extend human life forever. As hard as her diagnosis was to hear and to bear, she argued that it had also blessed her with a new clarity of purpose and appreciation for life. She talked, for example about choosing to go to her son’s soccer game, even when other opportunities conflicted, opportunities that six months ago she might well have chosen instead. Now she wanted to be with her son and to have her son know that.

Death is a hard thing.

But the prospect of death can teach us what is important in our lives, and what is not. Indeed in the Middle Ages people were encouraged to meditate on their death. They had a practice of imagining themselves on their death bed and prayerfully reflecting back over their life. Would they feel their life had been well lived? What would they feel good about having done? What might they regret never having gotten around to?

As you might expect from college students, much of the discussion that evening focused on generational issues. How would I decide when to retire if I kept the energy of my 20s for hundreds of years? Would I want to keep the same job or would I find myself just hopping from job to job, profession to profession as I tired of each in turn? What kind of identity would I have if my life story had no end I could anticipate or even imagine? Would it even look like a story at all? Would it not perhaps look more like an actor’s credits? And if every death is a life cut arbitrarily shorter than it need have been, would not death now become truly absurd? Impossible to bear? Or would it eventually, inevitably become something devoutly to be wished for when we just tire of it all, if not physically, then finally psychologically, spiritually?

Some brought up that we would have to drastically curb reproduction. But what would our society look like if virtually all adults had yet to be parents? Are there not virtues, they wondered, that are only learned through raising children? So too we associate wisdom with old age. Are there not virtues and insights that only come with physical diminishment?

In short, what exactly are we extending into the indefinite future? Our adolescent egos, or our true selves? Ultimately many of these post-adolescents thought there was something quite adolescent in wanting to live forever. Without physical diminishment, without death on the horizon, some feared we would not only remain physically 20, but psychologically, spiritually, 20-somethings as well. Not that it isn’t good to be young. But that night in the bar virtually not one of those 20-somethings at Gonzaga wanted to remain 20 forever. It appears the young want to grow old, and wise, after all.
A Joyful Affair
At Gonzaga University’s undergraduate commencement exercises, held May 11 at the Spokane Arena, approximately 960 graduates received diplomas.