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OHIO Liberal arts colleges hold a special place in American higher education because of their focus on undergraduates, and, like several other midwestern states, Ohio has a strong heritage in this field. We visited four colleges and universities within a short drive of downtown Cleveland. Enrollment ranged from a few hundred students to 3,000 plus, but it was the diversity of what they had to offer that stood out. Profiles by Alex Kingsbury



COUPLING LEARNING WITH SERVICE

John Carroll University

The Jesuits have been synonymous with education since the founding of their order in 1540. Their patron, St. Ignatius Loyola, espoused spiritual development and service.

More than 70 percent of students at John Carroll University identify themselves as Roman Catholic, and the 60-acre campus, about 10 miles outside Cleveland, is what one would expect from a Catholic college. There are imposing Gothic buildings, a standard quad, and the requisite student facilities and sports complex. It's a quiet campus and one that students are encouraged to think beyond. "We teach students about themselves, but that's not something that can be fully realized until they put their learning into practice in the world," says Robert Niehoff, the Jesuit who serves as president.

Worldwide, the number of Jesuits in higher education is in decline—their order now counts fewer than 3,000 in the United States, a third of them of re-

tirement age. This is especially evident at schools like John Carroll, where a graying group of 11 Jesuits is turning to lay parishioners to preserve traditions. "Not long ago, I was out with some students practicing a little of what they call 'pub theology,'" says Howard Gray, the school's rector. "I had to go home to bed, and I wished there was a young priest who could have taken my place." Comments Katie Mahoney, a senior and the editor in chief of the student newspaper: "It might seem kind of strange that they pride themselves on being a Jesuit school when there are so few Jesuits left, but their influence is still very strong."

The Jesuit spirit of engagement emphasizes service. Sure, there are parties, says one student, but serious community service goes on, too. Every Friday night, student groups make sandwiches for the homeless; other nights, they

volunteer at the Catholic work house. Spring break sometimes means Cancún, but it can involve housing projects in Nicaragua or hurricane relief on the Gulf Coast, as well.

The school's academic focus also reflects the realities of life off campus. There are programs in applied ethics and social justice, for example, and others on teaching literacy to schoolchildren. John Carroll has just inaugurated a "Poverty and Solidarity" program, designed to teach students about the causes and impacts of poverty. Ohio, in particular the northeastern part of the state, has seen better economic times. It has been a goal of schools in the region to concentrate

on entrepreneurship as a means to both educate their students and help the region out of the doldrums. "Regional engagement was not always a focus in John Carroll's history," says Niehoff. "We now see that as a duty and a focus."

John Carroll Blue Streaks

Key fact: Strong Jesuit tradition; commitment to social justice
Undergrad enrollment, fall '06: 3,129
Estimated annual cost, '07-'08 (tuition, fees, room and board): \$34,449