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How I have lived justice at Loyola differs somewhat depending upon the varied roles I have served in during my sixteen-year career in this institution. The core principle of social justice remains a constant in my career, like the North Star that marks the location of the North Pole, the point around which the whole sky turns. Similarly, justice is a reference point that all other core values rotate around, central and necessary for navigation. As an Assistant Professor, deeply engaging students in complex questions that face our society was a necessary part of the learning process. Beyond discipline, knowledge and skills, students became quick to recognize that the absence of a health care plan could be the difference in recovery from a stroke or the rehabilitation needed to regain employment. The brutal reality that free public education varies wildly depending upon the zip code people live in left students angered and wanting to challenge the system. As Chair of a department, I viewed assignments of workloads and classrooms through a lens of justice. It was not fair to assign a classroom space or particular teaching schedule because of seniority or status. Assignments were equitable and rotated so everyone had the opportunity for the desired
teaching times and teaching spaces. Now, as an administrator charged with graduate education, I think about social justice in the context of creating a vision for graduate education. I bristle at the simplistic and self-interested exchange of ideas that merely regard education as a vehicle to earn more and live a better life. Steering conversations to help individuals consider our Jesuit Catholic identity and how that might be infused into the curriculum creates a shared pride in our distinctiveness. Being able to articulate that we are creating men and women for others, whether that is locally or globally, is the genesis of creating a more just world. As we have heard in the oft-quoted Kolvenbach address, “the real measure of our Jesuit institutions is who our students become.” Those that graduate with the desire to go beyond their discipline’s specific content, to grapple with bigger issues such as being the silent beneficiaries of unjust practices, or to speak out against the unjust social structures, are the Loyola graduates I dream of.