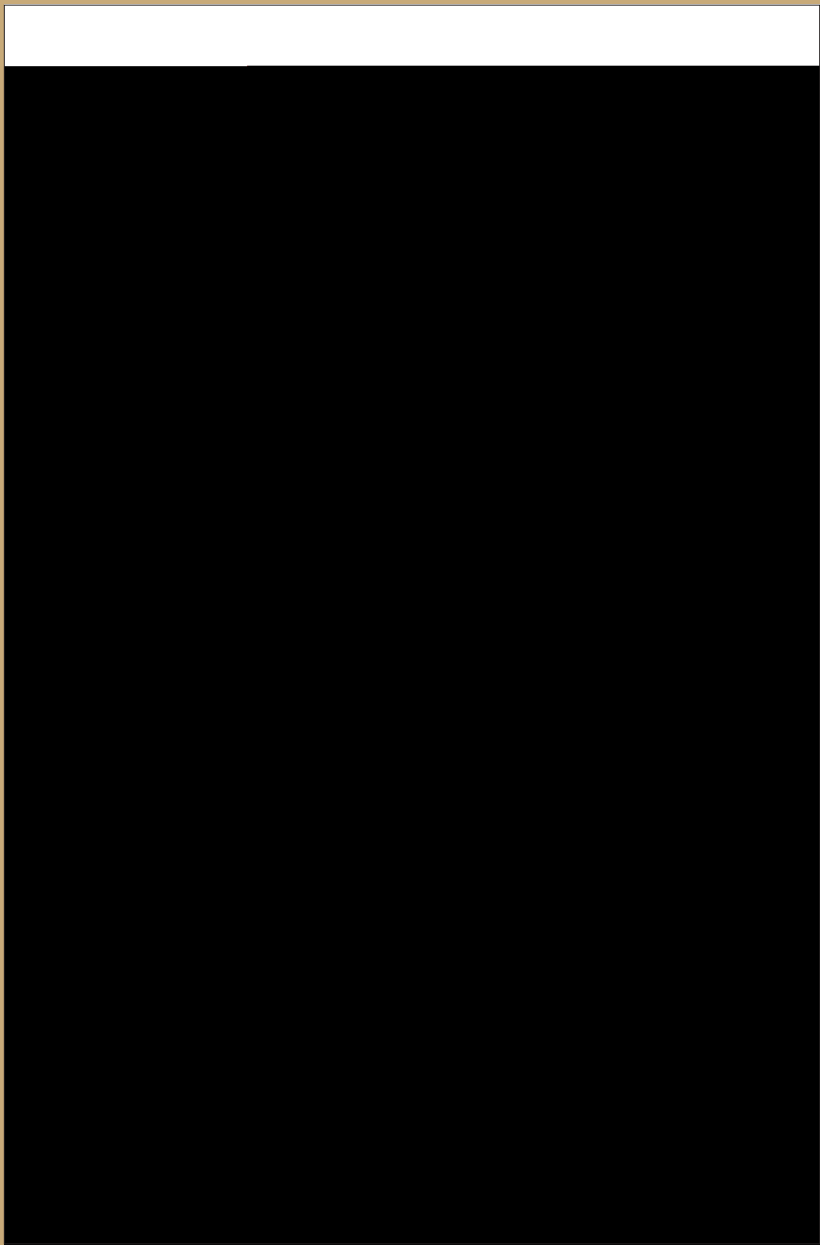


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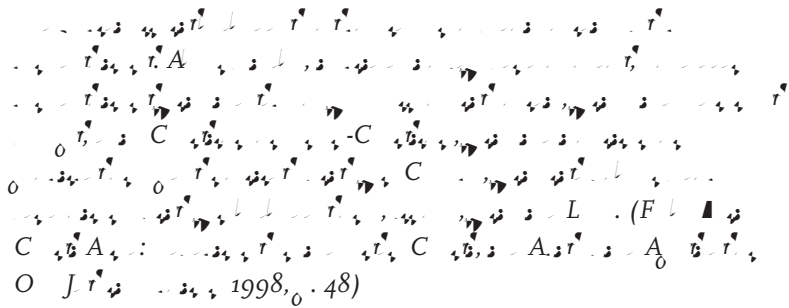




C E T A I A B C L L E G E

As a Jesuit, Catholic University, conversation is at the heart of the Boston College experience. From this Conversations in the First Year program, to classroom discussions, to late-night confidences with roommates and friends, to dialogues with on-campus speakers, to mentoring talks with faculty and staff members, to engagement with the local and global community that surrounds the Heights – Boston College encourages students to ask big questions, to reflect, and to respond in the most loving way to the world around you.

Boston College values conversation and emphasizes its role in



As you enter Boston College, you must consider how we live in the 21st century and how the world is growing rapidly and changing in unforeseen ways. In the midst of this globalized and technologically driven world, we ask you to critically evaluate all that has come before us. To enter into the University core curriculum is to enter

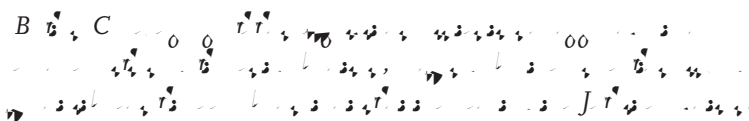
conversation advances self-reflection, the conversations with ourselves that are the cornerstone of early development and continue throughout life.” (p. 3)

Turkle argues that while people imagine that constant communication through technology means better communication because it is more frequent, the technology creates a gap in understanding.

“It all adds up to a flight from conversation – at least from conversation that is open-ended and spontaneous, conversation in which we play with ideas, in which we allow ourselves to be fully present and vulnerable. Yet these are the conversations where empathy and intimacy flourish and social action gains strength. These are the conversations in which the creative collaborations of education and business thrive.” (p. 4)

As you read *Conversations in the First Year*, it is the hope of the University that you will consider how you open your heart and mind to empathy and vulnerability while managing the increasing role of technology in our world. As Turkle writes, “Conversation is on the path toward the experience of intimacy, community, and communion. Reclaiming conversation is a step toward reclaiming our most fundamental human values.” (p. 7)

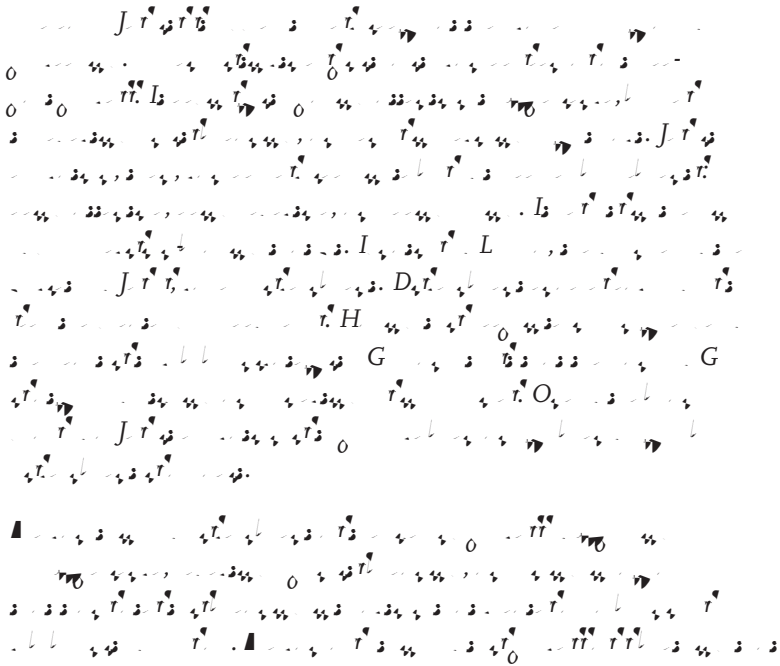
Since 2004, *Conversations in the First Year* has engaged members of the incoming class in an intellectual and reflective dialogue with a common text, embodying the richness of the Catholic intellectual tradition at Boston College which calls us to examine our faith and experience in conversation with other thinkers in order to pursue the greater glory of God. This conversation among thoughtful leaders that will begin for you with this common text will carry over to conversations with all members of the Boston College community during your next four years.

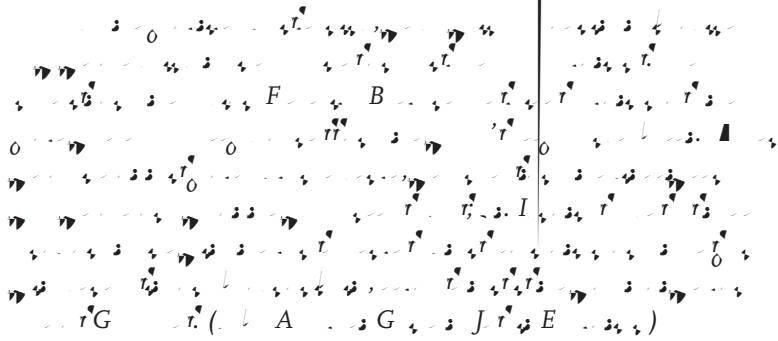


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A A A ACH HE E

As you enter Boston College, we will ask each of you to engage in conversation, to live together, and to share your life with one another. As members of the Class of 2025, your conversation will include this book which invites you to consider how conversation leads to greater understanding of yourself and others and how that experience of reflection and empathy informs how you engage with the world around you.





From the very beginning, the goal of Jesuit education has been to form men and women for others. To cultivate this formation, St. Ignatius and his companions translated their distinctive spirituality into an educational vision by describing it as a three-part process. It begins with paying attention to experience, moves to reflecting on the meaning of experience, and ends in deciding how to act moving forward. Jesuit education, then, can be described in terms of three key movements: **Be attentive, be reflective, be loving.** (from *A Pocket Guide to Jesuit Education*).

As part of their formation, St. Ignatius and his early Jesuit

She notes that in order to engage in conversation and to deepen these relationships we need also to find time in solitude to reflect. “In solitude we find ourselves; we prepare ourselves to come to conversation with something to say that is authentic, ours. When we are secure in ourselves we are able to listen to other people and really hear what they have to say. And then in conversation with other people we become better at inner dialogue.” (p. 10)

Later in the book, she returns to the idea of mutuality as essential to conversation. “Conversation implies something kinetic. It is derived from words that mean ‘to tend to each other, to lean toward each other,’ words about the *modus vivendi*, one’s ‘manner of conducting oneself in the world or in society; behavior, mode or course of life.’ To converse, you don’t just have to perform turn taking, you have to listen to someone else, to read their body, their voice, their tone, and their silences. You bring your concern and experience to bear, and you expect the same from others.” (pp. 43-44)

Only by having a sense of ourselves can we share our own vulnerabilities and be open to others sharing theirs with us. “It’s the capacity for solitude that allows you to reach out to others and see them as separate and independent. You don’t need them to be anything other than who they are. This means you can listen to them and hear what they have to say. This makes the capacity for solitude essential to the development of empathy. And this is why solitude marks the beginning of conversations virtuous circle. If you are comfortable with yourself, you can put yourself in someone else’s place.” (p. 61)

Turkle notes that our solitude is challenged by our propensity to turn toward technology rather than to turn inward. In the same way that Turkle advocates for using technology with intentionality, she also advocates for being intentional about finding opportunities for solitude. She writes, “How can the capacity for solitude be cultivated? With attention and respectful conversation.” (p. 65)

commitment. And making the offer changes you. When you have a growing awareness of how much you don't know about someone else, you begin to understand how much you don't know about yourself. You learn, says Williams, 'a more demanding kind of attention. You learn patience and a new skill and habit of perspective.'" (p. 172)

The practice of accompaniment is also an integral part of the Boston College community, and there are many opportunities for students, administrators, faculty, and staff members to engage in conversation that seeks to develop greater understanding and to be changed.

In Summer 2020, Boston College developed an online series titled [The @6](#) which modeled the importance of conversation and explored critical issues through the lens of the common good. The June 5, 2020 episode focused on "Jesuit Accompaniment in Vulnerable Times" and the importance of conversation in the life of Boston College.

Haub Vice President for Mission and Ministry, Jack Butler, S.J.,

things go quiet for a little while you look deeper, you don't look away or text another friend. You try to read your friend in a different way. Perhaps you look into their faces or attend to their body language. Or you allow for silence. Perhaps when we talk about conversations being 'boring,' such a frequent complaint, we are saying how uncomfortable we are with stillness. And how hard we find it to 'read' the face and voice, changes in body language, and changes in tone." (p.151)

This emphasis on accompaniment and presence supports Ignatius' definition of conversation as

Reflection is a key element in the spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). As the class of 2025 enters Boston College, you do so as the Society of Jesus celebrates the 500th anniversary of Saint Ignatius conversion experience. In May 1521, Ignatius Loyola was wounded in a battle in Pamplona, Spain. His leg was shattered by a cannon ball and he was forced to return home to recover from this injury. For a wounded soldier returning home from battle, this was a time of shame and isolation. Ignatius spent several months convalescing and during that time he read two books,

... *Lives of the Saints* and Butler's *Lives of the Saints*

reflection stresses history, the meaning of language, and the power of the unconscious. It teaches us that our lives are “peopled” by those who have mattered most to us. They live within us for better and worse. We learn to recognize their influence in our strengths and vulnerabilities.” (p. 80)

Who are the people who have mattered most to you? In what ways do they

In a recent *Time* Magazine article, Turkle comments on how the pandemic has given us new opportunities for empathy.

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for communication also applies. After a year and a half of communicating through technology, there are gaps in the way that we connect with others and distances that our devices cannot bridge. In a time where we have been most vulnerable, we have been least able to connect with others.

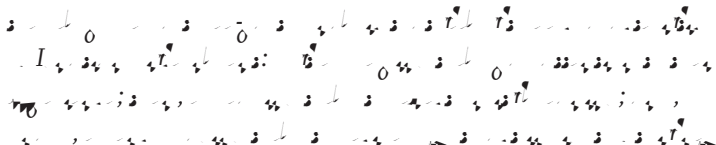
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“We become accustomed to seeing life as something we can pause in order to document it, get another thread and running in it, or hook it up to another feed. We’ve seen that in all this activity, we no longer experience interruptions as disruptions. We experience them as connection. We seek them out, and when they are not there, we create them. Interruptions enable us to avoid difficult feelings and awkward moments. They become a convenience. And overtime we have trained our brains to crave them. Of course, all of this makes it hard to settle down into conversation.” (p. 125)

When we find a way to avoid difficult feelings and awkward moments, we do not take the time to examine our feelings or reflect on how we are making ourselves uncomfortable. Rather, we have been exploring how we are making ourselves comfortable. How can we begin to understand and heal ourselves and have empathy for those who have experienced different forms of trauma and difficult situations? How can we engage ourselves if we do not commit to the conversation?

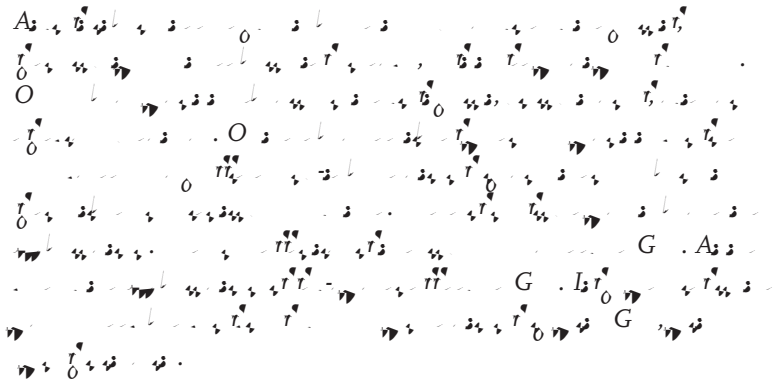
Attentive to the systemic racism that exists in our country and our community, and reflecting on how the University can respond to the issue and its root causes, Boston College has committed to developing initiatives for listening, dialogue, healing, reconciliation, and understanding, including establishing the Boston College Foundation for Justice and a number of programs through University Mission and Ministry. In a letter to the Boston College community in June 2020, University President William P. Leahy, S.J., wrote, “The current anger, division, and alienation result

from long-term, systemic causes, and they call for resolution of underlying issues through immediate and sustained action,” and described the loving response that Boston College will take against racism – both personal and systemic.



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The Ignatian tradition encourages action and contemplation in a mode of prayer called the Examen. The Examen is a prayer in five parts which helps individuals move through an examination of conscience, allowing the experiences of the day to guide one's reflection. Its basis is in Christianity, but it can also be considered in light of other faith traditions.



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CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF THE EAST

“The metaphor for the Catholic intellectual tradition...was ‘a conversation.’ The original meaning of the word converse is ‘to live together,’ ‘to share a life.’ A university illuminated by the Catholic intellectual tradition is a place of shared, transformative, intellectual life—a place where the Church, always acknowledging that there is more to learn, is informed by ongoing scholarship, and where the wisdom developed over centuries within the Catholic tradition permeates a university’s core values, curriculum, and search for truth. The true Catholic university, then, is a community of teachers, scholars, students, and administrators sharing an intellectual journey and conversation in the pursuit of truth. (From *The Catholic Intellectual Tradition: A Conversation at Boston College*)

Boston College provides a number of opportunities to continue the conversation, to engage both in reflection and in conversation.

- Retreat programs through [First Year Experience](#), and [Student Affairs](#) that provide

