Jesuit Social Research Institute

Annual Report 2024-2025

JSRI
RESEARCH
EDUCATION
ADVOCACY
SERVICE

JESUIT SOCIAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY NEW ORLEANS

ESTABLISHED 2007

A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

This year, JSRI continued to grow as a community of scholars, students, advocates, and partners committed to advancing justice in Louisiana and beyond. Our work has been shaped by a simple but profound belief: that every person possesses inherent dignity and that meaningful change begins with encounter, education, and accompaniment.

At Loyola-Rayburn, we celebrated significant milestones. We completed a successful accreditation site visit through the U.S. Department of Education's Prison Education Program process, submitted our application to access Pell Grants for incarcerated students, and expanded opportunities for degree completion through transfer credit evaluations and new pathways for technical credits. Most importantly, our students continued to thrive—presenting research, leading service initiatives through the Student Government Association, and supporting one another through peer tutoring and educational programming.

This year also marked an exciting new chapter for the Light of Justice Program. Founded by Calvin Duncan and now housed at JSRI, the program supports incarcerated people seeking meaningful access to the courts while educating future lawyers, judges, and advocates about barriers to justice. Through student internships, national presentations, publications, and public engagement, Light of Justice has become an important vehicle for advancing legal reform and expanding educational opportunities for Loyola students.

Across our campus and community, we continued to create opportunities for encounter and learning. Our Teach-Ins on Mass Incarceration engaged hundreds of students, parishioners, and community members in conversations about justice, while Café con Inglés continued to foster relationships across cultures through language learning and accompaniment. We were especially encouraged by our growing partnership with Archbishop Rummel High School, where students participated in a Teach-In, a civil rights experience, and a reentry simulation that challenged them to see our criminal legal system through a new lens.

This year was also one of transition. In December 2024, we celebrated the retirement of Dr. Sue Weishar after fourteen years of extraordinary service to JSRI. Sue's work on immigration, mass incarceration, solitary confinement, and the death penalty has left an indelible mark on our Institute and on countless students, community members, and advocates. We are deeply grateful for her leadership and legacy.

At a time when our nation continues to wrestle with division, inequality, and uncertainty, JSRI remains committed to forming students, conducting research, and building partnerships that advance justice and the common good. We are inspired by the examples of leaders such as Fr. Louis Twomey, Dr. Ronnie Moore, Calvin Duncan, and the many students and community members who remind us that another world is possible when we work together in hope.

Thank you to everyone who has supported JSRI this year. Your generosity, partnership, and encouragement make this work possible.

May God continue to bless you and your loved ones in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

Annie Phoenix

Dr. Annie Phoenix
Executive Director
Jesuit Social Research Institute

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Mission

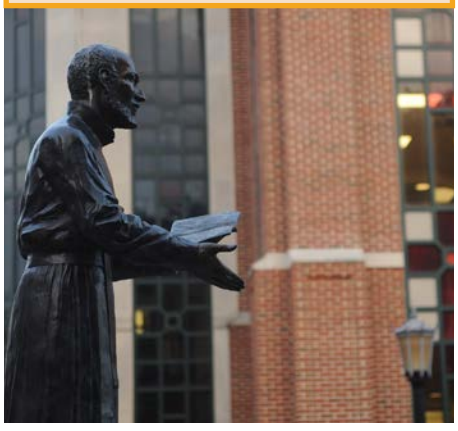
The Jesuit Social Research Institute works
to transform the Gulf South through
research, education, advocacy, and service
on the core issues of **poverty, race, and migration**.

The Institute is a collaboration of
Loyola University New Orleans
and the Society of Jesus
rooted in *faith that does justice.*

Values

Faith that leads to *justice*
Prophetic vision that leads to *transformation*
Love of neighbor that leads to *solidarity*
Scholarship that leads to *action*

The frameworks for all of our efforts are Catholic Social Teaching and Ignatian spirituality.



Universal Apostolic Preferences
of the Society of Jesus (2019-2029)

- To show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment
- To walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice
- To accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future
- To collaborate in the care of our common home

Staff Structure

Executive Director
Annie Phoenix, PhD

Operations Coordinator
Melissa Audick

Research Associate
Prison Education
Stephanie Gaskill, PhD

Research Associate
Prison Education
Javian Baker, PhD(c)

Research Associate
Legal System Reform
Bidish Sarma, Esq.

JSRI Fellow
Immigration
Sue Weishar, PhD
(part time)

Advisor and
Support Coordinator
Prison Education
Kelsey McLaughlin, M.S.

Research Coordinator
Prison Education
Patrick Govan

Research Coordinator
Prison Education
Kiana Calloway

Advisory Board

Rev. Chris Kellerman, SJ
Ian Peoples, SJ
Mary Baudouin, MSW
Michie Bissell

Charles Amos
Mamie Gasperecz, MBA
Christian Bolden, PhD
Diane Blair, MAPS
Constance Paige Young

Allen Nguyen
Marcela Villareal de Panetta
Ashley Howard, PhD
Rev. Tom Curran, SJ

LOYOLA AT RAYBURN

Loyola-Rayburn strives to bring the full Loyola experience to the prison and integrate the students into the university community, thereby contributing to Loyola University New Orleans' mission to welcome students of diverse backgrounds and prepare them to lead meaningful lives with and for others; to pursue truth, wisdom, and virtue; and to work for a more just world.

Currently, up to forty incarcerated students and up to twenty correctional employees per semester are working towards a Bachelor of Applied Science degree from Loyola University New Orleans. Incarcerated students take one to two in-person courses per semester and correctional employees take up to two online courses per 7- or 8-week session.

> I enrolled in Loyola because I wanted a challenge. I wanted something different, and I guess you could say my whole life I have been a part of things that didn't have structure and they didn't last. But from the moment that I was introduced to Loyola, I felt that Loyola was solid, and it was something that was sustained, and I wanted to be a part of that.

2024-2025 Accomplishments

Student Support:
Hosted a two-part peer tutoring workshop to improve and expand tutoring services beyond study hall periods.

Student Leadership:
The Loyola-Rayburn Student Government Association completed its first successful initiative: a toy drive for children visiting incarcerated parents during the holiday season.

Accreditation:
Completed a successful site visit from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) as part of the US Department of Education Prison Education Program (PEP) process.

Research:
Two Loyola students at Rayburn presented their research alongside fellow students from New Orleans during the annual Peace Conference (an undergraduate research conference).

Events:
Invited 25 guests from the National Conference on Higher Education in Prison to visit Loyola students at Rayburn.

Personal Finance:
Partnered with Loyola's Business School/Resilience Education to offer two personal finance workshops led by students in the Ethics fellowship.

Financial Aid:
Submitted Loyola's application to become a prison education program (PEP) authorized to access Pell Grants on behalf of incarcerated students.

Degree Progress:
Focused on decreasing time to degree for both incarcerated and employee students. Transferred previous general education and technical college credits toward Loyola students' degree. Employee students started taking two classes per eight week session. The first employee is set to graduate in December 2025.

2024-2025
Loyola Rayburn met all administrative and programmatic goals.

Expanded Student Support and Leadership: Strengthened peer tutoring, offered personal finance workshops, and supported the Loyola-Rayburn Student Government Association's first service initiative benefiting children of incarcerated parents.

Advanced Academic Achievement and Degree Completion: Created new opportunities for student research, expanded transfer and technical credit pathways, and accelerated degree progress for incarcerated and employee students.

Achieved Key Milestones for Program Growth: Successfully completed the SACSCOC Prison Education Program site visit, applied for Pell Grant authorization, and hosted national higher education in prison leaders at Rayburn.

> "Loyola, the staff and professors have been great, especially the staff. They always ask for our input and suggestions and they try to implement anything that we suggest. Anytime there's a problem, they're on top of it. The faculty have been great. They came in and just from day one, it's been really positive, really good experience."

2025-2026 Objectives

Degree Progress

Increase the number of classes offered to incarcerated students from one to two per semester

Implement remote synchronous classes (under 50% of degree) to improve instructor recruitment and advance degree completion

Support Services

Align admissions cycle with introductory courses that incorporate college prep

Employ graduate student assistants to strengthen instructor and student support

Student Leadership

Continue planning initiatives and events with Student Government Association

Begin planning ways for students to remain engaged upon graduation (while still incarcerated and upon release)

Sustainability

Support all students through the financial aid process to access federal and state resources

Establish external partnerships to share program responsibilities (e.g. 2+2 with Northshore Technical Community College)

Dissemination

Contribute to statewide convenings such as the Louisiana Education in Prison Task Force and the Untapped Talent Summit

Share learning from correctional staff research and community of practice

Data & Technology

Secure necessary permissions to offer AI & the Future of Business at Rayburn and support students to create AI training programs for others

Implement plan to improve Loyola's data collection and reporting practices with regard to incarcerated students

Light of Justice Program

The Light of Justice Program was founded by Calvin Duncan with the mission to assist incarcerated people to overcome barriers that would prevent their cases from being properly heard on appeal or in civil court. Calvin was wrongfully convicted and imprisoned for twenty eight-and-a-half years for a crime he didn't commit. Calvin's first-hand experience informs his expert knowledge on the procedural and practical barriers that prevent people on the inside from meaningfully accessing the courts.

In Louisiana, as in many states, the right to counsel ends once a defendant's conviction and sentence are affirmed on their first appeal. From that point on, unless they can afford to hire an attorney, they must try to access the courts on their own.

The Light of Justice works closely with incarcerated Counsel-Substitutes inside Department of Corrections facilities across the state of Louisiana to secure records and transcripts, as well as updated case law and law books, to help incarcerated people file their appeals. Light of Justice also offers incarcerated people education on procedural rules and changes to the law, and monitors their deadlines and outcomes of their appeals. The Light of Justice program is currently working to expand into the parish jails. Light of Justice staff are also conducting training and speaking at conferences to educate judges and lawyers about the need for post-conviction reform and client-centered representation.

In 2024, Light of Justice Program moved to the Jesuit Social Research Institute and Calvin Duncan joined forces with Bidish Sarma to expand the program and build on the success of the Civil Rights Division in Orleans Parish.

2024-2025 Accomplishments

Support for Council Substitutes
Monitored direct appeal decisions and assisted Council Substitutes with legal research and case-related requests.

Student Engagement at Angola:
Organized a visit for 50 Loyola law students to Louisiana State Penitentiary (Angola), where they met with Council Substitutes and learned about prison-based legal advocacy.

Law Student Research Internships:
Engaged three Loyola Law students in a pro bono research project examining the impact of legal representation on Louisiana Supreme Court appeal outcomes.

Undergraduate Research Internships:
Hosted three international undergraduate students from the University of Ottawa who contributed to ongoing research and program initiatives.

Recognition and Public Leadership:
Calvin Duncan delivered the 2025 J. Skelly Wright Lecture, received an honorary degree from Loyola Law School, and served as the 2025 Loyola Law School commencement speaker.

Academic and Educational Outreach:
Presented to undergraduate and law students at Loyola University New Orleans as well as at UCLA, UC Berkeley, Yale, and Columbia Law Schools.

Legal Education and Professional Training:
Delivered presentations to attorneys and federal judges in Louisiana, Washington, and Oregon on procedural barriers and challenges to meaningful legal representation for incarcerated people.

Publications and Scholarship:
Celebrated the publication of Calvin Duncan's co-authored memoir, which received widespread acclaim, and contributed new scholarship through articles in Jesuit Magazine and the Loyola Law Review.

IGNATIAN TEACH-INS ON MASS INCARCERATION

The Ignatian Teach-In on Mass Incarceration aims to create a "culture of encounter" that leads to greater understanding and empathy on the issue of mass incarceration by bringing together formerly incarcerated individuals and Catholic faith communities in a prayerful, intimate, and safe place. There is also an explicit advocacy goal for these events: to engage more Catholics in the pews and in our schools in the struggle for criminal legal system reform.

> "People sometimes just want to be heard. Will we take the time to listen and are we brave enough and compassionate enough to take action?"

2024-2025 Accomplishments

6 Hosted six Teach-In events

470 For a total audience of 470 people

65 Paid 65 stipends to formerly incarcerated speakers

> There is no better way to learn about the criminal justice system than to listen to those it has affected.

SPOTLIGHT ON RUMMEL!

In 2024-2025:

We completed three events with Rummel High School students including:

- A Teach-in on Mass Incarceration
- The March Continues: Civil Rights Experience with River Road Museum
- Re-entry Simulator with Department of Corrections

CAFÉ CON INGLÉS

JSRI faculty member Dr. Sue Weishar founded Café con Inglés in 2011 to teach English to the adult immigrant members of St. Anthony of Padua Church and to build a community of faith and friendship at the parish. English as a Second Language (ESL) classes meet for approximately two hours in the school cafeteria after the conclusion of the Spanish-language Mass on Sunday morning. Before class begins, students and volunteer teachers enjoy coffee, pastries, and conversation.

In 2024, JSRI expanded Café Con Inglés to Our Lady of Guadalupe Church.

TWOMEY LEGACY SCHOLAR IN RESIDENCE

Fr. Louis J. Twomey, S.J. was a Loyola alumnus (1931) and Jesuit priest who returned to Loyola University New Orleans in 1947 where he founded the Institute of Industrial Relations. Fr. Twomey was an early and outspoken advocate for racial justice, hosting racially integrated classes at Loyola starting in the early 1950's. Fr. Twomey's monthly newsletter, Blueprint for the South, was an inspiration for a generation of Jesuits and lay people engaged in the fight for equal rights for African Americans as both laborers and human beings.

In 2023, JSRI established the Fr. Louis J. Twomey, S.J. Legacy Scholar in Residence position and invited civil rights leader and community organizer, Dr. Ronnie Moore to be our inaugural scholar. Over the past two years, Dr. Moore has presented to classes, mentored staff and faculty, and organized events in partnership with Dillard's Center for Racial Justice and the Amistad Research Center, which holds the Ronnie Moore Collection. In August 2024, Mr. Ronnie brought a group of students and community members to Donaldsonville, Louisiana where he led the Freedom Summer Project in 1963 to register Black voters. Students accompanied Dr. Moore into the jail cell where he watched the March on Washington with James Farmer after organizing a protest against segregation. In May 2024, Loyola awarded Ronnie Moore an honorary doctorate degree for his lifetime of service and leadership to build a better future for our nation. Dr. Ronnie will continue to serve our campus and organize events to encourage us to remember the civil rights movement of 60 years ago and build the future that we want to live in 40 years from now.

In 2025, JSRI invited William Quigley, JD to serve as a Twomey Legacy Scholar in Residence. Bill Quigley has been an active public interest and human rights lawyer since 1977. He is an emeritus professor of law and served as Director of the Law Clinic and the Gillis Long Poverty Law Center at Loyola University New Orleans for more than 30 years. Bill has served as counsel with a wide range of public interest organizations on issues including public housing, voting rights, death penalty, living wage, civil liberties, educational reform, constitutional rights, civil disobedience, and social justice issues following Hurricane Katrina. Bill has also litigated numerous cases with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., the Advancement Project, and with the ACLU of Louisiana where he was General Counsel for over 15 years.

Bill is the author of Ending Poverty As We Know It: Guaranteeing A Right to A Job At A Living Wage (2003) and Storms Still Raging: Katrina, New Orleans and Social Justice (2008), as well as countless articles that focus on revolutionary lawyering, civil disobedience, international human rights, and a continuing history of how the laws have regulated the poor since colonial times. In his 2006 article on Revolutionary Lawreing, Bill urges us to **"Refuse to accept the reality of those who think that our future is predetermined by the powerful and will never change. Certainly, never accept our current reality as the inevitable future. Accept no limits! Never let anyone tell you what you can achieve or who you can become. Challenge injustice even if you don't know the solution."**

As one of his first initiatives at JSRI, Bill will serve as the editor for a special series of the JustSouth Monthly newsletter to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina and explore the impact of the storm with attention to JSRI's core issues of race and poverty.

JUSTSOUTH MONTHLY

The JustSouth Monthly features short written submissions (e.g. essays, reflections, opinion pieces, or poems) or videos from Loyola faculty, staff, students, alumni, and JSRI community partners that address pressing and timely criminal legal system reform and/or racial justice topics. The Monthly also provides information about upcoming campus and community events. The newsletter is sent monthly via campus email to all faculty, staff, and students at the Loyola main campus and law school as well as nearly two thousand JSRI e-newsletter subscribers from across the Jesuit world.

2024:

In 2024, the JustSouth Monthly launched a podcast where students interview authors each month.

2025:

In 2025, the JustSouth invited guest editor, Bill Quigley to work with authors to produce twelve articles to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. The series will explore the impacts across the areas of education, housing, criminal justice, healthcare, and immigration. With every topic, we center the experiences of poor people, the elderly, the disabled, people of color, children and workers to ask ourselves not only what happened then, but what has happened since, and what ought we do for justice?

FAREWELL TO SUE

After 14 years of dedicated service, Dr. Sue Weishar retired from the Jesuit Social Research Institute in December 2024. Throughout her tenure, Sue helped shape JSRI's work on immigration, mass incarceration, solitary confinement, and the death penalty, always guided by a commitment to human dignity and Pope Francis's call to create a "culture of encounter." She was instrumental in developing the Catholic and Ignatian Teach-Ins on Immigration and Mass Incarceration, which have engaged more than 2,000 students, parishioners, and community members in transformative conversations about justice. Sue also helped launch Café con Inglés, an innovative community-based English language program that continues to foster meaningful relationships across cultures. We are deeply grateful for Sue's scholarship, advocacy, mentorship, and unwavering commitment to social justice. Her legacy will continue to inspire JSRI's work for years to come.

Please continue to support our work by donating!

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Address any inquiries to Dr. Annie Phoenix,
JSRI Executive Director, at 504-864-7746
or alphoeni@loyno.edu.

Your tax-exempt contribution will be greatly appreciated!
Thank you for your support!

To give online:

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