“To Any Degree”: Jesuit Medical Schools in the Nineteenth-Century United States

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The study of medicine and laws, being more remote from our Institute, will not be treated in the universities of the Society, or at least the Society will not undertake this teaching through its own members.

St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* (1558)

... Assume the same form and proceed in the same manner as in Europe; as far as circumstances will permit, let nothing new be introduced.

Fr. General Jan Roothaan, S.J., to Missouri mission superior Théodore De Theux, S.J. (May 10, 1834)\(^1\)

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\(^1\) St. Ignatius of Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, trans. George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), 215 (Part 4, Chapter 12, “The branches to be taught in the universities of the Society,” paragraph 452). Johann [Jan] Roothaan (Rome) to Théodore De Theux (Missouri, 1834), in Gilbert J. Garraghan, S.J., *The Jesuits of the Middle United States*, 3 vols. (New York: America Press, 1938), 3:120n24. For Roothaan’s revised *Ratio* (1832), see Gerald McKeveit’s essay in this volume, 51–98. Ganss explains the structure of a “university” in the sixteenth-century Jesuit context: “In [Ignatius’s] concept of a Jesuit university, there was the lower faculty with which it usually began in the form of a college [...]. The chief instructional objective in the college was to teach boys the art of speaking, reading, and writing Latin with facility and with elegance as far as possible, according to the Renaissance ideal of *eloquentia*. A college became a university by addition of the higher
Of the nearly two dozen Jesuit institutions of higher education founded in the United States before 1900, only three established schools teaching in the medical arts: St. Louis (1842), Georgetown (1851), and Creighton (1892). However, that they existed at all is perhaps more surprising than their small numbers given that the sixteenth-century Jesuit Constitutions explicitly specify that “the study of medicine and laws, being more remote from our Institute, will not be treated in the universities of the Society, or at least the Society will not undertake this teaching through its own members.” In view of the importance of these medical schools in the wider US Catholic higher education enterprise, this chapter outlines the ways in which the Jesuits were able to honor this instruction by establishing ostensibly separate, unconnected schools of medicine within existing Jesuit institutions. As we will see, their success in doing so reveals how the restored order was able to strike a balance between the needs of a new, US context while remaining faithful to its pre-suppression European traditions. As this volume’s editors have observed, in medical education as in education in general, the US Jesuits proved “remarkably aware...