

# Changing Catholic College and University Leadership: Retaining Catholic Identity

**Christine Pharr**

Beginning with Vatican II's call for the laity to increasingly share in the mission of the Church through use of their gifts, and augmented by declining numbers of priests and women religious, Catholic colleges and universities (CCUs) have undergone a transformation in leadership and staffing. Today's

CCUs are largely led by lay presidents and leadership teams who must develop a systemic integration of the Catholic identity and mission into all aspects of the student experience (curricular and co-curricular), policies, and practices that cannot rely upon the founding order for their implementation.

This paper examines the evolution of this paradigm shift, explores the benefits it purports to bring as well as the challenges, and proposes possible solutions to ensure that while the characteristics of the participants have changed, the foundational values upon which CCUs have been built remain strong, visible, and consistent into the future.

## **Introduction**

In any organization the transition of leadership from one entity to another can either lead to a continuation of the same mission, vision, and values or a transition to a new organizational identity. As CCUs have evolved over the past half century from leadership by men and women religious to primarily laity, the question arises whether a change in leadership has resulted in a change in Catholic identity. Today's CCU presidents

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are 65% laity,<sup>1</sup> and while they are most often Catholic, they still tend, as individuals, to have less formal theological education to assist them in sustaining the Catholic identity and mission than their colleagues from religious orders. Success in preserving the values as well as the charism of the founding order is then dependent upon the institutionalization of mission and values into the university structure. This paper will explore the history and causes of the transition to lay leadership, potential benefits and challenges of this transition, and propose both solutions and obstacles to successful organizational mission retention.

### **A Very Brief History of Catholic Higher Education in the United States**

In the early days of the American colonies, Catholic higher education was not an option. Catholicism was outlawed in some areas, primarily as a response to the desire for religious freedom, and there simply weren't the resources available to build universities.<sup>2</sup> Yet many immigrants to America recognized the importance of universities to a cultured and educated populace and thus the early universities, while not Catholic, were largely tied to various religious denominations. As the population of Catholics increased, the first Catholic university in the United States, Georgetown, was founded in 1789 by John Carroll.<sup>3</sup> As a Jesuit university, its purpose was principally related to preserving and growing the Catholic faith rather than the development of other intellectual pursuits. Georgetown, as well as the other early Catholic universities, had three goals: 1) to prepare men and women for religious life; 2) to create a center for missionary activity, and 3) to cultivate more priests and religious.<sup>4</sup> Because of these goals the curriculum consisted of mostly the classics and theology with very little science. By the 1850s an increased emphasis on academic subjects, rather than the exclusive promotion of the Catholic religion, became more common. In 1889 The Catholic University of America was founded in Washington, DC, as a national center for scholarship, teaching, research, and the integration of faith and reason.<sup>5</sup> As these changes occurred, a concern that Catholic education was becoming too secular kept the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas on reason and a moral order as the foundation of the university's curriculum. The transitions were led largely by denominational priests with significant influence by bishops. In the intervening years, the Jesuits have continued to have a significant impact on the direction of Catholic higher education.

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1 Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, "The Catholic College and University President" (Washington, DC, 2013).

2 Patricia Hutchinson, "The Purposes of American Catholic Higher Education: Changes and Challenges," <http://www.gonzaga.edu/academics/graduate/graduate-student-council/Documents/Catholic-HE-Docs/The-Purposes-of-American-Catholic-Higher-Education.docx>.

3 Robert Emmett Curran, *A History of Georgetown University*, vol. 1 (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2010).

4 Hutchinson, "The Purposes of American Catholic Higher Education."

5 Hutchinson, "The Purposes of American Catholic Higher Education."

Another area of growth in Catholic higher education was the development of women's colleges. As women religious began to populate the country, a growing number of women's colleges sprang up, largely to educate those entering religious orders who were called primarily to teach in the burgeoning Catholic parish elementary schools. By 1916, one-third of all Catholic colleges in the United States were women's colleges.

Perhaps the biggest philosophical transition that opened the doors of Catholic colleges and universities to lay leadership was Vatican II's proclamations of the increased roles and responsibilities of the laity in the life of the Church. The Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* recognized the contributions of all the baptized, teaching that they share the "priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ."<sup>6</sup> This document promulgated the concept that the lay faithful are not just collaborators but fully share in the Church's mission through baptism, confirmation, and use of their charismatic gifts. This emphasis became a factor in opening more roles in the Church to lay men and women, which correlated with the decrease in men and women entering religious orders.

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Thus, in essence, Vatican II opened the door for the laity to take a larger leadership role within the Church, which included CCU leadership.<sup>7</sup> The leadership opportunities within CCUs were soon realized by lay presidents, largely because fewer religious men and women with the expertise and skills to manage and lead a university in the many aspects necessary outside of mission and identity were available.

As the Vatican II Catholic Church began to develop and thrive, CCUs began to expect a more collaborative interaction with Church leadership, more institutional autonomy, and increased academic freedom. The Land O'Lakes document drafted in 1967 by Catholic college leaders, entitled "Statement on the Nature of the Contemporary Catholic University," called for greater institutional autonomy.<sup>8</sup> Its opening lines summarized the requirement to be a true university as follows: "...institutional autonomy and academic freedom are essential conditions of life and growth and indeed survival for Catholic universities as for all universities."<sup>9</sup> An interesting side note here is that no women were

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6 Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium, 1964)* Chapter IV, online at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

7 Jacqueline Powers Doud, "Personal Reflections of a First Lay President," *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* 33/1 (Winter 2014), 5-10.

8 Neil G. McCluskey, S.J., ed., *The Catholic University* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970).

9 David J. O'Brien, "The Land O'Lakes Statement," *Boston College Magazine* (Winter 1998).

invited to the Land O'Lakes gathering despite the fact that the largest number of Catholic higher educational institutions at that time were women's colleges led by women.

In subsequent years, a greater focus on academic and career preparation for the laity became the norm for higher educational institutions.<sup>10</sup> The emphasis on scholarship and intellectual pursuit in the sciences became the norm in the CCUs, which contributed to an improved public image.<sup>11</sup> As CCUs gained more recognition as centers of intellectual pursuit, the university system of accreditation became more complex for professional programs of study. External relationships and fundraising became a critical element of CCU leadership. Many Catholic higher education institutions moved to separate incorporation, remaining strongly affiliated with their founding orders, but not legally sponsored by them. As the number of priests and women religious declined, boards of trustees, faculty, staff, and university leadership began to be populated by the laity,<sup>12</sup> and today the majority of CCUs employ religiously diverse professionals as faculty and staff. Clearly the participants in CCUs of the twentieth century are substantially changed from those of the early founding days.

### **The Catholic College and University Today**

As CCUs today grapple with their changing composition, the question of Catholic identity arises. What is it that differentiates a CCU from a public or other private higher educational institution? Why is our Catholic identity so important to and for our students? There are many responses to these questions and yet perhaps the more important answer is that many college students are in the formative years of their faith during college. If they have grown up Catholic, college is often a time to own and deepen their faith independent of their parents. It can also be a time of spiritual rejection. The experiences that students encounter both within and outside the classroom can have a long-standing impact on their spiritual life as an adult. The more embedded the Catholic identity and the founding order's charism are in the curriculum and co-curriculum the more influential they may be on students' faith development. And without these foundational values, there is no differentiation from their secular counterparts and thus no reason for the existence of CCUs.

### ***Changes in Leadership***

According to the most recent data from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), there were 221 Catholic colleges and universities in the United States with 776,443 students in attendance in 2016.<sup>13</sup> This represents a 28% decline in the number

10 Alice Gallin, *Negotiating Identity: Catholic Higher Education since 1960*, Chapter 5, "Partnership with the Laity" (University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 111-126.

11 Daniel J. Scholz, "The Call to Leadership – Lay Leaders, Priests, and Deacons" (Archdiocese of Milwaukee Synod 2014, Cardinal Stritch University).

12 Melanie M. Morey and John J. Piderit, *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis*, Chapter 10: "Leadership and Governance" (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 275-306.

13 The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), "Frequently Asked Questions," [www.cara.georgetown.edu](http://www.cara.georgetown.edu) (accessed February 2017).

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of Catholic higher education institutions since 1965 but nearly double the number of students in attendance over the same time period. Based solely on self-reported data, slightly over 50% of students in CCUs indicate being Catholic and thus the student population, like the faculty and staff, is a religiously diverse group.<sup>14</sup> Approximately 35% of Catholic colleges are led by men or women religious.<sup>15</sup> As indicated above, the changing demographics of the university in leadership and staffing have been a natural outcome of a combination of changes, starting mostly after Vatican II. The membership in religious orders as shown in Table 1 below has decreased by almost two-thirds between 1965 and the present, resulting in fewer leaders for the CCUs from amongst their ranks.

**Table 1: Number of Priests and Women Religious in U.S. (1965/2016)<sup>16</sup>**

	1965	2016
Ordained Priests	58,632	37,192
Women Religious	179,954	47,170
Total	238,586	84,362

At the same time that the number of men and women religious was declining and Vatican II was promoting the role of the laity in the Church, there was encouragement for positive dialogue about the intersection of faith and culture in CCUs. Lay leaders who possessed the leadership skills required for a university presidency and a sincere dedication to Catholic higher education, as well as the charism of a particular founding order, were increasingly chosen as CCU presidents by boards of trustees. While these transitions seem bound to have occurred if CCUs were to survive and they were encouraged by Vatican II, the question continues to be raised about whether or not lay CCU leadership can retain the mission, the charism of the founding order, and the Catholic identity that is foundational to the CCUs' existence.

### ***Changes in Culture***

The demographics of CCU students have also changed drastically from the earlier days

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14 Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) annual survey, *The American Freshman*, <http://www.accunet.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3797#CatholicStudents> (accessed February 2017).

15 Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, "The Catholic College and University President."

16 CARA, "Frequently Asked Questions."

of almost exclusively Catholic students with similar backgrounds. The changing student demographic was probably the result of an increasing focus on academic programs but it has led to a more ecumenical approach to religious education. CCUs today recognize the importance of meeting the spiritual needs of students of a variety of faith traditions while still giving focus and attention to Catholic tradition and beliefs.

Regardless of lay or religious leadership, the changing demographics of the staffing and participants in Catholic higher education require that new and different questions be considered. Examples include: How do universities engage Catholic and non-Catholic students, faculty, and staff? Will Generation Xers and Millennials who grew up with few men and women religious in elementary and secondary schools have the same interest and dedication to Catholic education as their predecessors? Can non-Catholic faculty and staff embrace and appreciate that the Catholic intellectual tradition is open to everyone, and how will they incorporate it into their instruction? The CCUs of today must serve an extremely disparate population; they extend their mission to these multiple populations because, as Pope Francis has repeatedly said, this is what the gospel calls us to do. To address the “common good” requires that there is a shared meaning and moral responsibility to work with the poor and underserved of society. This means not only the financially poor but also those who are educationally or spiritually poor and lack an understanding of the gospel message. Through our curriculum and co-curriculum, as well as our example, we demonstrate the connections between our work and our life, our faith and reason. With today’s emphasis on education for jobs and careers, CCUs must help students consider what questions to ask about the meaning and purpose of their lives, not just their work. The pluralistic university environment can assist them in understanding the importance of diverse perspectives if respectful engagement is foundational to interactions. The role of the lay or religious CCU president today is to lead by example with a varied set of constituents.

### ***Changes in the Catholic Church***

At the same time that the CCU participants have changed, an additional complication has arisen in that lines of division have developed within the Church. Far-right conservatives hold to the more traditional understandings of the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church while more left-leaning liberals are asking reconsideration of the Catholic Church’s stance on contemporary moral issues including sexuality, the environment, and the married priesthood. At the same time, groups are focusing more attention upon social justice issues affecting the poor and suffering amongst us. The “Francis Effect” has brought particular attention and focus to these important societal issues.

As lay versus religious CCU leadership is considered, it is important to understand that the playing field of Catholic higher education has morphed significantly in the last few decades. A president may try to determine which Catholic identity or what shades of it need representation in their particular setting. What students are they called to

recruit and serve? As Catholics we are called to address the “God in all of us”<sup>17</sup> and thus these changes are an evolution that the lay as well as the religious order presidents must address. In this time of recruiting heterogeneous student bodies, faculty, and staff accompanied by prolific technological and scientific advances that call for critical moral reasoning, CCU presidents have a myriad of challenges in balancing the culture and mission with a reality that didn’t exist even 30 years ago.

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### **Important Roles of the Lay President**

In the words of Jacqueline Powers Doud, “All presidents are entrusted to understand, respect, communicate, and advance the mission of the Catholic institution he or she leads.”<sup>18</sup> This requires that the mission, vision, and values of the university are institutionalized in such a way that they are consistently called upon in decision-making and building the cultural experience of the students. There must be processes for educating new and continuing faculty and staff on how the mission defines the institutional focus. Conversations about how to integrate career preparation with the liberal arts and spirituality are important to the education of the whole person. As the faculty develop and modify the programs and curriculum, it is the guidance provided by the university leadership team that assists in integrating the Catholic intellectual tradition and Catholic social teachings into student learning. Strong connections with a vibrant campus ministry program are essential. Student formation in a spiritual tradition requires both curricular and co-curricular opportunities for students to engage with those marginalized and forsaken by society. In essence, the president and the CCU leadership team are charged with assuring that the university delivers an understanding of how Catholic teachings and thought integrate with secular society.

Presidents are also responsible for keeping the mission alive with those external to the campus, but for whom the university has had an important influence in their lives. This includes helping alumni reflect upon how their experiences at the university fashioned their lives and how their current work and example continue to exemplify the mission. Donors who have a connection with the university can see the mission as a way to remain a part of something bigger than themselves. Clarification of how the mission and vision are part of the strategic plan for the university requires careful thought to align donor

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17 Renee K. Gadoua, “Do We Need Priests to Run Catholic Colleges?” *U.S. Catholic* 81/10 (October 2016), 28-33, at <http://www.uscatholic.org/articles/201609/do-we-need-priests-run-catholic-colleges-30773>.

18 Doud, “Personal Reflections of a First Lay President.”

interests with appropriate institutional plans. The board of trustees is a critical entity that the president must communicate with regularly. Board engagement will be strengthened if they have opportunities to experience the mission on campus and how it is lived out. Effective boards look for concrete evidence of mission in the life of the campus and it is the responsibility of the president to make sure they are exposed to and participate in that mission regularly. For a mission to have real impact it must touch both those on campus and off; those participants from the past and those who may come in the future. The more visible the president can make the university mission, through both the works of the campus and his/her words, the more external support and buy-in will exist.

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A third area where regular communication is imperative is between the president and the local bishop. A lay president would typically have fewer natural opportunities to meet with the bishop than a priest or woman religious might, and so taking the initiative on this is imperative for the lay president. In some instances this relationship has been a challenge due to the delicate balance required in retaining the academic freedom that defines a university while respecting Catholic traditions and beliefs that the bishop is charged to uphold. Questions occasionally arise from Rome about how CCUs can be Catholic if the pope and bishops have no authority over their governance,<sup>19</sup> but presidents who demonstrate a respect for their bishop's authority by regularly communicating about speakers and events, inviting him to campus occasionally, and remaining sensitive to topics that present conflicts between academic freedom and Catholicity increase their chances of a positive relationship. It is important to appreciate that bishops want CCUs to graduate spiritually educated, faithful, and generous students who will continue to build the body of the Church in the world. For a university to regain its identity as a Catholic higher educational institution requires presidential respect and appreciation for this perspective and necessitates a promotion of the scholarship and intellectual life of the campus that helps to grow the Church's perspectives.

A fourth imperative for presidents is a strong and impactful relationship with the founding order to ensure that their legacy continues into the future. Typically, a few members of the founding order will sit on the board of trustees. While separate incorporation of the university from the order has become more common, there remain

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19 David J. O'Brien, "A Catholic Future for Catholic Higher Education? The State of the Question," *Journal of Catholic Education* 1/1 (1997), Article 6.



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CCUs where the order continues to retain a legal responsibility for the institution inclusive of presidential hiring and retention authority.<sup>20</sup> Regardless of the financial arrangements, it is important that the president understand, embrace, and work to keep the spirit of the charism alive on campus. Each order brings its unique focus to the mission. For example, the Jesuit focus is on men and women for others; Mercy is meeting the needs of the underserved, especially women and children; Benedictine is hospitality and inclusion; and for the School Sisters of Notre Dame it is a special commitment to women, children, and persons who are poor. While very similar in nature, each order has a unique way of living out their charism through education, health care, housing, and social services. These identities should be retained and amplified by the educational institutions which they have founded.

It is critical that lay presidents be strong and exemplary role models for the Catholic laity and the academy. They must have one foot in the world and one in the Church as they set an example of how to live our lives as lay Christians. This can be done through participation in liturgies as a reader, Eucharistic minister, musician, etc. They can provide comfort on campus in times of grief through services that acknowledge and pray for those suffering. They should be in close contact with the work of campus ministry and they should strongly support the work of mission integration on campus. The president, as the primary spokesperson for the Catholic university, must be comfortable speaking on matters of faith and reason and interpreting their meaning and relevance for the university community. The majority of CCU presidents have risen to their roles through the faculty ranks. As such, they intimately understand the role that scholarly pursuits play in the life of the university. There was a time when the words "Catholic university" were considered an oxymoron; however, as the Catholic intellectual tradition has gained understanding amongst the laity it is becoming more clear that the Catholic university may well be where the Catholic Church does its most creative and insightful thinking. The charge of the lay president is to provide inspiration and motivation that weave the institutional mission and founding order charism into the education, scholarship, and management of all aspects of the institution while retaining the institutional commitment to freedom of inquiry and research that is essential to its existence as a university.<sup>21</sup> This may well be where the lay president can be a true asset to a CCU if he/she serves as a living model of a faithful Catholic and an academic scholar; that is, if they are able to bridge the Catholic and academic cultures.

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20 Charles L. Currie, S.J., "Finding New Structures: Responsive Governance for a New Age," *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*, 45/9 (2014).

21 Anthony J. Dosen, *Catholic Higher Education in the 1960s: Issues of Identity, Issues of Governance* (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, 2009) 27-46.

### Benefits of a Lay President

While much has been written about concerns related to the laity as CCU presidents, there are at least a few benefits which are already evident. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) affirmed the importance of lay men and women taking an active role in leadership in the mission of the Church.<sup>22</sup> The pastoral statement *Called and Gifted: the American Catholic Laity* and subsequent statements by the USCCB have pointed out the gifts that lay leadership have brought to the Church as a whole.<sup>23</sup> Over the last 15 years, leadership and formation programs which assist Catholic laity to better serve in leadership roles have sprung up across the United States. With these formation programs, the CCUs themselves have brought a more intentional focus to the issue of their Catholic identity, an identity that was often taken for granted under the leadership of men and women religious. This focused attention has resulted in more retreats, seminars, and workshops on the call for the laity to be faithful. Perhaps most importantly there has been a dramatic increase in commitments and follow-through by CCUs to concrete action on social justice issues.<sup>24</sup>

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As lay presidents increasingly lead CCUs, they are creating a model for students, faculty, and staff of lay leadership in the faith. Given that the vast majority of students in CCUs will not join the religious life, a strong lay role model may serve as a relevant and appropriate archetype for their own future. Catholic colleges are also a place where women more often assume leadership roles. While only 25% of college presidents in the United State as a whole are women, in Catholic colleges the number is closer to 40%.<sup>25</sup> In fact, CCUs continue to have the highest proportion of women presidents amongst any group of higher education institutions in the United States.

In CCUs led by lay presidents, numerous examples exist of presidencies that are successful not only from a secular but also a faith perspective. John GiGioia, the first lay president of Georgetown, has been called “the most visible—and arguably the most

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22 Scholz, “The Call to Leadership – Lay Leaders, Priests, and Deacons.”

23 United States Conference for Catholic Bishops, *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium* (1995), <http://www.usccb.org/about/laity-marriage-family-life-and-youth/laity/called-and-gifted-for-the-third-millennium.cfm> (accessed April 2017).

24 Gallin, *Negotiating Identity*.

25 Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, “The Catholic College and University President.”

articulate—advocate of Jesuit spirituality” by the *National Catholic Reporter*.<sup>26</sup> Jo Ann Rooney’s appointment as the first woman and first lay president of Loyola Chicago was chosen based upon the board’s belief in “Dr. Rooney’s commitment...to her Catholic faith.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, it is clear that there are lay presidents for CCUs who have been outstanding spiritual as well as academic leaders.

### **Challenges of the Lay President**

The role of the president in private institutions has never been trivial, but in today’s competitive environment, tuition-driven, private colleges are especially vulnerable and presidents must not only be the external face of the university but also often lead a complex financial environment. The role of the president has been described by O’Brien as having three parts: professional, ecclesiastical, and political.<sup>28</sup> Professional roles denote that higher education is becoming extremely reliant upon both regional and programmatic accrediting bodies for credibility for their professional programs. These systems of approval are required in many disciplines in order for students to become licensed and continue their study toward advanced degrees. As external approvals have become more important, the concern continues to be voiced that liberal arts disciplines, while more necessary than ever to prepare graduates for the myriad of careers they may pursue during their lives, are lacking resources and enrollment because students and parents favor those majors with built-in job opportunities upon graduation. There is also concern that our Catholicity may be impacted by these requirements as more attention focuses on “requirements” that are not as obviously related to mission.

The political demands of the president revolve around fundraising and partnerships within the community. As the price of higher education has increased, so also has the need for donor-funded scholarships. Student expectations of outstanding recreational facilities, residence halls, and state-of-the-art technology in the classroom pit comparable universities against each other to develop the most outstanding living and learning environments. Ever conscious of enrollment and fundraising needs, the university president spends significant time in this realm.

A final expectation of CCU presidents, and the focus of this paper, is that of being a spiritual and faith leader for the campus. Our spiritual mission is our *raison d’être* and is of critical importance, and yet, it has significant competition for the president’s time and attention. Maintaining the Catholic identity and mission in the pluralistic environment of today’s CCU requires focused time and attention from the CCU president. It requires a trust between Catholic and non-Catholic members of the college community that we are all working toward the common good. The Catholic intellectual tradition and Catholic social teachings can only be part of the culture if they permeate the classroom and the workspace and this requires structures, processes, and policies that consistently reiterate

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26 Renee K. Gadoua, “Do We Need Priests to Run Catholic Colleges?”

27 Renee K. Gadoua, “Do We Need Priests to Run Catholic Colleges?”

28 David J. O’Brien, “A Catholic Future for Catholic Higher Education? The State of the Question.”

“who we are” and “why we do what we do.” With the numbers of men and women religious who once populated the classrooms and offices of every CCU diminishing, it is much more difficult to carry on the charism of the founding order as a way to impart the Catholicity of the CCU. In addition, with fewer religious as faculty and staff, the cost of education has risen, requiring the hiring of more adjunct faculty<sup>29</sup> who may have excellent academic credentials but are often less knowledgeable and connected to the mission of the institution than those who are in full-time positions. All of these challenges face both the lay and religious president, but they exist in an environment that is quite different from the Catholic college of the past.

### Some Possible Solutions

As Catholic institutions grapple with what it means to transition to mostly lay presidents, it is imperative that they realize that the Catholic identity of the college is not solely the responsibility of the president. In fact, lay presidents should also recognize this and seek assistance from the multiple sources available to them. One solution that many CCUs are pursuing is the hiring of a director of mission integration.<sup>30</sup> The percentage of universities that have hired a mission officer has increased tremendously from the early 1990s to the present. In 1989 only 5% of CCUs had a mission officer position. By 1999 that percentage had risen to 30%, to 67% in 2010,<sup>31</sup> and currently of the 220 universities that belong to the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU), 159 (75%) have instituted a position specifically to work with the president in caring for the mission and Catholic identity of the institution.<sup>32</sup> This person typically reports directly to the president and often is a member of the senior leadership team, a signal to the campus that it is a position of paramount importance. While the role of the mission officer is evolving in most institutions, they can be of tremendous help in integrating an understanding of Catholic teachings into the curriculum and co-curriculum, particularly if they have academic credentials that give them credibility with the faculty and staff. They can promote research projects that advance the Catholic identity and offer workshops that focus on the integration of faith and reason. For example, in institutions offering health care programs of study, they can promote an understanding of the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*<sup>33</sup> with faculty in those disciplines, or they can

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29 Matthew Schmalz, “Mount St. Mary’s and the Future of Catholic Higher Education; General Historical Changes in Catholic Higher Education,” *Crux*, Feb 25, 2016, <https://cruxnow.com/life/2016/02/25/mount-st-marys-and-the-future-of-catholic-higher-ed/> (accessed February 2017).

30 John Richard Wilcox, with Jennifer Anne Lindhold and Suzanne Dale Wilcox, *The Future of Catholic Higher Education* (North Charleston: CreateSpace, 2013).

31 Joseph John Lehman, *Mission Officers in Catholic Higher Education: Responsibilities and Competencies* (Dissertation, Boston College, 2014), <http://hdl.handle.net/2345/bc-ir:103551> (accessed April 2017).

32 Renee K. Gadoua, “Do We Need Priests to Run Catholic Colleges?”

33 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services* (2009), 5th edition.

discuss the bishops' teaching on *The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers*,<sup>34</sup> which references numerous papal encyclicals, with the business faculty. Mission officers can develop partnerships with the regional Catholic Church for professional development of CCU employees. They can advise the president and leadership team on the development of policies and practices that will advance the mission through embedding it into the operations and structure of the campus.

A second, often underutilized resource for advancing the mission is using members of the founding order. Opportunities for these dedicated men and women religious to interact directly with the faculty, staff, and students at the institution can be a tremendous source of inspiration on both sides. Why not let those interactions continue through joint projects and interactions targeted to assist both groups? A few examples might include: 1) students teaching retired nuns to use technology so as to connect with their family and friends; 2) retired religious with appropriate credentials adjunct teaching a class; and 3) joint service projects involving students, faculty, staff, and members of the founding order. While members of the founding order are aging and decreasing in numbers, they have a passion for the institution that they founded, and there is much that they can give to a CCU when they interact with the campus. Lay associates are an additional source of assistance in carrying the Catholic mission. They are living role models of laity engaged in their faith and they see their role as disciples of the spirit of a specific congregation or society.

A final resource for lay presidents is their Catholic college presidential colleagues and the myriad of professional development opportunities extended particularly for Catholic college presidents. The ACCU has a formation program for new presidents that not only seeks to give advice and assistance from seasoned colleagues but also serves to develop a network for new Catholic college presidents.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

It is apparent that not only has the leadership of CCUs shifted from women and men religious to the laity but Catholic higher education institutions overall have evolved significantly since Vatican II. These changes constitute a paradigm shift that increases the complexity of maintaining the Catholic identity beyond just changing CCU leadership from religious to the laity. Given that this transition is unlikely to reverse itself anytime soon, it is apparent that the most pressing question is really *how* CCU presidents, be they lay or religious, maintain the founding charism and the Catholic identity. This paper has attempted to address the issues facing today's CCU president in maintaining the Catholic identity in the face of a less formal presence from the founding order; a very diverse population of students, faculty, and staff; and more external expectations than ever before.

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34 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers*, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/the-dignity-of-work-and-the-rights-of-workers.cfm> (accessed April 2017).

As with most changes, the challenges are accompanied by opportunities. Many say that greater involvement of the laity in Church leadership is long overdue, especially with regard to women. Lay presidents and leadership teams today cannot take their institution's mission and Catholic identity for granted as has often occurred in the past. In the current paradigm, it is imperative that the laity and the religious work together to educate a very broad group of constituents. In today's pluralistic CCUs, the morality and ethics of such topics as social justice, environmentalism, sexuality, and poverty can be discussed with many students who might never have exposure to these perspectives through an organized religion. These are students that CCUs might never have reached in the past. With regard to a diversity in faculty scholarship, Peter Steinfels points out that "God may act through scholars of diverse religious backgrounds, agnostics and secular humanists which may bring critical scholarly insights and goodwill to the Catholic campus mission far beyond what Catholics themselves offer."<sup>35</sup> This perspective is seeking common ground for the common good.

These transitions are a work in progress and perhaps in 20 years we will know if CCUs led largely by lay presidents have succeeded in retaining the identity that differentiates them amongst higher education institutions. Until then, those of us entrusted with this great responsibility for Catholic college and university leadership can remember we are not in it alone—just as the priests and women religious who came before us. We are a Catholic community built upon a rich heritage that, God willing, will endure and continue to evolve long into the future.

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35 Peter Steinfels, "Catholic Identity: Emerging Consensus," *Catholic Higher Education: Practice and Promise. Occasional Papers on Catholic Higher Education* 1.1 (November 1995), 16.