1963 is a year to remember.
It is a year of record.
It is Year One of the Sacred Heart experience.

By Dr. Michael W. Higgins
It is, of course, important to remember,

to recall, or to raise to the surface perhaps for the first time, those signal events of
the past that determine who we are as individuals and as a community.

In so many ways, we are our past. That’s why we remember. It is not possible to
go forward until we have a key and secure sense of where we are from; it is not
likely that we will flourish unless we have a grounding in the shaping moments of
the past.

For those who care about Sacred Heart University, for those who are diligent in
overseeing its progress, for those who have benefitted from association with its
programs, instructors and services, for those who have enabled the university to
expand and deepen its educational mandate, and for those who have watched
admiringly as the university continues to refine and perfect its vision, 1963 is the
year to remember.

It is the year to remember as well for the alumni, current students, faculty, staff,
administration and Board of Trustees; it is a year of celebration; it is a year of rem-
iniscence; it is a year of re-discovery; it is a year of awakening.

It is our year: 1963
It was a year of international tensions. The Cold War defined the political temperature with the Cuban Missile Crisis in October of the previous year, bringing the world to the brink of incineration. The aftershocks of fear and anxiety generated by the crisis would persist for decades to come, only truly ending with the disintegration of the Soviet system in 1989.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Vietnam War intensifies.
- Yugoslavia is proclaimed a socialist republic with its leader, Josip Tito, named President for Life.
- Nigeria, Kenya and Zanzibar achieve independence and define new political directions.
- James Bond films make their world premiere (*Dr. No* in May; *From Russia with Love* in October).
- The Great Train Robbery stuns England.
- Russia launches the first woman into space.
- The now-storied cult series *Dr. Who* premieres.
- The Beatles release their first album.
It was a year of major social and political turbulence that saw protests, riots and political assassination. It was also a time of creative fecundity and new thinking. As Charles Dickens would say: “it was the best of times; it was the worst of times.”

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- The new governor of Alabama, George Wallace, aggressively declares his opposition to integration: “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever.”
- Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* spearheads a national revival of interest in the women’s movement.
- Martin Luther King, Jr., delivers his famous “I Have a Dream” speech at the Lincoln Memorial during the mammoth March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.
- *Cleopatra*, the most expensive film ever made at the time, premieres.
- The notorious island prison, Alcatraz, is closed.
- The President of the United States, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the first Catholic in the history of the nation elected to this office, is assassinated in Dallas, Texas.
The Second Vatican Council was convened in the fall of 1962, and the following year the second of four sessions was convoked in Rome. But not with the pope who conceived, called and inspired the Council, John XXIII. He died in 1963 and was succeeded by Paul VI who pledged to continue the Council and nurture the vision that generated it.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- John XXIII's most influential encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, is issued less than three months before his death and has a profound international impact; a bold plea to all men and women of good will, it was an eloquent and passionate call for global peace.
- Rolf Hochhuth's *Der Stellvertreter* (The Deputy) premières in Berlin. This play would usher in decades of debate and accusation around the alleged silence of Pope Pius XII during the Holocaust.
The Second Vatican Council

In 1958, the princely Eugenio Pacelli, Pius XII, died and the Chair of Peter was vacant for the first time in nearly 20 years. The august Pius was a remote and imperious presence in the Church; he was the shepherd as monarch. His successor was the shepherd as peasant, an unlikely candidate by the name of Angelo Roncalli, and he would take the name of John. He would be known to history as Pope John XXIII.

Within just three days of his election as pontiff, John XXIII made a note to himself about exploring the idea of calling a Council (Pius XII had thought of doing so as well but abandoned the idea). When he decided to follow up with the idea and declared his intention to the cardinals in the Vatican bureaucracy, their tepidity and resistance was palpable. Still, he persisted in the knowledge that having a Council was “an insight tested in prayer.”

Within a year of his death in 1963, Roncali wrote that “when on the 28th of October, 1958, the cardinals of the Holy Roman Church designated me for the supreme responsibility of governing the universal flock of Jesus Christ, there was a widespread belief that I would be a provisional, a transitional pope. But instead, here I am on the eve of the pontificate’s fourth year with an immense program of work in front of me to be carried out before the whole watching, waiting world. As for me, I am like St. Martin: he neither feared to die nor spurned to live.”

Indeed, his immense undertaking of work, the Second Vatican Council, would continue following his death. His successor, Paul VI, ensured that John’s Council would continue until its work was done, work that included virtually reshaping the structure of the Church beyond the point of mild adaptation but falling short of a radical facelift: decentralization of some decision making; strong support for the principle of collegiality; deep recognition of the importance of meaningful dialogue within the Church and between the Church and other religions; and internationalization of the Roman Curia, the central governing bureaucracy situated in the Vatican.

The Council, by the time it had concluded on December 8, 1965, had produced 16 documents of varying weight, quality and authority. They addressed the mean-
ing of church, the role of divine revelation, sacred liturgy, pastoral challenges in the contemporary world, social communications, ecumenism, Eastern Catholic Churches, the role of bishops, priestly formation, renewal of religious life, the apostolate of the laity, ministry and life of priests, missionary activity, Christian education, relationship to non-Christian religions and religious freedom. Of special significance coming out of the Council was the recovery and celebration of the unique gifts of the laity, a recognition of their common or universal priesthood by virtue of their baptism, their capacity for meaningful leadership in ecclesial life and a renewed emphasis on their sacramental gifts.

These documents have been received and implemented with varying degrees of success since the Council. Under Pope Francis there is special energy and determination to revive the spirit of the Council and to make every effort to fulfill the dreams of the Council Fathers, the blueprint, if you like, for a renewal and reform of promethean evangelical import.
One of the players at the Council was the second Bishop of Bridgeport, Connecticut, one Walter William Curtis. The Council was a transformative experience for Curtis and affected the way he conceived of his ministry of oversight in the local church. Curtis diligently kept a diary throughout all the sessions of the Council, was swept up by the enthusiasm of a revitalized church and was eager to apply the new understanding emanating from Rome in his own jurisdiction.

Curtis was a Council bishop in the sense that he was both at the Council as one of the Fathers and in that he was wholly committed to its teaching and implementation: empowering the laity, prioritizing the needs of the poor and disadvantaged and emphasizing collegiality and subsidiarity as working principles of local church governance. Although appointed an Auxiliary Bishop of Newark, New Jersey (his native state) by Pius XII in 1957, it was under John XXIII that he was named Bishop of Bridgeport in 1961, just a year before the opening of the Council.

Before the Council actually commenced its work in the fall of 1962, there was much by way of preparation and renewal in the air. After all, although John called the Council, theologians, biblical scholars, liturgists, historians, patristics scholars, lay philosophers and cognoscenti had been laying the foundations for a great spiritual and intellectual ferment in the church for close to a century. In other words, the Council was the culmination, not the initiation, of a momentum for change and adaptation that had been building for some time.

Curtis himself anticipated some of the new trends with their liberating consequences for the church, and in that he was prescient. He understood the need for accessible, affordable Catholic higher education for an emerging generation of Catholic youth, and he understood the importance of creating a culture in which the laity would assume serious leadership, in which they would be validated as co-partners in the critical ministry of education in the twentieth century. In his first year as Bishop of Bridgeport, he had considered establishing a Catholic college in the diocese, and the following summer—the summer of ’62, he appointed a committee to formulate plans for just such an institution. Curtis would serve as the chair and fully half of the remaining composition would be lay. In addition to Curtis, there would
Bishop Curtis signs the charter in 1963 alongside Connecticut Governor John Dempsey.

While he was in Rome that fall attending the first session of the Council, his committee moved forward on several items:

- They resolved to create a Catholic college in the diocese.
- They decided on its form and location.
- They began their search for a lay president and administrative staff.

The committee’s decision that the college would be coeducational, primarily liberal arts in its core curriculum and focus, located in the Diocese of Bridgeport and administered by laity all met with Curtis’s approval. In addition, he insisted on two additional conditions:

- The name of the institution should be Sacred Heart (one of Curtis’s appointments as a priest was at a church dedicated to the Sacred Heart, and he retained fond memories of both that pastoral charge and for the popular devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus).
- Classes should commence within the year, that is, September 1963.

Curtis saw the new college as very much a Diocese of Bridgeport entity, responding to the needs of an expanding demographic, sensitive to the financial challenges facing the majority of his flock and conscious of the emergence of a confident church, strengthened by a post-World War II immigrant influx from traditionally Catholic countries in Europe, and all demanding the social mobility enabled by higher education. In a chancery press release issued on October 7, 1962, just days before the opening of the Second Vatican Council, he wrote:

“A college education is almost a necessity for our young Catholic people if they are to adequately prepare for the problems and opportunities of today’s world. It is realized that the increasing cost of a college education out of the state has prevented many of our fine families from sending their sons and daughters to college. It is our sincere hope that this new facility will give opportunity to those who though desiring a Catholic education would not previously have found it financially
feasible; and will also encourage others to think more seriously about a Catholic higher education.

Curtis’s educational plan was driven by an acute pastoral sense grounded in Catholic social justice teaching. He was a pragmatist, a builder and a pastor, and he saw in the still embryonic college a response to a changing church and changing society. As he adroitly observed in his prepared comments to the Hartford authorities regarding the granting of incorporation and charter:

"We believe that Sacred Heart University arrives upon the educational scene at an opportune time. The President of the United States himself has stressed the rising tide of students headed toward the shores of colleges and universities and urges states and the nation to plan for this magnificent opportunity. With classes beginning September 1963, Sacred Heart University will absorb some of this tremendous tide, and as the years go on and the demand increases, will accept an increasing share of it. Connecticut’s new university will be opportune in a second way because of its location in the heart of the greater Bridgeport area. Its beautiful campus, pictured in the exhibit which we have presented to you, is within easy commuting distance of the entire county of Fairfield, and for many in the greater Bridgeport area can be reached by public transportation. Thus, the many parents who cannot foresee a financial ability to send their children away to college with the additional costs of boarding expenses will find an additional institution of higher learning within easy commuting reach of their homes. This very presence will encourage parents to think increasingly in terms of the great treasure of a college and university education for their children. From all this the State of Connecticut will profit greatly." (Delivered on March 5, 1963)

Curtis recognized the timeliness of the new initiative and phrased his request in such a way as to underscore its national, regional and local value. It was in many ways a pioneering venture—cutting edge, nervy and rooted in a careful discernment of what the Vatican Council called “the signs of the times.” That pioneering impetus continues to define Sacred Heart University’s spirit to this very day.

The first Self-Evaluation Report (August 1969) for NEASC—the New England higher education accreditation body—highlights the special contribution Curtis made to the conception and direction of Sacred Heart.
It was Bishop Curtis who first suggested the establishment of Sacred Heart, and also its most innovative feature: a completely lay character. The lay concept was hardly a new one, but with Vatican II about to begin, and with the liberalizing trends apparent throughout American Catholicism, the time for its re-introduction was propitious. Bishop Curtis's decision to establish a lay-operated diocesan college was conditioned by a combination of three factors: his own experience with Seton Hall University; the educational needs of the Bridgeport diocese and pastoral concern for the spiritual and religious formation of college students within the diocese.

Curtis understood the necessity of a Catholic education continuum, he appreciated the post-war boom, the expanding Catholic demographics, government largess in a time of national growth and the moral and pastoral imperative to cultivate a Catholic sensibility and voice in the public square.
His personal interest in education is evident in his own formation: Fordham University, Seton Hall University, Immaculate Conception Seminary, the Gregorianum and Catholic University of America. A seminary professor and pastor prior to his appointment as a bishop, Curtis’s commitment to education was not a notional thing; he believed in it because he benefitted from it. And he was determined to ensure that others benefit likewise.

Sacred Heart University wasn’t just an episcopal initiative; it was a life’s passion.

Consistent with his intention that Sacred Heart be lay operated, Curtis deliberately removed himself from a hands-on approach and left things for the Board and university leadership team to determine its objectives, pattern of academic offerings, size, tuition rate and anticipated clientele. But from the outset, a clear philosophical determination needed to be made and the Board did not waffle or prevaricate in making it.

Early in its deliberations, some members argued that the school be so structured as to cater to and produce an elitist student body. The educational needs of the area, however, and the type of educational training that most area youths had hitherto received, soon convinced the Board that the school should not be elitist.

Another strong and persuasive advocate for the egalitarian and open university concept was the first president of Sacred Heart University, William Conley.
The first of the SHU Triumvirate, Conley, a career Catholic educationist, was the director of the Carnegie Study of Catholic Education and an educational assistant to the president of the Jesuit Marquette University in Milwaukee at the time of his appointment to Sacred Heart. Conley had previously worked as a teacher, dean of Wright Junior College in Chicago, dean of the College of Commerce at Loyola University in the same city, chair of the Department of Education and dean of Loyola’s University College, and then vice president of Seton Hall before moving to Marquette. Conley’s primary priority in the spring of 1963 was the recruiting of faculty for the fledgling college, the crafting of policies, objectives and programs (he would do this in close consort with his vice president/dean) and the public articulation of Sacred Heart as a local iteration of the global Catholic higher education network.

Conley was gratified by the results of his appeal for faculty and saw in this response a validation of his conviction that the Catholic university of the future is going to increasingly rely on the competence, fidelity and unique vocation of the laity in the Catholic educational project. In an interview with The Catholic Transcript of November 14, 1963, Conley noted that Catholic laity teaching in Catholic universities frequently face obstacles to advancement in administrative leadership simply as a consequence of being lay persons and that they are not involved in curricular design and sequencing in ways that respect their professionalism and abilities. Conley became an early advocate for the enhanced roles of laity in teaching and academic leadership, appreciated the Second Vatican Council’s innovative response to modernity and treasured the providential timing of the founding of Sacred Heart. He would write in SHU’s first yearbook (1967) a succinct distillation of the university’s founding mission, abiding ethos and entrepreneurial panache:

“Sacred Heart enjoys a qualified and vigorous faculty characterized by a spirit of educational innovation and a desire for excellence in teaching.”
Its program, while dedicated to traditional Catholic values, is open to qualified students of all denominations. The university’s pioneering spirit is exemplified by a willingness to experiment with new concepts in education. It recognizes a responsibility to offer varied educational opportunities adapted to the abilities of students and needs of the community it serves...The university’s receptivity to change is also reflected in a fundamental scholarly concern with ecumenical developments as they relate to religious instruction and related learning.”

Conley’s emphasis on SHU’s resiliency, enlightened pragmatism and commitment to an organic and living tradition, albeit ever subject to adjustment and growth, speaks directly to his own long experience of working within Catholic educational organizations and his realization that that world is in flux, old static certitudes in upheaval, the challenges of the future both electrifying and daunting.

Sacred Heart is prepared for that future; in fact, it welcomes it.
Maurice O’Sullivan

As was the case with President Conley, the second triumvir, Vice President and Dean Maurice J. O’Sullivan, was an experienced Catholic educator. Twice a graduate of Seton Hall University, he had served his alma mater in numerous capacities as an instructor and as an associate professor of philosophy, as a director of student teaching, as a professor of education and as the associate dean of the University College. In addition, he had extensive experience as a high school teacher in Jersey City’s public school system and served as assistant superintendent in charge of elementary schools for the same system. In short: he was an experienced pedagogue.

O’Sullivan would draw on that wealth of experience to help shape and direct Sacred Heart’s opening year of operation, and he would do so with an Hibernian flourish: he personally interviewed each of the 167 members of the first class; he counseled, planned and presided over their respective schedules; and he was fully engaged in many of the extra-academic functions of the university, including business manager, evening division coordinator and athletic director. He was the “go-to person” in this critical year of genesis, 1963.
William E. Ready

The third triumvir was the Welsh-Irish scholar, historian and fiction writer William E. Ready, who was appointed as the director of Libraries for the emerging university and whose achievements before arriving at Sacred Heart were impressive by any yardstick: variously an acquisitions librarian for Stanford University and director of Libraries at Marquette University prior to assuming responsibilities at Sacred Heart in 1963, he was also a novelist, short story writer, professional bibliographer, World War II veteran, art patron and an assiduously creative and doggedly resolute archivist who, during the course of his long career, acquired many of the primary manuscripts and original archival materials of both J. R. R. Tolkien for Marquette University and Bertrand Russell for McMaster University. His time at Sacred Heart was brief but formative, and he added an international complexion and artistic sensibility to the original triumvirate of shapers and leaders in the birthing year of 1963.

The three key players in the formative year of Sacred Heart’s inception brought complementary skills to their shared task. William Conley brought his managerial competence, Maurice O’Sullivan his indefatigable energy and William Ready his intellectual pedigree to the common project of creating a vital and singular iteration of Catholic Higher Education in the United States. They were venturesome, committed, nervous, bold and tenacious. They were the founding architects of the Founder’s vision. They gave structure and direction to Bishop Curtis’s initiative; they gave validation to his informing dream; they provided the conciliar impetus to his pre-conciliar vision.
Catholic higher education in the United States has undergone significant change since the time Sacred Heart was established. The Land O’Lakes Conference and Statement of 1967, the Apostolic Constitution Sapientia Christiana of 1979, the Apostolic Constitution Ex corde ecclesiae of 1990, the approval of the Norms and Ordinances for the Application of Ex corde ecclesiae in the U.S. context, the countless seminars and symposia organized by Catholic colleges and universities around the theme of mission and identity and the sometimes fierce and partisan debates that have roiled the American Catholic community around the frequently contentious issue of catholicity and university education all provide ample evidence of the many shifts and turns that have come to define the landscape.

Since 1963 the Catholic higher education environment has weathered many adjustments and a fair measure of turmoil: the sponsoring bodies of Catholic colleges and universities have experienced a radical decline in the number of teaching priests, brothers and sisters; the pressures to conform to the standards set by our secular equivalents has intensified; competition for students and faculty in an increasingly multi-faith society continues unabated. In a changing American world and in a changing ecclesial environment, the demands for a Catholic presence in higher education have in no way diminished. But the capacity to deliver on the expectations of contemporary Catholics, as well as others who see great value in a university value system deeply connected with a living and organic intellectual and spiritual tradition, calls for some fresh and vigorous thinking.

And that is precisely what Sacred Heart University has done and continues to do: fresh, adaptive, creative and engaged thinking.

Catholic colleges and universities have traditionally been under the patronage of religious orders that have sought to mediate the strength of their respective charisms or gifts through their educational enterprises. Jesuit, Benedictine, Franciscan, Felician, Dominican, Marist, Holy Cross and other religious canonical bodies have instilled their unique approach to education in all those who come under their charge and have done so with distinction, constancy and fidelity.

In addition, Catholic universities and colleges founded by dioceses, pontifical-ly-chartered universities and lay-founded universities are all committed to making their contribution to higher education in the United States. But of the latter group in particular, none have been as energetic and visionary as Sacred Heart.

Without a sponsoring body or specifically ecclesiastical foundation with oversight, Sacred Heart from the outset needed to define itself as an independent Catholic institution. And it has done so; and it continues to do so.
It sees its mission as integrally connected with the Gospel values of:

• Hospitality—openness to the contemporary world; a welcome attitude to the stranger; a nonjudgmental approach to diverse ways of thinking and being
• Honesty—a critical posture in relation to ideas and people that commands transparency and respect
• Humility—a deep recognition of the provisionality, tentativeness and partiality of all our intellectual contributions

And it does so with the realization that we live, move and have our being within a universe of meaning that transcends the transient and immediate.

Sacred Heart is an academy, a sanctuary, wherein ideas are pursued, research undertaken, teaching valued, mentoring esteemed and relationships fostered and all in the context of a holy continuity, an intellectual and spiritual continuity.

In the articulation of its mission as a university that is Catholic in inspiration and ethos, and in the framing of its curricular and pastoral programs wherein it is constitutively Catholic, Sacred Heart University consistently draws on the wisdom of John Henry Cardinal Newman and his seminal works on higher education: Discourses on the Scope and Nature of University Education as Addressed to the Catholics of Dublin (1852), Office and Works of Universities (1856) and Lectures and Essays on University Subjects (1859).

Although Newman was very much the Victorian thinker, his theological and pedagogical work has proven timeless in its relevancy and perspicacity. University education is neither static nor insulated; it responds to its time and it shapes its time. Many of Newman’s key concepts around the university remain cogent and pertinent. Sacred Heart University recognizes, like Newman, that the university is for the enlargement of the sensibility, the cultivation of the mind and the uncompromised pursuit of intellectual excellence. It also knows that these are not bodiless exploits, somehow untouched by the personal, the pastoral and the moral. Newman fully understood the irreplaceable value of human interaction, for, as he said, “an academical system without the personal influence of teachers upon pupils is an arctic winter; it will create an ice-bound, petrified, cast-iron university.” Sacred Heart, from its very foundation, has placed the highest priority in ensuring that the “personal influence of teachers” remains a determinative precept of its life and purpose.

In other words: the students—their growth and formation as spiritually and intellectually mature citizens—is the raison d’etre of Sacred Heart University.

Sacred Heart University is not a recruitment center, a storage hold, a Utilitarian’s dream. It is, as Newman wrote, “according to the usual designation, an Alma Mater, knowing her children one by one, not a foundry, or a mint or a treadmill.”

Sacred Heart, faithful to its roots, prizes the individual over the collective, intellectual curiosity over the commodification of learning, the creation of a wisdom
culture that nurtures the mind, the spirit and the body—full personhood—over the hyper-specialization and stratification of a constricted worldview.

In this way, Sacred Heart is deeply connected with the Catholic intellectual life, a tradition that has morphed, mutated, evolved and expanded over the centuries and that is distinguished by its capacity for engagement with, and not withdrawal from, the challenges posed by history and by society.

There is a danger in relying on what we have come to call the Catholic intellectual tradition (CIT) if we mean by that a constricting or narrowing of the term tradition. In other words, if our understanding of tradition involves a static entity, homogenous, all-encompassing, inured to change, an organic deposit to be handed down through the generations in the sure knowledge that possession of such a tradition ensures continuity, a shared heritage, a sacred legacy, then we have diluted the CIT of continued relevance and efficaciousness. Such an understanding of the CIT will involve the atrophying of ideas, the morphing of conventions into unalterable truths, the cultivation of a spirit of cultural resistance and righteous confidence that compromises the truly “catholic” mission of the university.

It need not mean this, of course, as it is possible to hold a much more elastic view of tradition, a more generative one, one that speaks of tradition in the plural as in Catholic intellectual tradition(s), that understands tradition as a substratum running through history connecting all the disparate parts, holding them together.

Gabriel Daly, a distinguished Irish theologian and Augustinian friar, phrases it this way:

History has shown that church teaching not merely can change, but actually has changed on such matters as crusading in the Middle Ages, the move in the sixteenth century from geocentrism to heliocentrism, and, in the twentieth century, the doctrinal significance of the temporal power of the pope. To take a further, more recent example, Pope Pius XII, in his encyclical Humani Generis (1950), affirmed, in the name of orthodoxy, that there must be no departure from Thomistic philosophy. The Second Vatican Council tacitly abandoned this teaching, thus allowing Catholic theologians freedom to study Thomas Aquinas, not as the formulator of mandatory orthodoxy, but in his own right as the brilliant thirteenth-century thinker that he was...Unity is not uniformity. No Catholic authority, however exalted, has the right to exclude legitimately dissenting views from unhindered expression in the one Church of Christ. (“Unity is not Uniformity,” The Tablet, 21 September 2013)

This is why in many ways the CIT is better defined as Catholic intellectual life with the following signature qualities, habits of mind, and unique insights:

- **personhood**—the essential feature of each existent as the imago Dei or image of God underscoring the staggering conviction that we are all—singly and irrevocably—loved into existence by God irrespective of all the qualifying considerations such as gender, sex, color, race, ethnicity, etc.
• **communio**—no individual is an island; all are united in a kind of federation or commonwealth of the living and the dead

• **tangibility of the divine**—relics, signs, holy places, wells, sacred sites constitute a point of entry into a world that is not circumscribed—its mysteries not exhausted—by the rational categories, modes of investigation and scientific discourse that defines our reality

• **fides et ratio**—the Catholic genius recognizes the indispensability of both reason and faith in the making of a deeply, spiritually constitutively, human culture. The creative energy and friction that is spawned by the dialectic of reason with faith ensures that religious belief is not a phantasm and rational understanding not the sole arbiter of human meaning and destiny

• **holiness**—the call to an integrated life—centered on Christ and the ethic of self-emptying—is not an esoteric, Gnostic or elitist invitation, but a common fruit of our baptism; Catholicism, despite its fondness for hierarchy, is essentially democratic and egalitarian

• **intellectual and spiritual fecundity**—the richness of the Catholic heritage is in great measure to be found in its capacity to generate new thinking from old, to build on the past and not to be held hostage to it, to value both syncretism and institutional fidelity, authority and prophecy, continuity and innovation.

These characteristics of the Tradition—in the most inclusive sense of that term—are in ready evidence at Sacred Heart University.

Sacred Heart University, more now than even at its birth in 1963, is an intellectually polished partner in the larger Catholic Higher Education Enterprise, a seasoned participant in the making of a civic and noble society and a credible witness to the enduring virtues of social justice, inclusivity and enlightened tolerance that speak to the strengths of a Catholic education.

As the university looks forward to the next half-century of its life, it is resolute in its commitment to that pioneering spirit so much in evidence at its founding. That “spirit” is best seen in SHU’s

• institutional commitment to a social justice critique of the inequities in American society
• its creative balancing of the managerialist with the prophetic impulse
• its focus on humanist innovations in pedagogy, applied work ethics and research
• its recognition of the centrality of the pastoral and personal in its stewardship of the young

Sacred Heart strives to be a genuine “schola,” a sanctuary that privileges free time, an arena wherein can be found a space “to contemplate the mysteries of life,” a place of learning and formation, a gift to higher learning and the church.

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This document attests to the rich and storied history of the founding of Sacred Heart University and its first 50 years. Beginning with our founding by the Most Reverend Walter W. Curtis as the first university to be led and staffed by lay people, the Sacred Heart community has demonstrated a pioneering spirit and a commitment to growth and innovation.

From an original class of 167 commuter students, Sacred Heart has become the second-largest Catholic university in New England with approximately 6,400 full- and part-time undergraduate and graduate students hailing from across the United States and more than 30 foreign countries. In this, our 50th year, we welcome our largest freshman class in school history—close to 1,300 students. Today’s Sacred Heart students arrive to find a rich residential experience beginning with our living and learning communities that are designed to be an extension of the Sacred Heart classrooms where students can continue conversations from class, work on group projects and attend special programs. The residence halls are staffed with a residence hall director and residence success assistants who respond to emergencies, enforce rules and report maintenance needs. But more than that, they create and implement programs that align with Sacred Heart’s holistic approach toward living and learning and support our mission to mold students who are educated, compassionate and able to respond to an ever-changing world.

Away from the classroom and the residence halls, students at Sacred Heart have numerous options to discover new interests or reinforce old ones. These include a variety of academic, multicultural, recreational & social and service clubs; 31 Division I sports, competitive club sports and intramural leagues; a Greek Life community made up of five fraternities, seven sororities and close to 800 students; and opportunities to participate in the performing arts or student government.

In the realm of academics, Sacred Heart has grown to include five colleges—the College of Arts & Sciences, the John F. Welch College of Business, the Isabelle Farrington College of Education, the College of Health Professions and University College. Our core curriculum consists of three areas—the Foundational Core that develops skills needed for a global world and ever-changing society; the Common Core, which is academically rigorous, distinct, enduring and culminates with a capstone course that focuses on the practice of ethical thinking and moral decision making; and the elective core courses that develop knowledge needed for the major and for life-long learning. Last year, we introduced the First-Year Seminar, which is required of all first-year students at SHU and focuses on writing, communication and academic research. This year, we will complement the Seminar with SHUsquare, an online community where students and faculty can
share ideas, resources and their work across disciplines and where our students will have a place to find their own creative and intellectual voices. Again, the goal is to ensure that learning and conversation continue beyond the classroom.

Another example of Sacred Heart’s pioneerism in the academic realm is the continued expansion of our programs. This has been especially true in the graduate arena. We constantly respond to the ever-changing needs of our students, the community and the business world. Most recently, we added a master’s degree in cybersecurity and a teaching concentration in adult TESOL. We are currently seeking approval for doctorates in business administration and education and a master’s program in accounting.

A final component of the SHU experience is our focus on and commitment to community service. Before they even enter a classroom, freshman students have the opportunity to participate in our annual Community Connections Week, which takes place the week before fall classes begin. It is an immersion and orientation week-long program led by upper-class students and involving faculty and staff. It provides an introduction to various service opportunities in the surrounding community and increases students’ understanding of urban issues. Service in the community is an integral part of the mission of Sacred Heart University. Many opportunities exist for students to become involved during the academic year, through a service-learning project, Campus Ministry or volunteer program. During the past few years, students, faculty and staff have donated as many as 45,000 to 55,000 hours annually to community service—many of those locally. Opportunities range from the on-campus chapter of Habitat for Humanity or mentoring local public school students to annual mission trips to such locations as Guatemala, El Salvador and Costa Rica. Sacred Heart’s Division I athletes have won the NEC Building Communities Award all three years it has been in existence.

As we look ahead to the next 50 years (or maybe just the next five), we have broken ground on a new 125,000-square-foot academic building that will house the John F. Welch College of Business and the rapidly growing Department of Communication & Media Studies. It will also have space for community programs and events. In addition, we have increased our presence in Stamford with an expanded Graduate Center that will offer students access to many of Sacred Heart’s existing programs traditionally available only at our main campus in Fairfield. From the very beginning, the Sacred Heart community has not been content to rest on its laurels, and that continues to be the case. This past year, a committee of faculty members spent many, many hours identifying opportunities for innovation. They conducted interviews with leadership, faculty, staff and students. Their conclusions will be incorporated into our future planning as we continue to change and grow—all the while remaining true to our original mission, which is to prepare men and women to successfully live in and make contributions to their world and to humanity.