

LAY LEADERS IN
CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

*An Emerging Paradigm
for the Twenty-First Century*

Edited by
Anthony J. Cernera

SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY PRESS
FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT



Lay Leaders in Catholic Higher Education
An Emerging Paradigm for the Twenty-First Century

Edited by Anthony J. Cernera

Library of Congress Control Number: 2004116762

ISBN 1-888112-10-7 (hardcover)

Copyright 2005 by the Sacred Heart University Press

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in a review, this book, or parts thereof, must not be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher. For information, contact the Sacred Heart University Press, 5151 Park Avenue, Fairfield, Connecticut 06825.

Contents

Introduction	
<i>Anthony J. Cernera</i>	vii

PART I

DESCRIBING THE EMERGING PARADIGM: ISSUES, CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES

Leadership and the Age of the Laity: Emerging Patterns in Catholic Higher Education	
<i>Melanie M. Morey and Dennis H. Holtschneider</i>	3

Responses to Melanie M. Morey and Dennis H. Holtschneider	
<i>John J. DeGioia</i>	28
<i>Marilon Eldred</i>	33
<i>Alice B. Hayes</i>	38

PART II

THEOLOGICAL AND ECCLESIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR LAY LEADERSHIP

Sent Out to Serve: Disciples of Jesus as Leaders of Catholic Colleges and Universities in a New Era	
<i>Anthony J. Cernera</i>	45
Responses to Anthony J. Cernera	
<i>John E. Thiel</i>	63
<i>Diana L. Hayes</i>	70

PART III
SPIRITUALITY AND LAY LEADERS IN ACADEME

Spirituality and Lay Leaders in Academe <i>Lawrence S. Cunningham</i>	79
Responses to Lawrence S. Cunningham <i>Zeni Fox</i>	90
<i>Monika K. Hellwig</i>	97

PART IV
LAY LEADERS: ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

Trustess and Leadership for Mission <i>Charles L. Currie</i>	105
Sponsorship and the Religious Congregation <i>Karen M. Kennelly</i>	112
Sponsorship in the Twenty-First Century <i>Sheila Megley</i>	119
Catholic Through and Through <i>William J. Sneek</i>	125
Cultivating Catholic Identity on Campus <i>Kevin E. Mackin</i>	129
The Mission of the College of New Rochelle <i>Joan E. Bailey</i>	137
Expanding Notions of Catholic Identity <i>Sally M. Furay</i>	143
Shaping Leaders for the Future: Native American Students at Creighton <i>Tami Buffalohead-McGill and Raymond A. Bucko</i>	147
Notes on Contributors	161
Index	169

Introduction

ANTHONY J. CERNERA

Each year numerous conferences and symposia are sponsored on college and university campuses. One such conference drew over 180 senior-level educators, administrators, university trustees, and leaders of religious communities, including twenty-six Catholic college presidents, to Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut, from June 13-15, 2003. Jointly sponsored by the university and the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, "Lay Leaders in Catholic Higher Education: An Emerging Paradigm for the Twenty-First Century" included presentations, collaborative working groups, discussions of the theological and spiritual dimensions of effective leadership within Catholic higher education, presentations of models of success in lay leadership, and opportunities for prayer and worship.

In addition to the expected excellent and scholarly dialogue, something dramatic happened. Our intuitions and anecdotal observations about the state of lay leaders in Catholic higher education were confirmed. A study presented at the conference said that for the first time, lay people now outnumber clergy and members of religious orders as presidents of Catholic colleges and universities. The report, "Leadership and the Age of the Laity: Emerging Patterns in Catholic Higher Education," was based on a survey of the country's 222 Catholic college and university presidents, of whom 116 are lay. The authors, Melanie M. Morey and Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, presented their findings on the first evening of the conference. Of the many observations made in the report, I would like to concentrate on three points of particular interest as well as strategic concern for the future development of lay leaders that were confirmed by the study and

discussed by the participants of the Lay Leaders in Catholic Higher Education conference.

First, the number of lay leaders is growing and is likely to continue to grow. The implications of this new trend have yet to unfold but lay leaders will undoubtedly add a new and added dimension to the conversations and processes by which the Church and religious congregations interact with college presidents. Second, most lay presidents of Catholic colleges and universities have come to their job with little formal theological training (four percent have earned a terminal degree in theological studies). This would seem to present a challenge to being an effective leader of a Catholic institution, especially to one who is charged with promoting the Catholic identity of a university community. Third, most lay presidents resemble their peers at other institutions in terms of their courses of study and career paths, with the most common field of study being education. They also have diverse experiences and perceptions of what it means to be an excellent academic institution. These three points—and many others—were discussed in different ways at the conference and I would like to examine them briefly and discuss some of their implications.

Growing Numbers of Lay Leaders in Catholic Higher Education

Since the Second Vatican Council, lay women and men are assuming greater responsibility for guiding the mission of the Catholic Church in the modern world. This is particularly true in institutions of Catholic higher education in the United States. For example, Sacred Heart University was purposely established by the Most Reverend Walter W. Curtis, then bishop of Bridgeport, in 1963, to be led by lay people. His vision was truly a pioneering one. For the past fifteen years, I have served as the university's president and have lived with the challenges and blessings of being a lay leader. And now in 2004 my case is not the exception, but more the rule.

In recent times, as Catholic colleges and universities have been developing and growing, there has also been a continuing decline in the numbers of religious men and women. The changing

sponsorship-governance relationships between religious institutes and congregations and their college and university communities is the direct result of the aging of and decrease in numbers of qualified religious to staff these institutions. This shift in demographics has prompted a number of Catholic religious congregations and colleges to be involved in restructuring processes that intend to charge the laity with significant leadership responsibilities. Some Catholic colleges have become private institutions, and still others, due to the dramatic changes in the size, scope, and costs associated with higher education, have merged with other schools or closed their doors altogether. However, the story is not as bleak as some might suggest, since several new Catholic colleges are also being built.

But what will this mean for lay leaders to promote the relationship of Catholic colleges and universities with the local and universal Church? Surely a respectful seeking of the guidance of the Holy Spirit will assist in the task of integrating the teachings and spirit of Vatican II without being pulled back to a former time of fear and exclusion.

Catholic Identity

As noted above, most lay presidents come to the job with little formal theological training. If one is the leader of a Catholic institution, then one must know or be surrounded by people who are attentive to the Catholic intellectual tradition and be able to articulate a Catholic identity beyond anecdotal stories of youth and the superficial nostalgia of the good old days. But these are also good and promising days. Decisions of core curriculum, faculty hiring, research funding, and the practices, policies, and procedures with which we treat each other are exciting and critical opportunities for us to cultivate and renew our university communities with a Catholic character and heritage.

But should we not be wary of losing our Catholic identity, especially if our leaders have little formal theological training? The document *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* seems to be an effort by the Vatican to stop or even reverse the trend towards religious disengagement in American Catholic institutions. Such efforts are important.

Works by Douglas Sloan, Lawrence Soley, and, most notably, James T. Burtchaell, who studied the development of seventeen American colleges and universities that were founded by prominent churches, all lament the disengagement of a variety of schools from their founding religious vision to become non-sectarian.¹

Of course, Catholic lay presidents' life experiences will necessarily cause them to articulate the Catholic identity of their communities in different ways from their religious counterparts. In fact, the most interesting part of this unfolding history of lay leaders is that the presidency and the vast majority of the administrators, faculty, and staff of Catholic institutions are now and will continue to come largely from the laity. This requires colleges and universities to do the hard work of clarifying who they are, what they do, and most important, *why* they do these things.

Parts II and III of this volume present strategies to help us begin thinking about and fostering theological and spiritual education for lay leaders. The complexities of Church-university relations are still being debated, as is the proper role and responsibility of lay leaders to provide experiences and resources that promote spiritual growth. These issues will persist and increase in importance as diocesan and parish resources decrease.

In her book, *Negotiating Identity: Catholic Higher Education since 1960*, Alice Gallin, argues that much work remains to be done in articulating the characteristics that distinguish institutions as Catholic.² Establishing a powerful connection of vision, mission, and identity is the direct responsibility of sponsors and leaders. They will need to retain that which is historically important to the institution/community as well as adapt to the new opportunities of the future. To neglect either the past or future in the present is to risk an institutional identity crisis that could negatively impact enrollment and alumni/ae support.

Catholic Leadership in Action

Lay presidents have talents that distinguish them, one of which is that they are able to draw good people around them to care for the mission of their institutions. It should prove

interesting to observe the ways that lay leaders will engage the American culture and academy. Many have attended non-Catholic universities and presume, for example, that respect for individual rights, tolerance, justice, pluralism, and academic freedom are necessary conditions for truth to be discovered and wisdom to be lived. These leaders will not have the same kinds of wariness towards modernity and apprehensiveness that such conditions, if unleashed to the extreme, could obscure or destroy the very nature of education. Jaroslav Pelikan has rightly lamented that many universities bracket or ignore the religious areas of study and thereby offer students an inadequate and shallow form of knowledge and education.³

There should be no doubt at any of our institutions that we are unabashedly Catholic, that these are places where Jesus and the Church are found. Whether in the classroom, on the fields, in the residence halls, or serving the poor in the community, the language and life of faith is understood as necessarily integrated into all that we do and all we are.

As new models of Catholic higher education leadership emerge, it will continue to be very difficult for religious congregations to move from “doing” the majority of the apostolic work to “guiding,” as others pick up the torch in planning and practice. Vatican II’s *Perfectae Caritas*, as well as Pope Paul VI’s *Ecclesiae Sanctae* and *Evangelica Testificatio*, identify religious life as a response to a call by God to meet the needs of the Church. The Holy Spirit is still very much alive and calling religious congregations to serve in many ways. The training and recruitment of religious congregational members for the ministry in colleges and universities is important, but will not adequately address the coming challenge. The efforts of religious and laity working together must be more than creating figure head appointments with veto power.

Some universities are beginning to take a serious look at ways to better prepare lay presidents and administrators to lead Catholic institutions. Boston College started an institute in 2001 to help administrators of Catholic colleges deal with the transition from religious to lay leadership. Catholic colleges and universities will need to develop programs for students, employees, faculty,

parents, and trustees that promote theological education, spiritual development, ethical reflection, leadership development, and mission effectiveness.

The torch of Catholic higher education is not a static possession to be fearfully guarded, but a vision and way of life, fueled by the past, confidently carried by those who dare, like those before us, to bring Christ's faith, hope, and love into the future. I know we all look forward to the continued efforts to improve Catholic higher education. The recent conference at Sacred Heart University provides us with a new and hope-filled point of departure, and this present volume is a further step along the way. I hope that what you read here, which attempts to capture and expand on the conference presentations and conversations, will spur all of us to continue to engage our students and our Church as we explore and live out the emerging paradigm of lay leadership.

A special word of thanks is due to David L. Coppola, executive assistant to the president of Sacred Heart University, Sidney Gottlieb, professor of Media Studies and Digital Culture at Sacred Heart University, and Christopher J. Sheehan, Sacred Heart University writer and editor, for their efforts in bringing this work to completion.

Notes

1. Douglas Sloan, *Faith and Knowledge: Mainline Protestantism and American Higher Education* (London: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994); Lawrence Soley, *Leasing the Ivory Tower: The Corporate Takeover of Academia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995); James T. Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

2. Alice Gallin, *Negotiating Identity: Catholic Higher Education since 1960* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000).

3. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Idea of a University: A Reexamination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).