

PART I

*Describing the Emerging Paradigm:
Issues, Challenges, Opportunities*

*Leadership and the Age of the Laity:
Emerging Patterns in
Catholic Higher Education*

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For most of the history of Catholic higher education in the United States, the selection and preparation of leaders was a relatively stable process controlled almost entirely by the bishops and religious congregations that founded and ran the colleges and universities. Over the last thirty-five years lay men and women increasingly entered the leadership pool. As they did, the once well-established pipeline and preparation process for leadership became less well-defined, less certain. Today, more than half the presidents of Catholic colleges and universities are lay persons.¹ The trend toward selecting Catholic lay persons as presidents will continue. We are at a point now where we can compare the backgrounds, aspirations, and career paths of religious and lay presidents—the general focus of this study, which is a key part of its authors' effort to focus on the challenges and promise inherent in the emerging patterns of leadership in American Catholic higher education.²

Notes on Methodology

The Leadership Trends Study began in summer 2002 and continued into the fall. Presidents of the country's 222 Catholic colleges and universities were sent twelve-page survey instruments that asked both informational and open-ended questions about presidential backgrounds and aspirations. The surveys focused on the institutional challenges presidents are facing and will face in the near future, as well as on how they understand Catholic higher education

as an enterprise and how it is likely to develop over the next ten years. Fifty-five percent of the surveys were completed and returned.

In order to position this study in relation to the broader landscape of American higher education, we asked a series of questions that mirrored questions posed in the American Council on Education's recently published survey.³ The ACE data were then used to compare the presidents of Catholic colleges and universities with their peers in all areas of American higher education.⁴

Findings

Two types of results emerge from this study. One is almost purely factual and statistical while the second is more interpretive. Since the survey covers over 55% of all presidents and because in this paper we focus on major differences between religious and lay presidents, the factual, statistical results speak largely for themselves. For the interpretive results, we will present arguments and analysis to justify our interpretation.

The seven principal factual findings presented in this paper represent a provocative portrait of leadership in Catholic higher education. Interestingly, the portrait that emerges contravenes much of the conventional wisdom that swirls in the atmosphere and peppers conversations of those attentive to this sector of American higher education.

It might be possible, when listening to public discourse on the topic, to believe that there is something unique about Catholic college and university presidents, compared to their counterparts in other colleges and universities, and that women are coming into their own in leadership in all institutional arenas in higher learning. It also might be possible to believe that faculty, who play a central role in colleges and universities and are the primary and most long-term collegiate educators, are committed to enriching the Catholic character, identity, and mission of the institutions they serve. Public discourse sometimes suggests that lay persons are being chosen over religious men and women to lead Catholic colleges and universities and that they are adequately prepared in terms of religious background and training for their presidential tasks. The conversation could suggest that presidents have emerged

from ten years of painful and conflicted interaction around all aspects of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* with little desire for a relationship with their local ordinaries. And, finally, with all the focus on and discussion of Catholic identity and mission, it would seem natural that some common definitions and clarity of purpose had been achieved. The findings of this study challenge all these perceptions.

Along with the factual findings, two interpretive conclusions emerge from this study. First, the boards of trustees who hire presidents have not yet identified minimum standards of religious education and training they deem essential for all Catholic college and university presidents. Second, the increasing dominance of lay persons in the leadership of Catholic colleges and universities has had an ambiguous impact; at best, in terms of the ideological divides in Catholic higher education. Conservative, liberal, and middle of the road lay men and women are assuming leadership positions in institutions that represent the full range of the ideological spectrum. The involvement of lay persons has resulted in neither a general trend toward any one type of leader nor a tilt toward a particular institutional ideology.

Who are the Catholic college and university presidents?

Finding 1: As a cohort, Catholic college and university presidents increasingly resemble their presidential peers elsewhere in U.S. higher education.

Catholic college presidents were generally religious and/or priests in past years, and because of this they differed as a cohort from their presidential peers at other institutions in notable ways. These differences often could be seen in the types of degrees they held, their fields of study and expertise, their career paths, reasons they sought or accepted a presidency, and, perhaps most notably, in their gender mix. As Catholic institutions of higher education have become increasingly led by lay people, these differences are fading.

Fields of Study

Perhaps the most obvious example of the trend is in the area of a president's field of study. Thirty-four percent of the religious

presidents, for example, have theology/religious studies degrees, while only 4% of lay presidents have concentrated in theological studies. That is actually less than their peers in the ACE study of presidents, where 7% of presidents have terminal degrees in religion or theology.⁵

After theology, the second-most common major field of study for presidents who are religious is education, where 30% of religious presidents have education degrees. Forty-three percent of lay Catholic college presidents have graduate education degrees, making that the most common field of study for lay presidents. Forty-three percent mirrors exactly the national proportion of presidents with education degrees in American higher education.⁶ Lay presidents and religious presidents have chosen fields in the humanities in similar numbers (20% lay; 18% religious), but lay people are far more likely to have concentrated in the professions (20% lay; 7% religious).

The fact that only 4% of lay presidents have concentrated in theological studies, compared to 34% of their religious counterparts, suggests that the future leadership of Catholic colleges and universities will be far less likely to have formal theological training at an advanced level than previous generations of presidents who, as members of religious congregations were more apt to be so schooled.

It is not surprising that all presidents who are religious report having formal religious training and formation. What is surprising, however, is that 27% of lay presidents had some previous formal religious formation while training to become priests or religious. This level of religious formation among lay leaders has contributed to religious coherence during the transition from religious to lay leadership. Because the stream of lay leaders who once spent time in religious formation has slowed to a trickle, this source of religious coherence will disappear.

Career Paths

Differences also can be noticed in the career tracks lay and religious take toward their first presidencies. Sixty-two percent of religious presidents report having held an administrative post

before assuming a presidency, while 81% of lay presidents first participated in a search while serving in an administrative post. This again matches the exact proportion reported in the 2001 ACE study of presidents, where 82% of presidents held administrative posts before assuming a presidency.⁷ It also is more likely that lay people served as academic officers prior to their first presidential search, but not by a large margin: 43% of lay presidents came from academic administration, while 37% of religious served as academic officers before coming to a presidency. Religious presidents were more likely to come to a search directly from a faculty position (15% religious; 9% lay). Religious presidents also were more likely to come from outside higher education altogether (22% religious; 5% lay).

When asked why they first considered seeking a presidency at this time in their lives, 24% of religious presidents responded using religious language such as “advancing the mission,” “obedience to the request of a superior,” and “service to the church.” Four percent of lay presidents used such language in their responses. On the other hand, 67% of lay presidents listed professional and practical considerations in weighing a possible presidential bid, such as the “time was right,” “the location of the institution was agreeable,” or they “were interested in and/or prepared to meet the challenges of the presidency,” whereas only 30% of religious presidents reported considering such factors prior to accepting a presidency.

These differences persist when presidents are asked why they ultimately chose to accept the offer of a presidency. Slightly over a third of the responses of religious presidents (35%) spoke of such things as the Catholic identity of the institution, the opportunity to contribute to the church, religious commitment, values, mission, service, the will of God, and/or responsibility and commitment to the founding congregation. Similar motivations represented only 19% of the responses of lay presidents. For 54% of all lay presidents, professional and practical considerations such as “being prepared or ready,” “a great opportunity,” “location,” “good fit,” or “the time was right” were the most commonly mentioned reasons for accepting a presidency. For religious presidents, 36% spoke of such matters.⁸

The fact that lay presidents were far less likely to explain their reasons for accepting a presidency in terms of religious mission, sense of vocation, or categories of service should not necessarily be interpreted to mean they do not have religious motivation. Nevertheless, it is striking that even when answering a survey that clearly focused on the religious mission of their institutions, lay presidents were far less likely to speak in such terms.

Lay presidents are less likely than their religious counterparts to have theology degrees; they are less likely to have doctoral degrees in the arts or sciences, and they are less likely to have served in other positions at the institution at which they are currently president. Lay presidents are less likely to have come to the presidency directly from a faculty position or from a position outside higher education altogether and more likely to have education or professional degrees. Lay presidents are more likely to have held an administrative post prior to being appointed president, and are more likely to explain their reasons for accepting a presidency in terms of professional and practical considerations. In all these matters, lay presidents of Catholic colleges and universities more closely resemble their presidential peers at non-Catholic institutions than do their religious counterparts in Catholic higher education.

Finding 2: Women are disappearing from the presidency in Catholic colleges and universities.

Across the landscape of American higher education, men are more likely than women to be presidents. In Catholic colleges and universities, males dominate in numbers, but to a lesser extent. The ACE study reports that 79% of college and university presidents are men, while 21% are women. By contrast, the LTS reports that only 64% of presidents are men, while 36% are women. On the face of it, the Catholic sector appears a somewhat more hospitable environment than higher education in general for women to exercise presidential leadership. Appearances are deceiving, however, if one fails to appreciate the historical preeminence of women presidents in Catholic institutions founded by women's religious congregations.

In 1967, 169 of the 266 Catholic colleges and universities open to lay enrollment (64%) were founded by women religious, and all of these were led by female members of the founding religious congregations.⁹ In 2002-03, according to LTS findings, about a third of Catholic colleges and universities had women presidents. So, while the percentage of women presidents is far greater in Catholic higher education than in higher education nationally, the trend lines for each group are headed in decidedly different directions. The ACE study reports that in the years 1986-2001 the percentage of women presidents more than doubled. In the last thirty-five years the percentage of women presidents in Catholic higher education, on the other hand, has been steadily decreasing.

In American higher education, generally, the number of women presidents is on the rise in doctorate-granting institutions.¹⁰ That is not the case in Catholic higher education. According to the ACE study, in 1986 only 4.3% of public doctorate-granting institutions had women presidents. In that same year 2.9% of the private doctorate-granting institutions were led by women. By 2001 significant gains were made by women nationally. Among public doctorate-granting institutions, 15.7% had women presidents, and 8.9% of similar private institutions also were led by women.¹¹ By contrast, in 2003 only one of the Catholic doctorate-granting universities is led by a woman president.¹²

In the past two years, thirty new presidents have been named at Catholic colleges and universities in the United States.¹³ Twenty-one of the presidents named, 70%, were men and nine were women. Women presidents were appointed only in those institutions founded by women religious, and, among those institutions, fully 52%, or ten institutions, appointed men to lead them.¹⁴

Clearly women are making inroads in the leadership ranks in American higher education. At Catholic institutions, however, their historic place is eroding. At this point it is difficult to know if, when, or where the trend line for Catholic institutions will bottom out and the one for higher education nationally will peak. Both trends could settle within a reasonable striking distance of each other or continue until a wide gap emerges. For the moment, however, we can report only the trend—one that looks less promising for women in Catholic higher education than in American higher education more generally.

Finding 3: Lay persons infrequently emerge as presidents from finalist pools containing members of the founding religious congregation.

Searches producing lay presidents, by and large, have no founding congregation members in the finalist pool.¹⁵ When asked if there were any founding congregation members in the finalist pool from which they were chosen president, 90% of lay presidents said there were not. If the candidate pool consisted of all lay professionals, then obviously a lay person was chosen. That was the case for 90% of the lay presidents in this study. Only 4% of all the presidents responding to LTS, however, were lay presidents chosen over congregational finalists. There is an apparent preference among boards for presidents who are members of founding religious congregations. Generally speaking, this apparent preference persists even when these religious men and women have less administrative experience than lay finalists.

In response to questions about career path, 81% of lay presidents indicated serving in an administrative post when first considered for a presidency, whereas only 62% of religious presidents had been similarly employed. Religious presidents, on the other hand, were more likely to come to a search directly from a faculty position (15% religious; 9% lay). Religious presidents were also far more likely than lay presidents to come to a presidency from outside higher education (22% religious; 5% lay).

It is at least curious that at a time in the nation when seasoned higher education administrators are increasingly in demand to fill presidential posts, selection committees at Catholic colleges and universities are willing to go directly into the faculty or outside higher education altogether to find a religious president.¹⁶ Any number of reasons might explain this counter-intuitive preference, but commitment to loyalty, legitimacy, literacy, and formal religious formation seem particularly plausible.

Loyalty to the founding congregation is one obvious reason some boards might prefer religious to lay people for a presidency. Having a member of the founding congregation as president is an obvious and direct way to support and enhance the founding heritage and legacy of the institution. This kind of loyalty emerges

even in situations in which a board chooses a lay person. When boards do hire lay men or women, they often hire those who once had some sustained and real contact with the congregational charism, individuals (for example, who have studied or worked at one of the founding congregation's institutions).

While congregational loyalty may be the motivation in some circumstances, it cannot fully explain the apparent preference for religious presidents. There are a number of circumstances in which the religious president chosen is not a member of the founding congregation and has little or no connection with that congregation or the college itself. In those cases religious status, not congregational affiliation, seems to be the more significant factor.

A presumption of legitimacy might also underlie the selection of religious for leadership at Catholic colleges and universities. Religious men and women by their very presence have provided a vital component of Catholic institutional identity in all of their institutional ministries. Patricia Wittberg points out that

Catholic hospitals, schools, and social-work agencies derived their religious identity primarily from the presence of religious congregations. Religious nurses, teachers, and social workers, all fully habited, served as living icons of the spiritual character of these institutions. . . . Without pointing to the congregation's presence, it would have been hard for a school or hospital to articulate what made it Catholic. Until the mid 1960s, however, the two were so intertwined that the question never even arose.¹⁷

At a time when Catholic identity is at best an illusive concept, this iconic presence remains a powerful legitimating factor that simply is not available to lay persons in the Church.

Religious literacy is another factor that might enhance the candidacy of religious men and women in a presidential search. Selection committees recognize that men and women religious have strong academic backgrounds in theology and philosophy, something quite rare among most lay persons. In situations in which leadership for Catholic character and mission are primary

considerations, religious candidates could well have a significant edge over their lay colleagues because of this training.

The fact that formal religious formation may play an even more important role than theological literacy in a board's presidential hiring decisions is born out in the study. Data indicate that when boards hire lay presidents, they appear to give preference to former religious or individuals who once studied in a religious formation program. They do not, however, give preference to laity with religious studies or theology degrees. It is spiritual formation and congregational connection, not theological literacy, which attracts boards to men and women religious and ex-religious. These kinds of commitments and connections can be assumed with religious, but must be demonstrated by lay candidates.

Finding 4: There is a significant lack of formal theological and spiritual preparation among presidents. There is also widespread agreement among presidents that inadequate lay preparation presents a problem for the future of Catholic higher education. Despite this, few lay presidents (9%) report that they personally feel ill-equipped to lead the religious mission of their institutions.

Perceptions

Forty percent of presidents indicated that there is something lacking in the effective preparation, development, and empowerment of lay leadership in Catholic higher education. Presidents, both lay and religious, fear that without serious attention to this dimension the Catholic and congregational identity and mission of these institutions will fade away. One religious president believes, "As priests, brothers, and nuns age and decline in numbers, the need for informed, competent administrators in Catholic higher education will become more acute. Compounding this problem is the limited pool of potential lay leaders who are familiar with the Catholic religious and educational heritage." This particular position is most often articulated by religious presidents who truly wonder whether lay

leadership is up to the task of leadership for Catholic character, mission, and identity given their present levels of education and preparation.

When asked to describe the areas of leadership they perceived themselves most prepared to assume the first day they began their presidency and the areas of leadership they felt least prepared to assume, small differences emerged between lay and religious presidents. Their responses fell into three general categories: organizational leadership—the preparation necessary to run any complex organization, educational or otherwise; faculty and academic culture—elements specific to higher education; and religious character, mission, and identity—elements unique to Catholic colleges and universities.

When speaking of the ways in which they felt best prepared, most presidents chose to list items related to the day-to-day operations of their institutions, such as budgeting and financial management, advancement, public relations, admissions, technology, strategic planning, staff development, personnel management, and overall leadership. (68% lay, 58% religious). A lesser number reported that they felt very well-prepared to negotiate the faculty and academic culture of their institutions (20% lay, 30% religious). A few mentioned feeling well-prepared to lead the religious mission of their colleges (9% lay, 11% religious).

The same rank order repeated itself when presidents reported the areas of leadership they felt least prepared to assume. They spoke most frequently of feeling ill-equipped to solve organizational difficulties related to financial crises, enrollment management, and most particularly, institutional fund-raising. This was exacerbated by the lack of privacy and pervasive loneliness of a job many came to understand only after assuming their roles (67% lay, 76% religious). Particular examples of academic culture and faculty resistance were cited far less often than organizational issues by religious presidents (16%) and lay presidents (19%) as areas for which they felt ill-prepared.

In the area of religious character, mission, and identity, only 7% of religious presidents and 9% of lay presidents reported feeling ill-prepared. (There were four “amazing” presidents, one

religious and three lay, who felt ill-prepared for nothing, and one lone lay president who claimed that in the first year of the presidency everything was overwhelming.)

Preparation

Lay and religious presidents responding to the LTS reported very different preparation for leading the religious mission of their institutions. All religious presidents reported having taken undergraduate theology and philosophy courses, and 61% of them have graduate degrees in theological or religious studies. All of the religious presidents also have participated in formal religious formation within their congregations or in the seminary. Sixty-three percent of this group claimed further participation in ongoing formation programs such as institutes or special courses.

Sixteen percent of lay presidents have graduate level degrees in theological or religious studies. Twenty-seven percent have had some formal religious formation within seminaries or religious congregations, and 45% of lay presidents, slightly less than half, have taken at least one undergraduate theology and philosophy course. That means, however, that 55% of lay presidents have no religious training beyond high school, while 30% of lay presidents report no religious or theological education of any kind.

The differences between these two groups are striking. For the most part, however, lay presidents do not see their lack of religious knowledge and formation as a particular weakness in terms of their own presidency. It is unclear why this is the case. Perhaps critical financial, enrollment, or advancement issues loom so large that the Catholic character and mission of the institution pales in comparison. Some presidents may have compensated for their own limitations in this area by delegating the responsibility to others in the institution. Other presidents may find responsibilities in this area so unspecific and vague that their own limitations pose no real challenge to a sense of professional adequacy.

At the same time, some presidents who dismiss a lack of preparation as a negative influence in their own presidency clearly identify it as a problem for Catholic higher education as a whole.

There are different ways of looking at this seeming contradiction. Some presidents are, in fact, well-prepared themselves and the general trend has no particular application in their case. It is also quite possible that presidents were unwilling to draw the obvious personal conclusion about their own preparation gaps in a national survey. Finally, it is possible that, like most of us, Catholic college and university presidents have an uncanny ability to see the splinter in another's eye while missing the plank in their own. Whatever the reasons for the personal optimism, the data clearly indicate that lay presidents lack significant preparation for leadership in the areas of mission and identity, and, at least in general terms, identify this gap as a serious problem for the future of Catholic higher education, but not for themselves individually.

Addressing the Preparation Gap

While there might be reasons for an institution to hire a president with little preparation for identity and mission leadership, it hardly seems reasonable to leave this leadership gap unattended. Unfortunately, there is little concerted effort made by institutions to educate presidents in any systematic way.

When asked how they became educated about the mission and heritage of the institution they lead, only 15% of the respondents indicated participation in any formal congregation- or institution-sponsored program. None indicated participation in any formal external program. Fifty-six percent of the responses of religious presidents indicated previous experience or education including religious formation as the way they were educated about heritage and mission. Only 10% of lay presidents' responses fell into this category. Seventy-seven percent of lay presidents claimed they were self-taught in the areas of heritage and mission, and 83.5% of all their responses indicated informal interaction or personal reading as the source of their knowledge about the religious history, character, and mission of the college or university at which they serve as chief executive officer.

There are very few formal programs established within congregations or at colleges and universities to bring a president up to speed. Likewise, there is a paucity of programs outside

individual institutions that offer formal preparation for mission and identity leadership. With so few opportunities or programs in existence, presidents are largely left to their own devices when it comes to preparing to lead their institutions in the one truly unique aspect of their heritage and mission.

Lay and religious presidents have distinctly different levels of preparation for leadership in the area of Catholic heritage, tradition, and identity. With little or no formal preparation, formation, or study, lay men and women enter Catholic college and university presidencies with a distinct leadership disadvantage. It would seem that this lack of religious education and formation could have a negative impact on the enterprise of Catholic higher education. Presidents, however, do not seem convinced, nor do the institutions they serve.

Contending with Mission

Finding 5: Forty-one percent of religious and 26% of lay presidents find the phrases “Catholic identity” and “Catholic intellectual tradition” to be fuzzy concepts that lack sufficient vitality on campuses. They want clearer definitions so they can develop strategies to effectively enhance this unique identity on their own campuses.

Presidents asked, “How do we understand mission as more than rhetoric and historical tradition? How do we avoid the mission becoming so diffuse or diluted [that] the institution becomes disconnected from its purpose?” With a desire “to stop blowing in the wind and stand for something,” many presidents agree that Catholic colleges and universities must “maintain a Catholic identity, being precise about what that identity means and the reasons for the importance of sustaining Catholic higher education.” They believe that without clear definition and strategic attention, there is no hope a Catholic intellectual tradition will thrive as the heart of their institutions.

Finding 6: Presidents desire a more supportive working relationship with the hierarchical church but find such a

relationship elusive and complex. Female presidents (27%) identify this more often than male presidents (13%). Lay presidents (27%) identify this more often than their religious counterparts (10%).

The *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* discussion over the last ten years compounded the tension between the Church and presidents. Some presidents believe that it remains a potential arena of mischief that will only further frustrate their relationship with the Church. Other presidents see this process, albeit painful and prickly, as having forced a conversation that otherwise would have been avoided.

When asked to list the most important challenges facing Catholic higher education, 18% of presidents stated that a workable relationship with the organizational Church, one that is a support to the enterprise rather than an impediment, is important for assuring the vibrancy of Catholic higher education in the United States. They want to move on and away from the bitterness and lack of trust that often characterized their relationships with the organizational Church over the past decade and identify strategies for creating deeper appreciation and support between both parties. At the same time, they seek respect for the contributions their institutions make to the Church. These presidents believe that a continuation of a brittle standoff between colleges and hierarchical authorities will serve no one's purposes.

The more frequent concern for this on the part of female and lay presidents is important to note. Educated women in this Church have long felt the ironies of working within a system that rarely invites women into the circles of Church decision making. Lay presidents feel only too keenly that the relationship they have to hierarchical leadership is more formalized and distant than the one enjoyed by their religious predecessors. Both groups feel less able than religious to shape the Church's involvement with their institutions.

Finding 7: Presidents all acknowledge the central role faculty play in their institutions. Nevertheless, many presidents, both lay and religious, report that the faculty is an obstacle to effective leadership in the area of Catholic character, mission, and identity.

Presidents in the study were asked about what interferes with their ability to lead the Catholic character and mission of their institutions. The presidents also were asked what they find most difficult about leadership in Catholic higher education. Combining their responses to these two questions proved interesting and revealed that faculty are seen to represent a major obstacle in the area of Catholic character, mission, and identity.

The area of greatest presidential concern in terms of leadership for Catholic identity and mission is the impact of unsupportive faculty and staff on the religious mission of the colleges and universities. Thirty-two percent of lay presidents and 40% of religious presidents report contending with faculty and staff who are tradition-illiterate, hostile toward, or simply uninterested in the Catholic mission and identity of the institutions in which they serve. At one institution the president rather gently points out that interference in his institution comes from "the attitude of some faculty who would like to see the college be an excellent liberal arts institution, but one that is purely secular. Academic excellence alone should be, according to them, the coin of the realm without any reference to or influence by a religious perspective."

Presidents try to deal with the lack of faculty support in a number of ways, in most cases avoiding tackling the issue head-on. One president "continues a background action to try to preserve identity and mission against a growing indifference with smaller and smaller groups of committed professionals." Another placates "some of the old guard faculty, who came in the late 1960s and early 1970s as Catholics, [and] are now bitter toward the Church and resist the label 'Catholic University.' I have found it much more acceptable to them if I emphasize the congregational character of the university."

Interpretive Results

Two interpretive results also emerged from the study. Each is supported by the data, but the assertions are also based on an analysis of the way in which modern Catholic colleges and universities function.

Interpretive Result 1: Boards of trustees have not yet identified minimum standards for religious education and training that lay presidents are expected to meet.

At the same time that lay Catholics started to be selected as presidents of Catholic colleges and universities, a structural change took place in the governance of Catholic institutions of higher education. Prior to the late 1960s, practically all boards of trustees of Catholic institutions were comprised almost exclusively of members of the founding religious congregations. Under the leadership of institutions such as the University of Notre Dame, the College of New Rochelle, and Saint Louis University, lay people were made trustees and assumed leadership roles in governing their institutions.

For the first two or three decades that lay persons assumed such leadership positions, the results were deemed favorable by many. It is well to note that these halcyon years were dominated by deference, particularly in the area of religious identity and mission, to the religious trustees, who represented the interests and concerns of the founding congregations. Reliance on religious trustees has become more problematic over time. Religious congregations have aged and become smaller and are less and less able to appoint member trustees with real knowledge of, or interest in, higher education ministry. Lay trustees have had to become more knowledgeable and tactical about selecting lay presidents. While they have become more proficient in terms of assessing the capacity and fit of candidates in traditional areas of executive leadership, their expectations regarding mission and identity leadership have remained vague, unfocused, and largely unarticulated.

If the people who hire them remain unable to define appropriate religious qualifications for Catholic college presidents, it is unlikely there will be any consensus about what background should be deemed adequate for these leadership roles. If this lack of clarity among trustees continues, the chances for mission drift only compound.

Interpretive Result 2: Ideological divisions are well-known in American Catholic higher education today. There is no

indication that the increasing dominance of lay persons in the leadership of Catholic institutions of higher education will do anything to diminish these stark differences. In fact, they may actually intensify.

The Catholic ideological wars that presidents endure are a fact of life that presidents will, most likely, have to live with for the foreseeable future. The frustration that presidents express in response to these pitched battles ranges from slightly irritated, to beleaguered, to downright indignant. Interestingly, the frustration seems to have gender overtones and is far more of a burden to men than women. Only 9% of women presidents claim they are plagued by the orthodoxy wars, while 24% of male presidents say they find the attacks from the left and the right to be major obstacles to leadership.

One of the milder presidential assessments of ideological difficulties maintains that the most taxing aspect of Catholic institutional leadership is “being in the middle between ultra-conservative Catholics who really don’t understand the university’s role and those who may understand it but are opposed.” A more outraged president rails against the

chronic and often scandalous pressure and interference from the right wing, the self-appointed third-party groups that the bishops should shut down in the name of the Church. Allowing faculty and administrators to be subjected to and harassed by the intemperate, intolerant, and ignorant rants of the righteous is both disappointing and discouraging when we work so hard to keep our institutions going. Instead of having our contributions recognized and praised, we are often viewed with suspicion and treated as “fair game” by the self-appointed watchdogs who would hardly survive a day in our trenches.

What is of particular interest about the internal and external “Catholicity police” is the fact that, by and large, they are lay people. From outspoken faculty on the one side who deride the

incursion of church in the academy to the members of the Cardinal Newman Society on the other who constantly call fidelity froufrou, the loudest proponents of Catholic "gotcha!" are lay people who do not wait for religious and clerical permission to level their attacks on the purported misdeeds of Catholic colleges and the presidents who lead them.

Caught between a faculty that is telling them they are too Catholic and conservative Catholics who tell them they are not Catholic enough, presidents feel beaten up by critics who are often less interested in finding solutions than in chastising presidents for failure to meet a preexisting standard. In the face of internal critics championing the academy and external critics challenging their lack of fidelity, every decision becomes a moment for Solomon. Clearly, leadership in the area of Catholic character and mission is not for the faint of heart.

Conclusion

In the survey's final question, presidents were asked to predict the future by indicating the major changes they anticipate for Catholic higher education in five to ten years. For the most part, their responses revealed conventional wisdom. They told us that priests and religious will continue to disappear from Catholic higher education, and that laity will almost entirely eclipse religious leadership and control (33%). They predicted a greater emphasis on the Catholic intellectual tradition and institutional identity (57%). Fifty-four percent of respondents, however, also predicted that there would be fewer Catholic institutions of higher learning in five to ten years, as a result of a series of closures, consolidations, or takeovers of the smaller, more financially fragile institutions. We suspect that the truth of that prediction is more complex than first meets the eye.

Certainly, some colleges will close. Notre Dame College in New Hampshire and Trinity College in Vermont both closed their doors in recent years; Barat College was assumed by DePaul University, and St. Mary's College in Michigan will be acquired by Madonna University in July. Yet, several new Catholic colleges have either recently opened or announced plans to break ground.

Our Lady of Corpus Christi, Ave Maria College and Law School, the two Campion Colleges (in Washington, D.C., and San Francisco), the Catholic Distance University, the College of the South, and most recently De La Salle University, to be located near Sacramento, and the University of Sacramento are additions to the ranks of Catholic colleges and universities. Not all “start-ups” survive, of course, but these new colleges have more than balanced the numbers of Catholic colleges that have recently closed.

Widespread predictions made in the 1970s and 1980s about the terrible fate awaiting much of American higher education were wrong.¹⁸ Grim forecasts about the future for small liberal arts colleges throughout their history also have proven untrustworthy.¹⁹ A careful examination of the history of small colleges shows that many of these institutions have proven to be agile and creative in times of financial crises and, while not becoming wealthy, have managed to stay viable. These are small institutions, and quick, significant change is far easier for them than for larger institutions. Counting them out too quickly could prove unwise.

There is another factor, however, that may prove more tenacious in thinning the ranks of Catholic institutions. Some may choose to abandon their Catholic identity and chart the future as private, non-sectarian institutions. Six—Medaille College, Villa Julie College, Daeman College, Marymount Manhattan College, Nazareth College, and most recently, Marist College—already have chosen to take this path.

A careful reading of survey responses predicting the closure of Catholic colleges cannot help but notice a tone of glib detachment in some of the responses. Some respondents simply write off the smaller colleges, presuming their closure to be of little consequence. This indifference to their fate underestimates the effect their demise could have on the enterprise of Catholic higher education, especially when an institution represents the only Catholic higher education presence in a given region.

A new generation of leadership has arrived in American Catholic higher education in a church that traditionally has identified future leaders from its religious ranks; prepared

successive generations of leaders through seminaries, formation programs, and guided career moves; granted moral credibility and leadership through the structures of vows or ordination; and conducted the informal conversations of leadership between bishop and college president in the comfort and context of shared religious profession.

This new generation of presidents, lay professionals, arrives with the extensive preparation, professional experience, and credentials of their lay peers in non-Catholic higher education. With the exception of the transition group of lay men and women who were in formation programs earlier in their careers, the religious background of lay presidents largely ended at confirmation or in required religious studies courses while in college. Reassuringly, lay presidents are committed to enhancing the Catholic nature of their institutions, but nearly all report a lack of clarity on how to proceed. Most report that they have little idea how to understand, assess, manage, or even how to promote Catholic character and identity. In addition, they feel a lack of support within, a sense of attack from without, and a belief that close working relationships with their bishops could be much improved.

These lay professionals assume their presidencies in a historical moment that follows three great transitions in Catholic higher education. As Catholics increasingly migrated into the mainstream, Catholic students began to apply to and attend secular private institutions for the first time in significant numbers in the mid- and late-1960s. The broad stream of Catholic students available to Catholic institutions greatly narrowed. Many single-sex institutions became coeducational. Catholic institutions responded by adjusting their marketing and curricula, and appealing to a broader range of students, many of whom were not Catholic.

Second, as the pressure to compete within mainstream American higher education grew, and as the numbers of trained and available religious diminished, the religious faculty and administration were supplemented and replaced with lay Catholics, as well as non-Catholic professionals. Chosen for their diversity and academic competitiveness, many of these faculty members complemented established, long-term religious faculty and staff.

Once the religious began disappearing from campuses, however, the impact of this more diverse lay faculty with little or no commitment to the religious character of the institution posed a hitherto unanticipated threat to the religious authenticity of Catholic colleges and universities.

The third dramatic transition occurred when Catholic colleges and universities steadily shifted from predominantly religious to lay governance. This happened within the context of a church that to this day provides only basic religious education to laity and considerable formation to religious men and women. Initially, men and women religious continued to set the tone and direction of university policy. As the number of lay trustees increased and their experience broadened, they assumed greater responsibility for the direction of policy.

For at least two decades, trustees have been aware that the leadership of Catholic institutions is passing to lay persons. During most of this period, however, the lay trustees rarely had to think about the religious preparation of presidential candidates who were priests or members of religious congregations. That has changed over time, and lay trustees now have to confront the challenge of assessing adequate religious formation, knowledge, and commitment among potential lay presidents. They are called to do this in challenging times and with no established guidelines to direct them.

This study shows that lay people are increasingly running Catholic institutions of higher education in the United States. Their responses indicate that they care deeply about maintaining the Catholic identity of the institutions. Their views about that Catholic identity, however, cover a broad spectrum of attitudes and assumptions, and they vary greatly in the ways in which they promote the Catholic faith in their own institutions. There is no unanimity and little convergence around practical means to promote the Catholic culture of these institutions.

Many lay presidents genuinely struggle with their own lack of clarity about the Catholic intellectual tradition and about the degree to which they can assert moral and religious leadership over other lay professionals at their institutions. They are unsure about how much explicit focus on religion the market will bear,

now that the true market for Catholic higher education is broader than just Catholics. They are also unclear about the particular ways Catholicism might be instilled when Catholicism itself is divided ideologically.

Lay leadership is increasingly the norm, not the exception, in Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. Lay leaders are accepting their increasing responsibility at a time when the structural supports of the past have eroded and the future contours of the enterprise appear dimly in the mist. What is clear is that the shape of Catholic higher education in the future will be in the hands of faith-filled and hardworking lay men and women. Providing a clearer portrait of the emerging patterns of leadership in American Catholic higher education is a place to begin to understand and prepare for that future.

Notes

1. Of the 222 Catholic institutions of higher education in the U.S., 116 have lay presidents and 106 have presidents who are priests or members of religious congregations.

2. In this paper we use the words “religious” and “lay” as they are used in ordinary parlance, though this use does not conform to the meaning of these words as they are used technically within the Roman Catholic Church. According to canon law, a lay person is anyone who is not a bishop, priest, deacon, or someone who has been selected for, but not yet appointed, to one of these positions. Thus, any woman—whether or not she is a nun—is a lay person. In ordinary parlance, a nun is not considered a lay person because she takes special vows of service in the Church. In this paper, we follow the common usage. A nun is considered a religious and not a lay person. Lay persons are people who have not made special vows or promises of service to the Catholic Church. Also, in this paper “male religious” includes the three or four men who are diocesan priests and who therefore do not belong to religious orders or congregations. Technically, they are not religious, but in this paper, because their number is small, we group them with the men belonging to religious orders or congregations.

3. *The American College President* (Washington: American Council on Education Center for Policy Analysis, 2002). Hereafter cited simply as ACE 2001.

4. The Leadership Trends Study (LTS) data were coded using traditional methods of hand coding for qualitative data, and certain key questions were tracked on a percentage basis. All this information, along with written summaries, was given to the rest of the research team, who helped clarify findings, test assumptions, and hone the final results. In addition to the authors of this paper, three researchers participated in the project: Paul Gallagher is the former associate director and acting executive director of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities. He is presently a senior search consultant for R.H. Perry and Associates and brings a career of close relationships with presidents and the experience of coordinating their national conversations and concerns. Rev. John Piderit is the president of the Catholic Education Institute, past-president of Loyola University Chicago, and a Princeton-trained economist. Dr. Mary Lou Jackson had a seventeen-year career in administration at Stonehill College and recently received her Ph.D. from Boston College. Her dissertation focused on women and leadership in Catholic higher education. Their hard work and support was invaluable, and the study is far better for their challenging insights.

5. ACE 2001, Appendix B, 68. The ACE data are likely an inflated comparison in that they include presidents of divinity schools, whereas the LTS data exclude such institutions.

6. ACE 2001, Appendix B, 68.

7. ACE 2001, Appendix B, 64.

8. One caveat should be noted. Because priests, nuns, and brothers are religious professionals, the religious inspirations, aspirations and motivations that animate them in considering a presidency might well be considered their own unique kind of professional consideration.

9. Andrew M. Greeley, *From Backwater to Mainstream: A Profile of Catholic Higher Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 39. This number includes junior colleges, as well as four-year colleges. At times, women leaders operated under the title of "dean" with an honorary title going to a local bishop or his delegate as "president." For all intents and purposes, day-to-day leadership was always in the hands of women religious.

10. For purposes of this study, Carnegie category definitions have been used.

11. This represent a decrease from the 9.5% reported in 1998.

12. The University of San Diego is the Catholic doctoral-granting university that has a lay woman president, Dr. Alice Hayes. Upon her retirement, she will be succeeded by another lay woman, Dr. Mary Lyons, former president of the College of St. Benedict (in St. Joseph, Minnesota).

13. The names of the institutions and their new presidents are reported regularly by the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) in their newsletter. For the names of presidents appointed over the last two years see, "Update," *ACCU Newsletter* 24 (4) through 31 (2).

14. The only sector of Catholic higher education in which women dominate as presidents is Catholic women's colleges. All the Catholic women's colleges, save one, have women presidents. Stephen J. Sweeny, the president of the College of New Rochelle, is the one male president of a Catholic college for women.

15. Finalist pool is an imprecise term. It is used here as respondents used it. In fact, respondents may have been referring to the group of people given serious consideration by trustees, not an official group of finalists.

16. It should be noted that Catholic colleges are not the only ones to counter this general trend. In one recent example, Princeton University's board of trustees, in selecting Shirley Tilghman as president, decided that academic and research credentials trumped administrative experience in terms of meeting the university's leadership needs.

17. Patricia Wittberg, "Reciprocal Identities: Apostolic Life and Consecrated Life," *Review for Religious* 61 (2002): 343.

18. In his book, *Liberal Arts Colleges: Thriving, Surviving, or Endangered?* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1994), David Breneman points out, "The experience of higher education in the 1980s has deviated strikingly from the pattern forecast by economists and other analysts in the late 1970s. Rarely has a body of predictions been so wrong" (2).

19. Breneman, *Liberal Arts Colleges*, 137.

Response to Morey and Holtschneider

JOHN J. DEGIOIA

Over the course of the last century there were a number of important moments in higher education when a document was produced that forever after defined the shape of conversation and discourse around a field. In particular, I am thinking of the earlier part of the twentieth century, when Abraham Flexner studied American medical schools, the mid-1940s, when Harvard produced its Red Book, and the late 1940s, when Vanover Bush did his study of the role of science in the context of university research and university education. And there are more recent documents that we are all familiar with from the 1980s. Catholic higher education is a work-in-progress, and we are seeing the first pass at some new research. I think that from now on our work is going to be defined by the kinds of findings in the research of Melanie Morey and Dennis Holtschneider.

I will reflect on three findings in the Morey and Holtschneider report that have led me to grasp a core conflict that I think we all wrestle with in the work of promoting Catholic identity. I hope that through these reflections I can help push us a little further to understand what is really at stake: the responsibility we all share in sustaining the Catholic identity of our institutions. The core conflict is this: Can we compete as an academy, as a college or university, in the American context and sustain an authentically Catholic character? Regardless of the context in which one is competing, can we compete as an academy and sustain an authentically Catholic character?

First, do lay leaders have the same legitimacy as religious leaders in the stewardship of Catholic universities? The work of promoting Catholic identity is the work of a community. It is not

the sole responsibility of a president or a mission director. It is the responsibility of an entire community and sometimes of what the report refers to as an iconic figure. If we had one, we would never let him or her go! But on the other hand, the presence of an iconic figure enables a community to avoid the real work that is the responsibility of everyone.

History is replete with examples of institutions, religious orders, and all sorts of organizations that were inspired by powerful, charismatic leaders. When those leaders left or died, the followers were left with the difficult task of sustaining the charism and identity of that mission and organization. If we can be clear that the work of identity is the work of a community, then the implications for promoting Catholic identity will take on a positive dynamic for all of us as we wrestle with it.

Second is the concern by many about the lack of a clear definition of Catholic identity—what it means to be Catholic. Although I can identify with this frustration, I do think it is a category mistake in the report. I believe the work of Catholic identity is the work of definition. It is not something separate from the community that can be handed to us. It is not something static that can be handed over from one leader to another. The work of Catholic identity is an ongoing organic, evolving process of trying to determine how a specific community at a specific point in time—looking at its resources, opportunities, and challenges—determines how best to draw from the diverse elements of the Catholic tradition in order to strengthen its ability to engage and sustain its Catholic identity.

I thought of a couple of examples while I was reflecting on this. At Georgetown, in recent years we have discovered some resources that have simply jelled. We did not know in advance that they would come together in the way that they did, but somehow they did. For example, in 1994 we established a Center for Muslim-Christian understanding. There is a similar center at the seminary in Hartford, Connecticut, but the one at Georgetown is the only one sponsored by a university. The Center is led by arguably the nation's leading Islamist, John Esposito. He has assembled a wonderful faculty and has done extraordinary work over the last decade. In the same context where he is working, the

Center for Contemporary Arab Studies has also flourished, although it has been at Georgetown for about three decades. Recently we were able to secure support to establish an academic chair in the study of Jewish civilization. Jane McCauliff, one of the world's leading experts on the Qur'an, arrived a few years ago and serves as dean of our college, and is involved in every major interreligious discussion. When we look at where Georgetown is today, with Dean McCauliff, John Esposito, the Wiesel Chair coming on line, as well as three Jewish chaplains and an imam, this combination of resources enables us to engage our Catholic tradition by emphasizing and bringing focus to interreligious understanding.

Because of these resources, we can offer to a student of a different faith tradition a sincere respect that we have for them and their faith tradition, which probably would not occur in an institution that did not have such a commitment. We can provide a foundation for students to learn to respect. Instead of saying that we want to be open to a diversity of students and faculty and staff because it is the law, we are motivated by the conviction of respect for each individual person, because he or she is loved and created by God. But there is no confusion that the Catholic tradition is privileged at Georgetown by virtue of the way we structure our curriculum, by the presence of certain kinds of people, by the ways in which we celebrate certain public events, including our baccalaureate with a liturgy. One of the rabbis I alluded to earlier is Rabbi Harold White. He has been a member of the university community at Georgetown since 1968. He claims that Georgetown has sent more people on to rabbinical school than any other college in the country. So although we privilege one tradition, if a student comes, then he or she is part of a community that is conversant in the language of faith, and takes the idea of a transcendent reality very seriously.

Many of us have volume two of *Examining the Catholic Intellectual Tradition*, which is the result of the work that Sacred Heart University has been engaged in for a number of years. In this university, the Catholic intellectual tradition has been given a focus, a privilege, an emphasis. This work helps to sustain a vocabulary, a syntax, a grammar, for an important kind of

intellectual discourse that could otherwise be lost. And at Boston College, Father William Leahy and Father Joseph Appleyard and a number of their colleagues have just done an extraordinary job over the last year in developing a program on the Church in the twenty-first century. This provides a forum and resources to assist the Catholic community in transforming the current clerical sexual abuse crisis into an opportunity for renewal. They looked at the resources they had and they were able to pull those resources together in a way that enables them to make a contribution that almost no one else could do. And it is an exceptional service to all of us that they are doing so.

So the real issue is not about defining what Catholic identity in the abstract. Rather, our efforts would be better directed towards promoting communal cooperation and responsibility towards bringing people together with the resources and opportunities that we have.

A third reflection builds on the former one. The work of Catholic identity is the work of the community and to say that the faculty is an obstacle to this effort is to confuse the nature of the work. It is just another way of saying that the work is difficult. This leads back to the core concern: Can we compete in the contemporary academy and share in the responsibility of sustaining a tradition to be authentically Catholic? From a leadership perspective, I do not think any of us would have accepted our responsibilities if we did not share a conviction that there is no better way to live out our vocations than in the context of the Catholic community. Can we share this vision with the faculty in a way that enables them to participate fully as they wrestle with all the demands that come with being a faculty member competing in the contemporary academy? Yes. And faculty members who find it difficult to participate and resist are still part of our community; they are part of the world that we are a witness to and trying to address.

Our work is to determine in this moment what elements of our tradition can be effectively engaged in a way that enables us to ensure that we can sustain an authentic Catholic community. The work is the work of the community; the role of leadership is to present the work in ways that can be engaged by all the

members of the community—even those who are resistant. I think the challenge to compete as an academy and sustain an identity as authentically Catholic is a responsibility we all share. It is difficult, daunting, and frustrating, but I do not think any of us can imagine a more important way to spend our lives.

Response to Morey and Holtschneider

MARILOU ELDRED

The study by Morey and Holtschneider has done a service not only to Catholic higher education, but all of American higher education. I suspect that there are several follow-up studies that could complement theirs, and I foresee some doctoral students continuing to advance the research that is begun here.

Although I was not surprised by many of the results of the study, there were a few points that caused me to question some conclusions drawn. I am the only one of the three respondents who has a religious background, that is, I was a religious sister before becoming a lay president of a Catholic college. My response flows from that dual perspective.

I was a member of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM) for ten years, from 1959-69. The BVMs are exclusively a teaching order, staffing many grade and high schools and two colleges: Clarke in Dubuque, Iowa, home of the order's mother house, and Mundelein in Chicago, which merged with Loyola University in 1991. My professional life in the community consisted of three years of teaching high school, three years as assistant academic dean at Mundelein, and a year of graduate school in between to earn a master's degree in student personnel administration. Immediately after leaving the congregation, I returned to New York University, where I had earned a master's, to begin a doctoral program in higher education administration, completing that in 1974.

As a student and administrator at Mundelein, I learned to appreciate the importance of a college for women, and particularly a Catholic college for women. I was fortunate to work with many strong women leaders, such as Sister Ann Ida Gannon. I learned

that women could and did do everything; there was no “glass ceiling,” no questioning of women’s ability to lead, to make corporate decisions, to be the spokesperson for a college. Women were in charge, although all the top level positions at that time were held by women religious, not lay women.

After completing my doctoral work, I decided that Catholic women’s colleges were the place where I wanted to devote my life in higher education. I was fortunate to work at the College of St. Catherine for eighteen years, and to hold many senior-level positions there. It was a situation where, as we know in Catholic education, if there was a need, I filled it. I am very grateful for that experience and opportunity. When I decided I might be ready to consider and be considered for a college presidency, I knew that my preference would be for a Catholic women’s college.

With that bit of personal history, I will now turn to the paper and my response. With regard to many of the statistical and demographic characteristics of Catholic college lay presidents, I think I fit the mold. My degree is in education and I was a former academic vice president, although there were no members of the founding congregation in the finalist pool when I was selected to be president at Saint Mary’s College.

But I would differ with the researchers in some of their comments about mission fit and Catholic identity as a lay president. I certainly include several courses in theology and philosophy among my undergraduate studies, which have assisted me in an intellectual understanding of those disciplines and their place in the curriculum of a Catholic college. But I also believe, as a former religious sister, that I have a good sense of the mission of a Catholic college without formal theological education beyond the undergraduate level. I am committed to leading my institution in pursuit and fulfillment of its Catholic mission. Without denying the importance and necessity of advanced theological education, I believe it is possible for leaders of Catholic colleges without a formal education to possess a level of knowledge of Catholic mission and identify sufficient to be the presidents of those institutions.

A significant finding of the research is the fact that there are many fewer women presidents of Catholic institutions than male presidents, both religious and lay. Furthermore, the number of

women presidents is declining, as the number of women religious declines. Of course, that is not surprising, considering that the Church continues to be led by a male hierarchy and women still are not considered equal with regard to important leadership positions in the Church. That could take us down a very different path from the focus of this discussion and it is an issue of which we are well aware.

It is interesting to me that congregational loyalty, presumption of legitimacy, religious literacy, and religious formation are four factors that the authors speculate are reasons for selecting religious over lay presidents, even when the religious person may not have administrative background pertinent to assuming the presidency. I wonder which colleges have made that kind of selection and if they are among what could be described as conservative Catholic colleges; and if they would make the same choice again. I also wonder if those religious presidents enjoy their work, since it was noted that the vow of obedience may have come into play in the selection of these presidents. It seems to me that it is important for all colleges, regardless of how they would describe themselves, to select presidents who can truly engage in the job of the president; this includes both lay and religious presidents. The job is too challenging, too varied, and too wide-ranging to be foisted upon someone with little or no interest. I would worry about the success of the presidency and the institution in such a situation.

With regard to questions of mission and Catholic identity, I believe the authors make two immensely important points. They discuss the complexity of the president's responsibilities in such a way that mission fulfillment may become one more in a series of important issues to be considered by the president. So if the president does not have formal preparation in theology, it may be no worse than having limited preparation in student life or fund raising. Also, some respondents to the study noted the importance of mission preparation for Catholic higher education as a whole, but seemed to diminish its importance for their particular institution. It is difficult to know what that means. I think these points underscore the imperative of continuing discussion, with a goal of clarification of issues relating to Catholic identity and mission. The Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU)

offers a wonderful service, with its trustee workshops, annual meeting, and ongoing consultation that its president, Monika Hellwig, provides. At some point, however, it would be helpful if, as part of the preparation for a Catholic college presidency, there would be specific knowledge areas that candidates should have in their repertoire. A model might be the master's program at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, and perhaps other places, that helps to prepare student personnel professionals for working in Catholic colleges.

At Saint Mary's College, we have a vice president for mission, a position created when the governance of the college moved from the congregation to a lay board of trustees. The person should preferably be a member of the Congregation of Holy Cross, the sponsoring order of the college, and is to be appointed jointly by the presidents of the congregation and the college. The position title is a bit of a misnomer, since her responsibilities are really for the Catholic mission of the college, and not for the liberal arts or women's components of the mission. It is difficult for many faculty and staff to understand this position. I consciously work at keeping the position visible in decision-making, public college events, and hiring issues, among others. I would venture that at Saint Mary's, there is probably more affinity and support for the charism of the congregation than there is for the mission vice president of the college. Many people think that because we have this position, she is responsible for the Catholic mission, and other faculty and staff "don't have to worry about it." So, I am concerned about how to make the most of this position, and I hope there will be discussion about it.

Many of our faculty were hired years ago when there were many sisters teaching and working in the college. They were hired largely for their disciplinary expertise and little mention was made of the specific attention to the Catholic mission of the college, assuming that the sisters were taking care of that. In our time, however, as we hire new people, we are deliberate in talking about the mission of Saint Mary's and try to ascertain the fit between the potential faculty or staff person and the Catholic mission of the college, as well as the academic discipline, the support for women's education, and the usual hiring factors.

Although we continue to demonstrate outwardly our identity as a Catholic college with crucifixes in every office and classroom, prayer as a regular part of meetings and many classes, a curriculum requirement in religious studies, a Center for Spirituality and a vice president for mission, I worry that the Catholic identity is not necessarily a vital part of the fabric of all that we do at our college.

Finally, I would emphasize the importance of strong leadership from the board of trustees in all of these issues. The president takes direction from the board and if mission issues are not a clear priority at the top level, it will be even more difficult for the president to change a culture that may need changing. We are seeing a new generation of board leadership where the religious congregational members are in the minority and may hold few, if any, board leadership positions. This underscores again, the importance of the ACCU workshops for trustees.

I have seen many dedicated lay presidents of Catholic institutions. I suspect that all of us are passionate about what we are doing with and for our institutions. I also suspect that we worry about how well we are leading our institutions as Catholic colleges, not just colleges in the U.S. system of higher education. Together, I hope that we can find a few answers and also be open to new questions.

Response to Morey and Holtschneider

ALICE B. HAYES

The past few decades have been a time of transition in Catholic higher education, reflecting great changes in society. Since Vatican II, we have seen a significant reduction in the number of religious, a change in the role of women in the governance of higher education, and a change in the Church itself. The college presidents today are different people facing different challenges than when I was a student in the 1950s, when Catholic colleges and universities were owned and operated by religious. Looking around us at the products of those earlier colleges, we ask, "Did those nuns and priests and brothers do a good job of preparing Catholic professionals and leaders?" If they did, then today's challenges can be managed. If they did not, then perhaps we should not look to those days as models for the future.

The study by Dr. Morey and Father Holtschneider makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of Catholic higher education and our leadership needs for the future. Lay presidents have become the majority and they appear to be well-prepared, perhaps better-prepared than some of their religious peers in terms of administrative experience in higher education. We may wonder why boards of trustees entrust multimillion-dollar operations to candidates who do not have experience in university administration. Of the religious who became college presidents, over one-third (38%) did not come from an administrative post. Fifteen percent moved into the presidency directly from a faculty position, and 22% (nearly one quarter) of the religious presidents came from outside higher education. I think these are astonishing statistics.

At the University of San Diego we have had lay leadership for thirty-two years. But I have been a member of other Catholic

university boards of trustees on four occasions when they had been either looking for a president or reviewing the statutes that govern selection of a president. Two of the four would only consider members of the founding congregation, even though they knew that this meant that the pool of candidates would be sharply limited and that they might not be able to get the experience in the leader they sought. The third board decided that they would be open to lay candidates, but it was clear that this would not be their preference. The fourth board was open to lay candidates, but it was an easy decision because they did not expect that there would be any candidates from the founding community. None of the chairmen of these boards wanted to be the one who transferred leadership to a lay person. One went so far as to say that they would get a member of the religious community even if the person was not fully qualified, in which case they would hire someone else to provide the real administration of the university. What my experience and this study show is that leadership of mission is perceived by boards as the most important qualification for a president, and that it is often believed that a member of the religious community will do a better job preserving the institution's religious identity than a lay person would do. The religious person not only understands the charism and educational philosophy of the founding community, but he or she is also spiritually inspired and committed to it, and is therefore, considered a better candidate for leadership of the mission.

The number of religious educators prepared and available to lead Catholic universities is diminishing, and we will need to rely more on lay people to carry on the mission of Catholic higher education. As chairs of search committees have learned, it is very difficult to let go of these blanket preferences. When the founding communities or diocese can no longer provide leadership, something is lost. But then we have to move on with what is possible for the future. For some colleges, a number of religious from the founding community or diocese will be available and qualified for leadership, but for others, that will not be likely.

A criterion that this study used to measure one's ability to lead the religious mission of a Catholic college or university was the president's spiritual preparation and formal study of theology.

Lay presidents typically have modest theological background and have not had the spiritual formation experience that religious have. This is not to say that they do not have deep spirituality or adequate understanding of the major teachings of the Church. Rather, the spirituality of lay presidents is formed and experienced in different ways than that of the religious, and their understanding of Church teachings is usually not at the intellectually sophisticated level of a theologian.

For example, in my experience of over forty-one years in higher education, I recognize that the spirituality and theological knowledge of a lay person is not the same as that of a religious. Despite thirty-three years at Jesuit universities, as close and committed as I was to the educational mission, I never felt a deep resonance with the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola. There is much that I valued and ideas such as “persons for others,” “doing all for the greater glory of God,” and “finding God in things” were very meaningful to me, but the Exercises are not the kind of spiritual devotion designed for women, wives, or mothers. Similarly, the required four theology and five philosophy courses I took as an undergraduate gave me some familiarity with the language of Catholicism and encyclicals and dogma, but I have no real authoritative knowledge. I feel closer to the spiritual outlook of the Religious of the Sacred Heart that animates the University of San Diego where I spent the past eight years. But I know that my spiritual formation and theological foundation is not the same as that of a member of the religious community. Yet, as Morey and Holtschneider were surprised to learn from other lay presidents, despite our limitations we do not feel ill-equipped to lead the religious mission of our universities. I feel that, with appropriate effort on my part, I can translate the mission and charism for our students, faculty, and staff. The legacy of our founders lives in the lives of lay people—our faculty and alumni and the people whose lives they influence.

The preparation that Morey and Holtschneider have measured is the preparation to be a religious, not preparation to be a university president. They observe that a religious is “granted moral credibility and leadership through the structure of vows or ordination.” There is no doubt that this happens, but as we have

learned in recent years, ordination no more assures the moral credibility of a priest than baptism does for a lay person. I do not think that it is necessary or appropriate to prepare for leadership of a Catholic university in the same way one would prepare to be a sister, brother, or priest.

What the president needs, it seems to me, is a good foundation in the teachings of the Church that should ordinarily have been acquired over a lifetime as a practicing Catholic, which is updated continuously by study about the Church and Catholic issues today. For example, I find it helpful to regularly read several publications such as *Origins*, which reports weekly on the teachings of the Pope, the bishops and current topics, and *Commonweal* and *Logos* for treatment of issues of contemporary Catholic life and higher education. And there are many other publications that presidents find helpful. The questions that the president has to answer are not deep theological issues calling for advanced study in theology. Rather, we will be asked to comment on a current issue that touches on the faith, or more typically on morals, or the use of a controversial textbook, or the performance of a questionable play, or exhibition of a work of art, or a gay/lesbian or pro-choice guest speaker, or to approve a course or program for the curriculum. For this we need to understand Church teaching and know enough theology and philosophy to be able to read current Catholic literature on Church teaching on these education-related issues, or frame the question for a response by a trained theologian.

We also need formation programs that would thoroughly inform lay leaders of the history, charism, traditions, and educational philosophy of our particular founding congregations or dioceses. These programs should be made available to members of the board as well as the senior administrator's faculty.

The lay person will not be able to marry, bury, baptize, or spiritually counsel members of the university community and their families, and will not preside at Eucharistic liturgies, but should be able to lead the mission of the university. Founding communities should also be sensitive to the needs of the institutions they developed and if there are members of the community with an interest and ability in university leadership, they should

see to it that these individuals get the administrative experience and training that they need to be effective in the universities they will serve. Both aspects of preparation—for leading the mission and for leading the university—are important.

There are several other issues raised by the Holtschneider and Morey study that deserve more attention than I can give them. I am not sure how to respond to the finding that the number of women leaders of Catholic colleges and universities is diminishing, but I suspect that this may be in part a consequence of the merger of women's colleges with men's colleges which then continue under their original and usually male leadership.

Another important observation was the recognition that lay college presidents desire but do not achieve working relationships with the hierarchical Church as easily as their religious peers. The authors suggest that there are more “informal conversations of leadership between bishop and college president in the comfort and context of shared religious profession.” However, I think that the hierarchical authority relationship between bishop and religious may be a greater inhibitor of free exchange of views than the teaching authority relationship between bishop and lay president. The bishop and college president are obliged by *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* to develop a dialogue, and I think we can do without tension.

The concern about lack of support for mission from faculty members is widespread. This study shows that most presidents believe that faculty development for mission is the real area of concern and one that must be addressed. All of us, whether religious or lay presidents, will need to focus on hiring for mission, orientation of new faculty, and faculty development programs for current faculty as we guide our institutions faithfully and fearlessly into the future.