



Introduction to the Special Issue: Recognizing 20 Years of Research in Catholic Education

Mary K. McCullough
Loyola Marymount University

Recognizing 20 years of Catholic Education is noteworthy. Recognizing 20 years of research in Catholic Education is worth celebrating and the purpose of this special edition of the *Journal of Catholic Education* (hereafter *Journal*). Over the past two years, the *Journal* Governing Board, comprised of representatives from 13 Catholic colleges and universities, has been planning for a way to recognize the contributions of this, the longest running and most successful journal devoted to research in the field of PreK-16 Catholic education. The decision was made to highlight in this special edition a representative sample of the most popular research articles published over the past 20 years. The members of the Governing Board voted on the selection of the articles and every effort was made to contact the authors, so they could share in this celebration of the *Journal* and their work. The *Journal* editors hope you enjoy this special edition and agree with us that continuing to publish research in Catholic education is worthy of this and many other honors!

The *Journal*, published as a refereed hard copy journal under the former title of *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, was founded in 1997 through a collaborative effort of the University of Dayton, Saint Lois University, Fordham University, and the University of San Francisco. Early leadership in the development of the *Journal* was contributed by Sr. Mary Peter Traviss, O.P. and Rev. James Heft, S.M., supported by funding from the

Lilly Foundation. In the beginning years, the *Journal* was published quarterly as a subscription-based print publication supported by 20 Catholic universities. Original editors included William Losito, Joseph Rogus, Thomas Hunt, and Ronald Nuzzi, all collaborating to disseminate educational research to teachers, administrators, parish and diocesan staff, and researchers. Former host institutions for the *Journal* include Notre Dame University, Boston College, in 2010 the *Journal* Governing Board and the staff at Boston College's O'Neil Library collaborated on a new online format.

In 2013, Loyola Marymount University (LMU), Los Angeles became the *Journal* host institution and currently manages the editorial and production services. Prior to coming to LMU the *Journal* experienced a successful five-year run at Boston College's Roche Center for Catholic Education, where it transitioned from a subscription-based print journal to an online, open access format under the editorship of Lorraine Ozar, Joseph O'Keefe, S.J., and Michael James. Building on this success, the editorial staff at LMU, including Mary McCullough, Rebecca Stephenson, Martin Scanlan, Karie Hutching, and Franca Dell'Olio transitioned the *Journal* to the online repository platform Digital Commons, where all 20 years of *Journal* articles are now available free of charge and licensed with Creative Commons licenses to promote sharing. These combined efforts led to the *Journal's* position as the most widely-distributed peer-reviewed journal on Catholic education in the world with more than 80,000 articles downloaded annually.

One of the strengths of the online format for the *Journal* is easy access to data about the readership and usage of the articles we publish. In addition to download numbers, which are one indication of the impact of the *Journal*, data show that articles are accessed from countries around the world. While the United States remains the *Journal's* primary audience, recent issues have seen downloads from more than 200 countries spread across six continents. Building on this international growth, the Governing Board and Editors currently are working to cultivate relationships with universities and authors outside of the US in order to continue to grow our international presence in the coming years.

As plans for the future of the *Journal* continue to evolve, this 20th Anniversary special issue offers an opportunity to reflect on its history and highlight some of the influential articles the *Journal* has published over the years. Selecting just 20 from the nearly 500 excellent articles the *Journal* has published since 1997 was no small task. And, while these are exceptional articles, they are certainly not the only high-quality pieces in the *Journal's* catalog. A number of selection criteria were used to identify articles to include in this

special issue. Some were selected because they continually rank among the most-frequently downloaded articles, indicating the ongoing importance of the topic in the field. Others were chosen to showcase the diversity of topics, methods, and styles articles have taken over the years. Still others were identified as prime examples of the balance between research and practice the *Journal* strives to promote. We encourage readers to visit the *Journal's* website to explore the full catalog of articles in our archive collected over the past 20 years.

On behalf of the Editors and the Governing Board of the *Journal of Catholic Education*, we thank all of our readers, authors, peer reviewers, past editors, former Governing Board representatives, and other supporters for contributing to this vibrant research community.