

September 2013

Supporting Catholic Education through Effective School/University Partnerships: Two Models from the 2012 Catholic Higher Education Collaborative Conference

William A. Henk

Marquette University, william.henk@marquette.edu

Jennifer Maney

Marquette University, jennifer.maney@marquette.edu

Kevin Baxter

Archdiocese of Los Angeles, kcbaxter@la-archdiocese.org

Frank Montejano

Holy Family School, fmontejano@holyfamily.org

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/ce>



Part of the [Other Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Henk, W. A., Maney, J., Baxter, K., & Montejano, F. (2013). Supporting Catholic Education through Effective School/University Partnerships: Two Models from the 2012 Catholic Higher Education Collaborative Conference. *Journal of Catholic Education*, 17 (1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.15365/joce.1701102013>

This Focus Section Article is brought to you for free with open access by the School of Education at Digital Commons at Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for publication in *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* by the journal's editorial board and has been published on the web by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons at Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information about Digital Commons, please contact digitalcommons@lmu.edu. To contact the editorial board of *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, please email CatholicEdJournal@lmu.edu.

Supporting Catholic Education through Effective School/University Partnerships: Two Models from the 2012 Catholic Higher Education Collaborative Conference

Cover Page Footnote

Suggested citations: Henk, W. A. & Maney, J. A. (2013). Higher education working together to help Catholic schools: The Greater Milwaukee Catholic Education Consortium. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, 17(1), 164-171. Excerpts from the Greater Milwaukee Catholic Education Consortium Presidents panel at the 2012 CHEC conference, Milwaukee, WI. (2013). *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, 17(1), 172-175. Baxter, K. & Montejano, F. (2013). Sharing the mission: Sowing the seeds of an archdiocesan and university partnership. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, 17(1), 176-185.

Supporting Catholic Education through Effective School/University Partnerships: Two Models from the 2012 Catholic Higher Education Collaborative Conference

The following article contains two essays based on presentations to the 2012 CHEC conference on Catholic school governance held at Marquette University in October 2012. The essays outline two models of deep collaboration between Catholic institutions of higher education and Catholic P-12 schools designed to support and foster improvements in Catholic education. The first essay, "Higher Education Working Together to Help Catholic Schools: The Greater Milwaukee Catholic Education Consortium," written by William A. Henk and Jennifer A. Maney, provides an overview of the Greater Milwaukee Catholic Education Consortium (GMCEC), an ongoing collaborative effort between the archdiocese of Milwaukee and the region's five Catholic colleges and universities. Building a strong partnership among multiple institutions has allowed the GMCEC to leverage the individual strengths of each member institution to provide a variety of supports to Catholic schools within the diocese. The essay outlines the early history of the collaboration, the key areas of engagement, and some emerging outcomes and ongoing challenges associated with efforts to scaffold supports for diocesan schools. Following this essay are excerpts from a panel discussion among the five presidents of the institutions of higher education that are part of the consortium.

In the second essay, Frank Montejano, Principal of Holy Family School, and Kevin Baxter, Superintendent of Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, provide an overview of the ongoing partnership between the Archdiocese and Loyola Marymount University to improve educational opportunities for students in Catholic schools in Los Angeles. The essay discusses the collaborations' key areas of engagement, including research on Catholic schools in the dioceses, assessment of academic and social-emotional outcomes of students, professional development and preparation of teachers and principals, and long-term strategic planning. The essay also includes some of the initial outcomes of these efforts to prepare the diocesan schools for continued growth in the coming decades.

Both of these essays provide an introduction to the kind of innovative work being done nationwide to build a stronger system of Catholic education across the P-16 educational continuum.

Higher Education Working Together to Help Catholic Schools: The Greater Milwaukee Catholic Education Consortium

William A. Henk, Marquette University, Wisconsin
Jennifer A. Maney, Greater Milwaukee Catholic Education
Consortium, Wisconsin

This essay was developed from a panel presentation by Henk and Maney, as well as other key professional colleagues, delivered at the 2012 CHEC Conference. The essay describes the formation and initial work of a consortium of five institutions of higher education in the greater Milwaukee area, including Alverno College, Cardinal Stritch University, Marian University, Marquette University, and Mount Mary College.

Across the nation, numerous Catholic schools have struggled to exist, let alone thrive. In the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, one in every five schools has closed its doors over the past 15 years. As academics who work in the five Catholic institutions of higher education (CIHE) in the greater Milwaukee area, we have witnessed and lamented these struggles over the years. Each of our colleges and universities has tried, in its own way, to help when called upon, but the breadth and depth of the challenges facing urban Catholic schools has continued to outstrip our individual institutions' ability to contend with them. The issues were systemic and intractable in nature, and none of us had the singular capacity to make differences that were far reaching enough.

Eventually, we concluded that helping our local P-12 Catholic schools, at scale, would require working together in a unified, coordinated, and selfless manner. That conclusion gave rise to a new model of collaboration, now known as the Greater Milwaukee Catholic Education Consortium (GMCEC). The model is described here along with its early history. We see this recounting as a fitting addition to this focus section of the *Journal*, one which summarizes the Catholic Higher Education Collaborative's (CHEC) 2012 conference on Catholic school governance. The GMCEC served as the event's host and the Consortium's model was shared in a key panel discus-

sion. Our partnership not only assists Catholic schools with governance, but also represents a unique form of multi-institutional governance in its own right.

Responding to a Call to Action

The trials and tribulations faced in Milwaukee will sound all too familiar to anyone who knows the K-12 Catholic education sector, particularly in urban and rural areas. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, in its 2005 pastoral statement, *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium*, described current trends in Catholic education that threaten its future. Numbered among these obstacles are declining enrollments and sharply rising tuition. But the difficulties hardly stop there. Attempts to prevent school closings, and to facilitate mergers and consolidations, have occurred in urban and Catholic schools in Milwaukee and elsewhere. The mergers are often unsuccessful. Moreover, Catholic schools reflect a shifting student demographic that is frequently not Catholic and is increasingly diverse.

Compounding the challenges, there have been reverberations that academic quality has diminished. This concern is obviously a serious one, because even devout families will hesitate or wholly refrain from sending their children to Catholic schools whose records of advancing student achievement are suspect. Equally important, the escalating shortage of vowed religious professionals on staff, which has endangered school sustainability by driving up labor costs for several years, has jeopardized even more so the tradition of faith development assured by their clerical presence. Regrettably, the combination of these issues has resulted in a significant downward spiral, where the very real peril exists that only select, non-diverse, and affluent parish-operated Catholic schools will survive. Clearly, the schools of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee are not immune to these trends, as many of them remain decidedly at risk.

The pastoral statement of the Bishops also included a specific appeal to Catholic colleges and universities to address problems like those described above. To formulate a local response, our Catholic institutions of higher education (CIHE) in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee (Alverno College, Cardinal Stritch University, Marian University, Marquette University, and Mount Mary College) came together to form the *Greater Milwaukee Catholic Educa-*

tion Consortium (GMCEC). The purpose of the partnership was to marshal the academic resources and professional expertise of the region's CIHEs to build enduring connections that strengthen and sustain quality Catholic education. Specifically, the GMCEC's aspirations were twofold:

1. To exert a transformational impact on Catholic elementary and secondary schools in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee
2. To become a national model for ways in which Catholic higher education collaborations might support P-12 schools through the professional development of educators, the transmission and modeling of best practices in faith formation, and the improvement of schools' organizational effectiveness.

Origins of the GMCEC

In January 2007, leadership in the School of Education at Marquette University came to believe that, despite its own current and past efforts to support Milwaukee's diocesan schools, more needed to be done. Accordingly, a focused discussion was convened to examine the following issues in depth:

- The major challenges facing Catholic schools
- General strategies that would address these challenges
- Specific actions Catholic institutions of higher education could take to be especially helpful in those respects

The discussion was purposely planned to coincide with the visit of Dr. Karen Ristau, President of the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA), whose insights proved to be invaluable. A small group of Marquette facilitators led approximately 25 Catholic school leaders, teachers, board members, clergy, and other constituents from across the Archdiocese, as well as a small number of local college and university representatives in addressing these topics. It is important to note that Marquette University originally intended to explore how it alone might help. The notion of a partnership had not yet emerged.

As it turned out, the Catholic school leaders and community members in attendance expressed urgent pleas for assistance. Their concerns centered on the three primary themes reflected in the GMCEC's collaborative work:

professional development, Catholic identity and faith formation, and organizational effectiveness.

Given the scope and gravity of the challenges and the modest size of the Marquette School of Education, a decision was made to approach a respected peer institution, Alverno College, about forming a partnership. Fortunately, the Alverno colleagues wholeheartedly embraced the proposition, and the newly formed higher education partnership set out to gather as much information as possible about Catholic education centers, institutes, and collaborations around the country, especially in urban areas. This data collection included discussions or visits with Boston College's Lynch School of Education and its Roche Center for Catholic Education, Creighton University and its Magis program, Loyola University Chicago's Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, St. Louis University, and St. Thomas University. In addition, there was a thorough examination of the Notre Dame report on the future of Catholic schools (2006), driven by its Alliance for Catholic Education, as well as other print and web-based materials germane to the inquiry.

The findings indicated that a wide range of models existed for archdiocesan and Catholic higher education collaborations and that the emphases of these alliances varied markedly. Focusing on the three core areas previously identified seemed defensible, and if the Consortium were to be expanded regionally, there would be ways to contribute to the national Catholic education landscape in niches such as school governance.

For several months, Alverno and Marquette worked together before the decision was made to reach out to the other three CIHEs. As a result of discussions with other knowledgeable and passionate Catholic school supporters—especially the Stollenwerk Family Foundation—invitations to join the partnership were extended to Cardinal Stritch University, Marian University, and Mount Mary College. (see Table 1 for a description of each member institution). Education deans from all five institutions, along with representatives from the Archdiocese's Office for Schools and its Education Advisory Committee, met and reached universal agreement on the value of the consortium. This consensus resulted in the formal establishment of the GMCEC partnership, in which all institutions would support the joint work in equal measure, primarily through in-kind contributions of academic and administrative expertise.

Marquette University serves as the GMCEC's fiscal agent and is the physical home of its institutional coordinator. The consortium is governed

Table 1

Greater Milwaukee Catholic Education Consortium Member Institutions

Institution	Description
Alverno College	Longtime leader in the field of teacher education, whose work with ability-based education and performance-based assessment is recognized nationally and internationally. Education at the college derives from a liberal arts tradition, with particular focus on integrative, experiential and reflective approaches to learning.
Cardinal Stritch University	A leader in innovative programs rooted in liberal arts with a focus on life-long learning. The university is a large provider of teachers in the region, and through its Saint Clare Center for Catholic Life provides education and formation for lay Catholics who seek to grow in faith and service.
Marian University	A liberal arts institution that welcomes diverse spiritual traditions. The institution is committed to the transformation of the individual and the world through life-long learning, and it represents a leader in the use of technology in education.
Marquette University	A national research university focused on the tenets of excellence, faith, leadership, and service, and dedicated to social justice and the education and welfare of all children. The university exhibits special strength in scholarship and resource acquisition that benefits the GMCEC.
Mount Mary College	A liberal arts institution focused on leadership, integrity, and a deep sense of social justice arising from sensitivity to moral values and Christian principles. Mount Mary is committed to excellence in teaching and learning with an emphasis on critical thinking.

by a board that consists of two members from each institution and a liaison from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee's Office for Schools. The consortium interacts with the Superintendent of Schools and three associate superintendents to develop and execute plans for organizing the collective strength of the academic resources and professional expertise.

Progress to Date

The impact of the Consortium can best be captured through three primary areas of emphasis.

Professional development. All five GMCEC institutions are positioned to provide practicing teachers, standing administrators, and aspiring admin-

istrators with in-services, workshops, consulting, and formal coursework to help them embrace best pedagogical and leadership practices. This particular emphasis of the Consortium is rich in resources, but requires considerable institutional coordination. As a by-product of our work together, each institution now infuses its existing undergraduate teacher education curricula with a greater emphasis on Catholic social teaching.

Mission and identity. The consortium is likewise strong in the domain of mission and identity, or faith formation. In fact, long before the GMCEC took shape, some key members of the partnership worked together with the Archdiocese around these goals in a group called ATIC or the Archdiocesan Theology Implementation Committee. Now, as part of the work, a new group known as the STAFF committee (an acronym for Schools, Theology, and Faith Formation) serves as the foundation for the GMCEC in supporting the faith formation of P-12 Catholic educators through two innovative programs rooted in religious education.

STAFF was charged by former Milwaukee Archbishop Timothy Dolan (now the Cardinal of New York City) to expand the scope of its work to include the development of appropriate theological competence standards and faith formation expectations for each of the following groups: Catholic school principals, Catholic elementary school teachers, Catholic high school teachers, Catholic high school theology teachers, and, Catholic school boards. Since 2009, the STAFF Program, developed by the Saint Clare Center for Catholic Life at Cardinal Stritch University at the GMCEC's request, has trained school teams to attend to the development of Catholic school *culture* by the intentional development of adult faith communities among teaching staffs. The program has served more than 175 teachers and principals from 36 schools thus far. The Saint Clare Center administers and coordinates the program, which offers graduate credit to participants.

Organizational effectiveness. Organizational effectiveness is a multifaceted theme that includes work in areas such as finance, fundraising, governance, human resources, public advocacy, technology, data analysis and research, and strategic planning. It remains the most challenging element for the GMCEC to orchestrate. Executive-level support is critical to formulating GMCEC's message to the college and university communities that address Catholic schools matters. Each institution's president, all of whom participated in a panel discussion at the CHEC summit (an account of which is included on pp. 172–175), has taken steps in that direction.

Bridging the Present and the Future

The combined capacity of the GMCEC keeps P-12 Catholic education not only alive but also vibrant in Milwaukee. Through collaboration, the GMCEC enhances, facilitates, and launches programs and other supports that are strengthening the region's Catholic schools. Although many national and international organizations are dedicated to improving Catholic schools, there does not appear to be one that collectively leverages the strengths, knowledge, expertise, and vision of multiple institutions of higher education. In this regard, the GMCEC is unique. This collaboration among the five higher education institutions, the Archdiocese, Catholic schools, and the extended Church community will sustain and grow Catholic education into the future.

From consultation and facilitation to communication and technology training, data support, and resource acquisition, the GMCEC leverages the competencies of partner institutions to enhance academic excellence, faith formation, and organizational effectiveness in P-12 Catholic schools. Having already served 600 teachers and administrators from 80 archdiocesan schools, the GMCEC plans to continue providing the same high-quality support through its future educational and service programs, including:

- providing integrated and comprehensive training to meet the needs of students with learning differences;
- supporting teachers and leaders in effectively and justly serving second language learners;
- conducting workshops and consultation in grant writing, enrollment management, and governance; and
- providing staff training to enhance classroom practice by integrating technology in order to increase student learning and engagement.

Support has also included the use of GMCEC member institutions' undergraduate and graduate populations by placing them in schools with needs in the area of data analysis, health and wellness program development, mental health counseling, and various marketing and communications initiatives such as brochure and website development. Furthermore, upon the request of the Archdiocese's Office for Schools, the GMCEC has embarked on an assessment of high school culture. The primary goals of this effort are

to evaluate and bolster schools in three primary areas: (a) theology and faith formation, (b) academics, and (c) school culture. Surveys and focus groups are being used to evaluate both school and student dispositions in the context of faith and their effects on student knowledge and behaviors as well as to take a deeper and more meaningful look at student academic performance in Catholic schools.

Through the GMCEC, the Milwaukee region is embracing the true strength and promise of Catholic education, pushing schools toward higher levels of excellence and inclusiveness that will help ensure sustainability. The GMCEC not only possesses the expertise and momentum to continue making a difference for children and families in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, but also holds a blueprint to help other archdioceses and their Catholic institutions of higher education impact the education of Catholic school children throughout the nation.

William Henk is dean of the College of Education and professor of literacy at Marquette University. Beyond co-ounding the Greater Milwaukee Catholic Education Consortium, he has led his college's efforts in national and state accreditation, established a Teach For America program, launched and anchored the popular Marquette Educator blog, contributed significantly to the Milwaukee Succeeds community partnership, and is codirecting a feasibility study for a Cristo Rey High School in Milwaukee. Correspondence about this essay can be sent to Dr. Henk at William.henk@marquette.edu

Jennifer Maney, Ph.D., is the institutional coordinator for the Greater Milwaukee Catholic Education Consortium (GMCEC), based at the College of Education, Marquette University. Jennifer has a doctorate in Educational Policy and Leadership with a minor in diversity education, a master's degree in counseling, and a bachelor's degree in journalism. She is also an adjunct faculty member for Alverno College, Mount Mary College, and Carroll University.

Excerpts from the Greater Milwaukee Catholic Education Consortium Presidents Panel at the 2012 CHEC Conference, Milwaukee, WI

As Henk and Maney have described in the previous essay, the GMCEC is a collaboration among five institutions of higher education in the Greater Milwaukee area. Key to the success of the GMCEC has been the leadership and support received from the presidents of each institution. The following brief essay contains highlights of a panel discussion titled "How Can Institutions of Higher Education Support Dynamic and Effective Governance Structures in K-12 Catholic Schools?" which included the presidents of the five Catholic colleges and universities that partner in the Greater Milwaukee Catholic Education Consortium: Mary Meehan, Ph.D., president of Alverno College; James P. Loftus, Ph.D., president of Cardinal Stritch University; Rev. Scott Pilarz, S.J., Ph.D., president of Marquette University; Eileen Schwalbach, Ph.D., president of Mount Mary College; and Steven DiSalvo, Ph.D., president of Marian University. Mike Gousha, distinguished fellow in law and public policy at Marquette, moderated the panel discussion.

Opportunities through K-16 Collaboration

Among these Catholic higher education leaders, there was agreement that the opportunities are endless for Catholic K-12 schools and higher education institutions if they work together. Collaboration, in fact, is vital to the success of the Catholic educational system. "We will not all survive if we're fragmented," said Dr. Mary Meehan, president of Alverno College. Throughout the session, the presidents agreed that Catholic K-12 schools and Catholic universities need each other. But while the relationship is mutually beneficial, it is not without challenges.

The president of Cardinal Stritch University, Dr. James Loftus, noted that promoting a K-12 Catholic education system is critical to the success of both the K-12 schools and the institutions of higher learning. "It's also part of our responsibility to do the faith formation, to provide an opportunity where people can explore, and I think that's the venue that Catholic colleges can provide," Loftus said.

According to Fr. Scott Pilarz, president of Marquette University, the Catholic K-12 system is not only a leading source of students for Marquette, but also prepares those students for success in academics and in life. As Pilarz noted during the panel, “They come prepared to engage in the kind of conversation that we really cherish here, the conversation around faith and values and the importance of service, and they become leaders early on because of the background they’ve been enriched with.”

Marian University looks at Catholic education as a K-16 model, according to the university’s then-president, Dr. Steven DiSalvo. The university offers tuition discounts of up to 50% to graduates of the local Catholic high school if they continue on to Marian University. Teachers in the local Catholic high school can receive a tuition discount if they pursue a master’s degree at Marian University. Describing the university’s decision to provide discounts to Catholic high school alumni and faculty, Di Salvo said: “It’s put your money where your mouth is and try to make sure what we do in the K-16 model is a continuum.” All five GMCEC member institutions offer discounts to Catholic school teachers on graduate programs.

Although each of the institutions represented on the panel had made strides in supporting K-16 Catholic education in Milwaukee, the Greater Milwaukee Catholic Education Consortium formalized the existing relationships between the higher education institutions and the schools, helping them become more expansive.

Challenges of K-16 Partnerships

The presidents agreed that the biggest challenge to working together with K-12 schools is time and resources; however, they noted, there are ways around those challenges.

Because it is a small college, Mount Mary expanded its assistance to Catholic schools outside of the education department, President Dr. Eileen Schwalbach said. For example, the dietetics department educates K-12 students about nutrition, and the counseling department sends students to the schools. As Fr. Pilarz noted, partnerships with K-12 schools can extend beyond academics. Universities with engineering departments have the potential to help Catholic schools deal with their aging buildings, for example. Colleges can offer expertise in areas such as fund raising and marketing, he added.

Another way to manage the demand on resources is to focus on each university’s unique mission and strengths. Dr. Loftus provided an example of the

strengths of Cardinal Stritch, including its literacy center and the St. Clare Center for Catholic Life, which focuses on religious education. The presidents further concurred that K-12 schools and institutions of higher learning face the same challenge of selling the value of a Catholic education.

Loftus further noted that many families decide to opt out of one part of the Catholic system for financial reasons; often college is when that opt-out takes place. He emphasized the difficulty of convincing students that their debt burdens after graduating from a Catholic university or non-Catholic university will be similar. "The facts are there, but it's a difficult kind of marketing proposition. There is a leap or a gap in terms of families saying it's accessible, it's affordable for us," he said. Providing one example of the kinds of marketing done by Catholic schools, Dr. DiSalvo described one local Catholic high school that markets its tuition as a way to prepay for college because of the discounts offered to alumni enrolling at Marian University.

Building the Future of Catholic Schools

DiSalvo also argued that universities should bring more religious identity to their campuses as a way to help students and families see the value of a Catholic education. "Lead with your strengths," he said. "At the end of the day, this is who we are, this is what we celebrate." Catholic educational institutions also must demonstrate that their students graduate on time, get good jobs, and become good citizens. Asked to imagine an ideal Catholic K-12 system, Dr. Meehan described a seamless K-16 system, in which students in the K-12 system could afford to attend Catholic universities, and graduates would choose to work in Catholic K-12 schools.

Dr. DiSalvo advocated for stronger partnerships, not only between schools and universities, but also between local parishes and universities. Involving parish priests in campus life on college campuses could ameliorate the loss of staff affiliated with religious orders. "It's not only the schools, but it's the parish community that needs to embrace this model if we're going to succeed," DiSalvo said.

Providing evidence of the disconnect between parishes and higher education institutions, Dr. Loftus cited the University of Notre Dame study of US pastors (Nuzzi, Frabutt, & Holter, 2008), which showed that while many pastors were receptive to a working relationship with their local Catholic higher education institution, very few actually had one. According to the

study, 67% of the pastors did not perceive the mission of their schools to be supported by Catholic universities.

Curriculum alignment is another important element to a successful K-16 system, so that Catholic students are well prepared for the university work and don't have to take developmental courses. As Dr. Schwalbach noted, "I think that's one area where we could really look at what's being taught at the K-12 level and then what's required at the college level."

Asked what role governance can play in improving schools, Dr. Meehan stressed that a good board is vital. "There's no great institution that doesn't have a great board," she said. "Great boards do not tolerate mediocre institutions and vice versa." Boards also have to understand that they operate at the governance and not the operational level, she added.

Fr. Pilarz agreed about the need for clarity about responsibilities, noting that he had served on three high school boards, including that of his own alma mater, a diocesan school. "We've got to get some clarity around what it means to be a board of limited jurisdiction, what's the relationship between the board and the diocese, what's the role of the diocese in the operation of the school," he said.

All of the panelists agreed that the future for Catholic education can be bright if schools work together, focus on quality, and demonstrate their value-added proposition. Dr. DiSalvo saw great promise in the rising number of first-generation college students and immigrants at Marian University. "I think you're going to see a big shift over the next five to 10 years where those families are going to say we understand the value add," he said.

A final theme of the panel was the contemporary need for schools to be responsive and flexible. "We all are going to be challenged to change," Dr. Schwalbach said. "Higher education is changing at a rapid pace." Schwalbach predicted that Catholic institutions will respond and become even more relevant, challenging the Catholic education community to consider the question: "How do we remain profoundly Catholic but change with the changing times?"

Reference

- Nuzzi, R. J., Frabutt, J. M., & Holter, A. C. (2008). *Faith, finances, and the future: The Notre Dame study of U.S. pastors*. Notre Dame, IN: Alliance for Catholic Education Press.

Sharing the Mission: Sowing the Seeds of an Archdiocesan and University Partnership

Kevin Baxter, Archdiocese of Los Angeles, California
Frank Montejano, Holy Family School, California

The kinds of partnerships undertaken by individual K-12 Catholic schools and (arch)dioceses can be critical to their survival and growth. One such partnership, the linkage of higher education to K-12 Catholic schooling, can stimulate the flow of needed resources while providing the academy with valuable data from which to support schools through additional research and program development. In collaboration with the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Loyola Marymount University offers support in areas as diverse as Catholic school research, assessment and intervention, academic preparation for teachers and principals, and strategic visioning. This article explores some of the specific initiatives that are having an impact on Catholic schools within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. It also examines the difficulty in providing comprehensive outreach and support to a large and diverse Catholic school population.

The crisis impacting Catholic schools across the country has almost become a cliché to those who are deeply involved with them. However, in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles there are signs of hope over the past few years and there is optimism about the long term prospects for Catholic schools. An important aspect of that hope is the partnership and collaboration that exists between the Department of Catholic Schools (DCS) and Loyola Marymount University (LMU). According to Shane Martin, dean of the LMU School of Education (SOE), “The wide range of partnerships that exist between the DCS and SOE strengthen the work of both institutions” (S. Martin, personal communication, March 8, 2013).

The collaboration is viewed in terms of Catholic school research, assessment and intervention, academic preparation, and strategic visioning. It is the hope of both the DCS and LMU to contribute to the field by chronicling efforts to impact Catholic education in Los Angeles through direct service, outreach, and fluid communication among (arch)diocesan and university leaders. No doubt, Catholic school partnerships of a similar kind have been

forged in different parts of the country, and the positive effects of these relationships are known to many in the field, but the need exists to capture best practices and share them across regions of the country, universities, schools of education, and (arch)dioceses.

There are three underlying principles that provide the foundation for the optimism that is felt regarding Catholic schools in Los Angeles. The first is that the Archdiocese of Los Angeles is large, and growing. With nearly 5 million Catholics, there are plenty of students to fill Catholic school desks. The Catholic school-age population is expected to grow from approximately 1 million today to 1.6 million in 2040. Currently, the archdiocese serves about 8% of the Catholic school-age population. By increasing this number to 10%, the archdiocese would be able to double the current enrollment by 2040. Add to this the fact that the schools also serve many non-Catholic students, and the potential for growth is clear.

There are challenges, of course, because a significant percentage of the Catholic population in Los Angeles is low income and many are first- or second-generation immigrants. This reality presents funding and instructional challenges, which is where the energy should be focused—and collaboration with LMU is vital. The effort should be directed at creating schools of substance and value that will attract students and families.

The second foundational principle is leadership. The partners recognize the value of strong leadership to a school's success. This is not just leadership in the person of the principal, but also the pastor, teachers, and parents as well. When strong leadership is present in a school, there are consistent outcomes: strong Catholic identity, rigorous academic excellence that leads to high growth and achievement, and efficient stewardship in the area of management and finances. These outcomes, in turn, lead to enrollment growth, because when value is present in a school setting, families will want to be a part of the community. LMU is a vital part of leadership development for Catholic schools in Los Angeles, and there is a continual analysis and review of how the various programs are meeting the needs of the Catholic school community.

The third foundational principle is innovation. Change is a requirement for growth. In order to meet the needs of 21st century learners and to prepare them for 21st century careers, Catholic schools need to innovate in areas such as curriculum, governance, technology, and instructional delivery. In all of these areas, LMU is a support for Catholic schools, providing principals and teachers with key resources to meet the needs of students and families.

In 2010 the LMU's School of Education launched its Center for Catholic Education. LMU's existing Catholic education programs were incorporated within the center, while new initiatives broadened LMU's impact on Catholic education in the region. The existing programs that preceded the center included several Catholic-focused teacher and leadership training programs, whereas the expansion included new research and outreach opportunities aimed to impact the growth and sustainability of Catholic education in the region. Broadly viewed, in recent years, LMU has:

- provided professional development workshops for more than 800 teachers and principals;
- sponsored events for more than 500 Catholic school students within LMU's Family of Schools;
- contributed more than 6.5 million in scholarship support to Catholic school teachers and principals, and raised approximately \$7 million in support of Catholic education; and
- partnered with the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to secure more than \$3.5 million in federal funding to support archdiocesan educators.

These outcomes include support for traditional academic preparation programs, yet move beyond in terms of vision and resource allocation. They further reflect a collaborative approach to use data in ways that help Catholic educators in the field with decision-making strategies, and those in higher education interested in the effects of Catholic schooling. The resulting feedback loop proves beneficial to both entities and serves as a foundation for diverse outreach initiatives. What follows is an overview of the university/K-12 collaboration that has taken place in Los Angeles in the areas of Catholic school research, assessment and intervention, academic preparation, and strategic visioning.

Catholic School Research

The LMU Center for Catholic Education (CCE) has developed three areas of research concentration: the Catholic school effect, the 200-day calendar, and education tax relief. In addition, the CCE conducted a number of smaller studies for individual schools or groups of schools. Selected results from studies within each of the research concentrations, as well as the individual studies, are described in the sections that follow.

Catholic School Effect Study

In a study examining the impact of Catholic education on elementary and secondary students in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, LMU researchers focused on the continuation and graduation rates of historically marginalized students who were Catholic Education Foundation (CEF) scholarship recipients (Litton, Martin, Higareda, & Mendoza, 2010). LMU researchers collected confidential student data for this study per an agreement with the CEF, which provided LMU a tracking number assigned to each student. The collaboration was based on mutual needs: CEF funders were naturally interested in the impact of its funding efforts; LMU researchers wanted to know what effects a Catholic education had on students from low-income families.

This particular partnership resulted in a multiphase longitudinal study that followed several groups of CEF students through various levels of the educational process in Catholic schools and beyond. Achievement measurements included an examination of continuation rates (from 8th to 9th grade), graduation rates, University of California and California State University course completion rates, SAT sitting rates, SAT scores, and college attendance. When compared to their public school counterparts, the CEF students achieved greater success in nearly every measure (Higareda, Martin, Chavez, & Holyk-Casey, 2012).

200-Day Calendar Study

In January, 2011, Cardinal Roger Mahony of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles announced a 200-day calendar (20 additional days) for all elementary schools in the Archdiocese. Numerous Catholic elementary schools in the Archdiocese adopted the new calendar, and began implementation during the 2011–2012 school year. By the 2012–2013 school year, 70% of the elementary schools had extended the academic calendar beyond the traditional 180-day instructional year. In cooperation with the Department of Catholic Schools, LMU researchers sought to examine the decision-making process of three demographically distinct schools that were moving to 200 days in 2011–2012.

In February, 2012, the LMU research team issued a policy brief chronicling the three schools' move to 200 days, focusing on why, the process utilized, and the experiences of various stakeholders. As to the why, a common response emerged across schools: improved teaching and student learning. The researchers noted that each of the schools had not adopted a formal im-

plementation plan, but were comfortable with the strategies that were under consideration at the time of the interviews. The findings, which captured the experiences of school communities undergoing significant change as a result of an archdiocesan-wide initiative, serve as an instructional piece for other schools in the Archdiocese that are going through—or considering—similar change (Sabatino, Huchting, & Dell’Olio, 2013).

Education Tax Credit Feasibility Report

Education tax relief is a growing phenomenon nationally that benefits Catholic schools and families via education tax credits. In a 2012 commissioned report to the California Catholic Conference of Bishops’ Education Committee (CCC), an LMU research team examined the feasibility of education tax relief for the State of California. In its report, the research team considered existing models nationally, the state of California finances, how tax relief might be funded, and philanthropic trends in the state. The results helped the CCC to better understand the opportunities and impediments to advocating for an education tax relief plan to benefit all children in the state.

Individual School Research

The CCE conducted a number of small-scale research projects in support of individual Catholic schools or groups of schools. One recent study, an examination of a local Catholic high school in transition, resulted in a change from a single-sex school to a co-ed one. In this study, LMU researchers compiled qualitative and quantitative data that included interviews with key stakeholders and the collection of relevant demographic data; the latter included information about neighborhood demographic changes, family income levels, feeder school continuation rates, and the potential impact on neighboring Catholic high schools. In a report to the school, a series of alternatives were presented, with the school ultimately choosing to transition to co-ed beginning in 2013–2014.

Assessment and Intervention

A number of approaches to assessment and intervention are used in the collaborative work conducted by the DCE and LMU. These approaches include professional development, the Campus Climate Survey, and the Family of Schools, each discussed in turn below.

Professional Development

The CCE maintains a Professional Resource Academy (PRA) through which workshops and other forms of targeted professional development (PD) are developed. These professional trainings, offered as part of the CCE's annual symposia, range in topics from strategies in the classroom to leadership development for principals and pastors. They feature as presenters LMU faculty and other recognized experts in the field. Interested schools (or groups of schools) can also consult the PRA list of available members on the CCE's website and create tailored events and programs based on specific needs; in these instances, the CCE serves as an additional resource to help schools plan and make arrangements with potential presenters/speakers/facilitators.

As an example of the kind of PD offered to schools, the CCE recently initiated a program to support local Catholic schools through board development training. First, the CCE surveyed all Catholic schools in the Archdiocese to assess the nature and progress of boards in Los Angeles. Schools without boards were asked primarily about impediments to starting a board, whereas schools with boards were asked to assess their board's strengths. An important survey finding was that schools without boards viewed their experienced colleagues as a credible training resource. This finding helped the CCE to design a board training process that included experienced principals as both presenters and mentors. The mentors, to be trained by the CCE, will be asked to serve as a guiding presence in a principal's first year of initiating a board. The initial training, led by experienced principals and pastors, involved over 60 Catholic educators, many of whom expressed interest in participating in the mentors program.

Campus Climate Survey

The Campus Climate Survey (CCS) for Catholic secondary schools was created in 2002 by LMU faculty to assess student, teacher, and administrator perceptions of the school culture and climate (McCullough & Martin, 2002). The survey was revised in 2010 and piloted online in selected Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Today, Catholic schools nationally can access the survey through the CCE, which supports participating schools with data collection, analysis, and interpretation of findings. Designed to help school leaders and other stakeholders identify strengths and weaknesses in the school program, the CCS ultimately exists as a tool to aid growth and reform efforts at the school level.

Family of Schools (FOS)

The FOS is a unique university-community collaborative that exists to support K-12 schools in close proximity to LMU. Expanding its reach in the Fall of 2011 to include four local Catholic schools (three K-8 schools and one high school), the FOS provides ongoing support in areas of professional development, partnerships, research, and service. In its inaugural year with these schools, the FOS-sponsored events that included an ecology fair, a multicultural heritage festival, an entrepreneurship mentors' program, and professional development presentations ranging from curriculum mapping to bullying in the classroom. LMU SOE members also serve on the consultative school boards of FOS schools. Additionally, students from the FOS schools come to LMU's campus for activities and events that include tutoring, academic support, and a college readiness program that helps students with issues ranging from completing the application process to general college counseling.

Academic Preparation

A range of academic programs are connected to LMU's CCE; what follows is a brief review of some of the existing programs serving Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, including the Catholic Archdiocesan School Teachers (CAST) program, the Partners in Los Angeles Catholic Education (PLACE) Corps, the Catholic Leadership Academy (CSLA), and the Ed.D. in Leadership for Social Justice.

Catholic Archdiocesan School Teachers (CAST)

The CAST program provides current Catholic school teachers in the Los Angeles Archdiocese an academic program leading to the California SB 2042 preliminary teaching credential and M.A. in Education. Initiated in 2005, CAST was developed by DCS representatives and LMU School of Education Leadership to meet the needs of full-time Catholic educators. To that end, classes are held on Saturdays and conducted using a "hybrid" format, whereby students attend classes on campus approximately 60% of the time, with the remaining sessions conducted online. Also, the schedule of classes at LMU was modified to mirror breaks in the archdiocesan calendar; accommodations of this kind allow teachers in the program to participate in arch-

diocesan events that might otherwise conflict with the standard LMU SOE calendar. To date, over 350 teachers have successfully completed the CAST program.

Partners in Los Angeles Catholic Education (PLACE) Corps

The PLACE Corps is LMU's Catholic teacher-service program in support of under-resourced schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. PLACE Corps members, who live in community, earn a California SB 2042 preliminary teaching credential over two years while gaining professional experience in the classroom. As evidence of the program's success, a number of PLACE Corps members have continued to teach beyond their two-year commitment, and many others have moved into positions of leadership throughout the archdiocese. Currently, 148 PLACE Corps members (current and alumni) are teaching in a Catholic school within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Catholic School Leadership Academy (CSLA)

Participants in the CSLA are current and aspiring Catholic school principals and administrators who can earn an M.A. in Catholic school administration, a certificate in Catholic school leadership, and/or a California Tier 1 Administrative Services Credential. Students in the program are taught the importance of making critical leadership decisions in the diverse educational setting that is Los Angeles. Given the SOE's focus on social justice, particular attention is given to ensuring success among students with special needs. The program currently enrolls 49 students across three counties.

Educational Leadership for Social Justice

The Ed.D. in Educational Leadership for Social Justice, the university's only doctoral program, includes a specialization to prepare individuals for high-level positions in Catholic education. Students receive the tools, theories and experiences necessary to succeed as transformational leaders and change agents in their respective settings. A survey of recently completed dissertations includes such titles as: *A Case Study of Leadership and Service in a Catholic Female Single Sex High School* (Bickett, 2008); *Response to Mission: Students' Experience of Catholic Social Teaching in an Inner City Catholic Elementary School* (Quinly, 2007); and *The Catholic School Principal and Inclusive Leadership: A Quantitative Study* (Quinn, 2010).

Strategic Visioning

In 2012, the Dean of the School of Education at LMU coordinated an effort to create a strategic vision for Catholic schools in Los Angeles. It began with regular meetings with the Catholic school superintendents, the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the Dean of the School of Education and some key representatives from funding partners in the city. The process led to the creation of a document published in June 2013, outlining the vision of the future of Catholic schools in Los Angeles.

The document will also launch a Board of Ambassadors made up of influential individuals who will assist the DCS in externally communicating the great work being done by Catholic schools in the city. The strategic visioning process, along with the formation of the DCS Board of Ambassadors, is a great illustration of the collaboration and partnership between LMU and the DCS, and how it continues to have a constructive, positive impact on Catholic schools.

References

- Bickett, J. P. (2008). *A case study of student leadership and service in a Catholic female single-sex high school* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Proquest Dissertations and Theses Full Text. (UMI No. 3412452)
- Higareda, I., Martin, S. P., Chavez, J. M., & Holyk-Casey, K. (2012). *Los Angeles Catholic schools: Impact and opportunity for economically disadvantaged students*. Unpublished manuscript, School of Education, Loyola Marymount University.
- Litton, E.F., Martin, S.P., Higareda, I., & Mendoza, J. (2010). *The promise of Catholic Schools*. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, 13(3), 350-367.
- McCullough, M. K., & Martin, S. P. (2002). *Assessing campus climate and culture: Ensuring equity and diversity in Catholic secondary schools*. Paper presented at the National Catholic Educational Association Annual Meeting, Atlantic City, NJ.
- Quinly, N. (2007). *Response to Mission: Students' Experience of Catholic Social Teaching in an Inner City Catholic Elementary School*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA.
- Quinn, J. M. (2010). *The Catholic School Principal and Inclusive Leadership: A Quantitative Study* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Proquest Dissertations and Theses Full Text. (UMI No. 3432881)
- Sabatino, A., Huchting, K., & Dell'Olio, F. (2013). The 200-day calendar initiative in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles: Three schools' decision to break the mold. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, 16(2), 388-416.

*Kevin Baxter, Ed.D., is the Superintendent for Elementary Schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and a part-time faculty member in the School of Education, Loyola Marymount University. Prior to this appointment as superintendent, Dr. Baxter was the principal of two Catholic schools in the Los Angeles area from 2001–2009. Dr. Baxter holds a Doctorate of Education degree from the University of Southern California in Educational Leadership. He is the author of the book *Changing the Ending* (NCEA, 2011), which focuses on innovation and new approaches for Catholic schools.*

Frank Montejano, Ed.D., is the principal of Holy Family School, a K-8 Catholic school in Pasadena, CA. Previously, Dr. Montejano was the Director of Professional Development and Outreach for the Center for Catholic Education in the School of Education at Loyola Marymount University. Correspondence about this essay can be sent to Dr. Montejano at fmontejano@holyfamily.org