

Navigating and Utilizing Values during Change Processes at Catholic Colleges and Universities

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Abstract

Catholic colleges and universities (CCUs), particularly those of moderate selectivity, are especially vulnerable to changes in the external environment. In addition to external forces, values from the academic tradition as well as those from an institution's Catholic heritage contribute to change efforts at CCUs. This study uses the lens of general education revision at two Catholic universities to show how leaders and members of sponsoring organizations can effectively navigate these value sets. It reveals that the values of the sponsoring organization can be essential touchstones for organizational change, particularly when members of the organization express their values clearly and seek validation that those values are meaningfully utilized, and that conflicts among values emerging from the academy are more prevalent than those between sponsors' values and academic values. The study concludes with practical recommendations for members of sponsoring organizations and senior leaders at Catholic colleges and universities.

Introduction

Echoing the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, Sevier¹ reminded us over a decade ago that change in higher education is perhaps the only constant. That is no less true today, when pressures for change abound.

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¹ Robert A. Sevier, *Integrated Marketing for Colleges, Universities, and Schools: A Step-by-Step Planning Guide* (Washington, DC: Council for Advancement and Support of Education, 1998).

Elected officials,² policy makers,³ and families⁴ are paying increased attention to affordability. Demographic changes, particularly a decline in white traditional college-age students and a rapid rise in the Latino population,⁵ are focusing increased attention on returning adults and racial and ethnic minority students. For-profit institutions are growing, influencing student enrollments (particularly among the populations mentioned above) and also causing not-for-profit institutions to rethink their business and educational models.⁶ Catholic colleges and universities are trying to deal with these multiple challenges in a manner consistent with institutional values when, at the same time, the number of vowed religious among faculty and staff is in decline. It is indeed a challenging time for leadership in Catholic higher education.

This paper uses general education revision as a lens into meaningful institutional change at CCUs, focusing specifically on the role that values play in such change efforts and how leaders can be most effective. The purpose of this study is to address the question, “How do leaders at Catholic colleges and universities successfully navigate and utilize the multiple sets of values involved in a general education revision process?” with the hope that the answer to this question may also shed light for CCU leaders involved in other decisions in which these value sets interact. This study will begin with a brief review of relevant research. Second, the methods used to conduct the study will be outlined, followed by a discussion section containing key features of the cases. The article will discuss findings that emerge from these cases and

² Stephen Burd, “High Stakes on Tuition: Colleges Must Control It Or Face Stiff Penalties, Key Congressman Says,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 2, 2003, A29; Charles E. Grassley, “Wealthy Colleges Must Make Themselves More Affordable,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 30, 2008, A36.

³ Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, “Empty Promises: The Myth of College Access in America,” (2002); Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, “Access Denied: Restoring the Nation’s Commitment to Equal Educational Opportunity,” (2001); Patrick M. Callan and Joni E. Finney, “State-by-State Report Cards: Public Purposes and Accountability for a New Century,” in *Achieving Accountability in Higher Education: Balancing Public, Academic, and Market Demands*, ed. Joseph C. Burke and Associates (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005).

⁴ Longmire and Company, “Report on the Impact of the Economy on College Enrollment,” (2009); Royall and Company, “Higher Education Enrollment and the Economy: Summer 2009 Update,” (2009).

⁵ WICHE, “Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity 1992-2022,” 2A365 (2008).

⁶ William G. Tierney and Guilbert C. Hentschke, *New Players, Different Game: Understanding the Rise of for-Profit Colleges and Universities* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

previous research and will provide recommendations for practice that can be drawn from these findings. The paper will conclude with a discussion of limitations and suggestions for future research.

Literature Review

Williams defines values as “socially oriented, unique constructs that describe characteristics of organizations, guide action and behavior, and serve to differentiate organizations.”⁷ The last two characteristics of this definition are particularly important. First, values influence action, even when their influence is not evident.⁸ In addition, the importance of differentiation increases as competition for students and faculty grows, requiring institutions to evolve as the external environment changes.⁹ Leaders who conduct change processes consistent with institutional core values and culture increase the likelihood that their efforts will be successful.¹⁰ In fact, research suggests that organizations able to sustain long-term success consistently reaffirm their commitment to central values¹¹ while maintaining flexibility about how they pursue those values.¹²

In their study of CCUs, Morey and Piderit identify two concepts that are central to understanding culture and values in these organizations. The first concept is distinguishability, which refers to the evident difference between one culture and others.¹³ The concept of distinguishability fits with the idea of mission and values as a potential point of differentiation for CCUs. The second concept is permeability. Morey and

⁷ Sandra L. Williams, “Strategic Planning and Organizational Values: Links to Alignment,” *Human Resource Development International* 5, no. 2 (2002), 220.

⁸ Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992).

⁹ Robert M. Moore, “The Rising Tide,” *Change* 36, no. 3 (2004): 56-61.

¹⁰ Robert Birnbaum, *How Academic Leadership Works: Understanding Success and Failure in the College Presidency* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992); James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, “Building Your Company’s Vision,” *Harvard Business Review* 74, no. 5 (1996): 65-77; Williams, “Strategic Planning.”

¹¹ James C. Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies make the Leap—and Others Don’t* (New York, NY: HarperBusiness, 2001); Collins, “Building Your Company’s Vision”; Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America’s Best-Run Companies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982).

¹² Peters, *In Search of Excellence*; Collins, *Good to Great*; Collins, “Building Your Company’s Vision.”

¹³ Melanie M. Morey and John J. Piderit, *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Piderit observe, “The Catholic culture at Catholic colleges and universities is porous and bumps up against other cultures.”¹⁴ The culture of the academy is perhaps the most prominent other culture present within Catholic colleges and universities. While a variety of academic culture types exists,¹⁵ most share a commitment to “dialogue, consensus, and shared governance,”¹⁶ especially in academic matters such as curricular reform. Of course, there is neither a single set of Catholic values nor a uniform group of academic values. Catholic values may be influenced by Rome, by the local bishop or the local community, the sponsoring order, or any combination thereof. Similarly, subcultures exist within the academy. For example, the values of various disciplines are powerful influences on faculty behavior, and different disciplines often hold deeply different core values.¹⁷ Because these various cultures are present within CCUs, leading significant change efforts in CCUs involves navigating multiple institutional subcultures and the value sets that give shape to those subcultures.

An institution’s general education curriculum is a prominent expression of the most important values and beliefs of its faculty.¹⁸ If the Catholic mission and values of an institution are to be meaningfully transmitted to students, the curriculum must play a large role in that transmission.¹⁹ Four main parts comprise the undergraduate

¹⁴ Morey, *Catholic Higher Education*, 47.

¹⁵ William H. Bergquist, *The Four Cultures of the Academy: Insights and Strategies for Improving Leadership in Collegiate Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992); Robert Birnbaum, *How Colleges Work: The Cybernetics of Academic Organization and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988).

¹⁶ Gregers K. Dubrow, “It’s Just the Way Things Are Done Here: The Role of Institutional Culture in the Process of General Education Curriculum Reform” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2003), 44.

¹⁷ Adrianna J. Kezar, *Understanding and Facilitating Organizational Change in the 21st Century: Recent Research and Conceptualizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001); Bergquist, *The Four Cultures of the Academy*.

¹⁸ William G. Tierney, *Curricular Landscapes, Democratic Vistas: Transformative Leadership in Higher Education* (New York: Praeger, 1989).

¹⁹ Ellis A. Joseph, “Philosophical Foundations,” in *Handbook of Research on Catholic Higher Education*, ed. Thomas C. Hunt, et al. (United States: Information Age, 2003), 137-154; Thomas P. Rausch, *Being Catholic in a Culture of Choice* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006); Laurence Musgrove, “Mystery and Humility in General Education,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 16, 2008, B28; Terrence J. Murphy, *A Catholic University: Vision and Opportunities* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001).

curriculum—major, minor, general education, and electives.²⁰ The general education curriculum is the only one of the four main parts of the curriculum that reaches all students. Further, general education usually accounts for a substantial proportion (often between one-third and one-half) of the credits required for graduation. As a result, general education is an essential staging place for implementing institutional values.

Meaningful general education revision is a high-stakes endeavor. The combination of general education's impact upon the student experience, the numbers of value sets that enter the process, and the often difficult nature of undertaking significant change in the academic environment combine to make general education revision a unique challenge. Despite this challenge, many institutions have chosen to revise their curricula; in fact, over 75% of institutions in one study revised their curricula in the 1990s.²¹ Changes in the external environment,²² changes in the needs of students and faculty, and a sense that the previous curriculum was insufficiently coherent have all been primary drivers of change in recent years.²³

Methods

This paper is based on a multiple-site case study of two campuses which had, in the past three years, undergone general education curriculum revision that had been significant enough to “alter the content and organization of the curriculum, the central principles of what it intended to accomplish, and who was responsible for delivering specific curricular goals.”²⁴ The case study approach is effective for general education revision²⁵ because it cultivates deep understanding of a particular

²⁰ James L. Ratcliff, “What Is a Curriculum and What Should It Be?” in *Handbook of the Undergraduate Curriculum: A Comprehensive Guide to Purposes, Structures, Practices, and Change*, ed. Jerry G. Gaff and James L. Ratcliff (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 5-29.

²¹ D. Kent Johnson, et al., “Editors’ Notes,” *New Directions for Higher Education* 125, Spring 2004 (2004): 1-8.

²² Mildred Garcia and James L. Ratcliff, “Social Forces Shaping the Curriculum,” in *Handbook of the Undergraduate Curriculum*, 118-136.

²³ D. Kent Johnson, et al., “A Decade of Change in General Education,” *New Directions for Higher Education* 125, Spring 2004 (2004): 9-28.

²⁴ Peter D. Eckel, et al., *Riding the Waves of Change: Insights from Transforming Institutions* (Washington, DC: American Council on Education, 2001).

²⁵ Dubrow, “It’s Just the Way.”

setting²⁶ and allows for themes to emerge within and among sites²⁷ though it also carries the inherent weakness of limited generalizability.²⁸ Each of the sites in this study was a Catholic institution of moderate selectivity, with median ACT scores from approximately 20-23 and most students graduating from the top half of their high school class. Selectivity was held constant in order to reduce the number of variables that could influence differences between cases. Members of the sponsoring organization were involved at multiple levels of each organization (i.e., trustees, administration, faculty, staff), and the president at one was a vowed member of the sponsoring congregation. At neither, however, did vowed religious account for a significant proportion of trustees, administrators, or teaching faculty. To ensure some variety in predominant values among the sites, the institutions selected had different sponsoring organizations: one was Franciscan and the other Jesuit.²⁹

The study was conducted through a combination of document review, site visits, and member checking. In advance of site visits, preliminary conversations were held with key participants who could identify others who might be able to contribute to painting a comprehensive picture of the revision process. In addition, these key participants provided documentary evidence—internal memos, group reports, meeting agendas and minutes, presentations, etc.—that contributed to generating a basic understanding of the timelines and milestones of the project. Site visits consisted primarily of meetings with individuals or small groups to discuss the process of revision from their perspective, along with a campus tour. These interviews were transcribed and themes identified through coding—see appendix for interview protocol. Evidence from the document review and interviews was used to draft a chronology of the revision process, which was reviewed for accuracy by key participants at each site. The discussion below was informed by this work. Subsequently, findings were derived from the cases, as well as from previous research, and recommendations for practice were generated from these findings.

²⁶ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2007).

²⁷ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2002); Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (United States: Sage Publications, 2003).

²⁸ Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*.

²⁹ Each institution was promised anonymity as part of its agreement to participate. The universities will, therefore, be identified with aliases: Assisi refers to the institution sponsored by Franciscan sisters, and the Jesuit university will be called Ignatius.

Discussion of Cases

Assisi University

Assisi University is a Franciscan institution of over 2000 students in an industrial metropolitan area with over 500,000 residents. Assisi serves both traditional and nontraditional learners and offers degrees at the associates', bachelors', and masters' levels, primarily in professional (business, health services, education) programs. When asked to describe the university, faculty and staff used words like student-centered and caring. They also articulated a shared sense of commitment to Franciscan values, which is evident through a strong physical presence (artwork, statues, and prominent displays), initiatives such as University-sponsored pilgrimages to Assisi, and monthly awards to staff who exemplify application of the Franciscan values to their work. Assisi is also a very dynamic campus. In the decade before curricular revision, Assisi changed from college to university status; purchased a two-year institution; expanded athletic programs; and built new academic, athletic, and residence facilities.

An effort to change the general education curriculum began in the mid-1990s when the Academic Dean worked with a small number of faculty members to draft a revised curriculum. This proposal never made it out of the responsible faculty committee because of the lack of faculty participation in the process, and no further initiatives followed during the next few years. During that period of time, surveys of business leaders, alumni, and faculty highlighted the need for curricular revision. A faculty member observed, "We [had been] using the same curricular plan for the past 30 years. It hadn't changed[,] but yet society has changed, education has changed." Assisi sought the opportunity to use its general education curriculum as a way to infuse its mission and values into the student experience. Another faculty member commented, "It can be distinctive for [Assisi University] to have a general education package of courses and opportunities for students...in our Franciscan-Catholic tradition." Finally, there was a sense that the general education curriculum was too large for an institution whose students increasingly pursued professional programs with accreditation requirements that, in conjunction with the existing curriculum, made it difficult for students to complete their education in four years. The 2002 Strategic Plan therefore called for curricular revision that met current and emerging student needs, demonstrated the university's Franciscan values, and allowed students to complete both general education requirements and their major course of study within four years.

In that context, the General Education Committee began the process of curricular revision in fall 2003. This committee decided to take an outcomes-based approach to the curriculum, an approach that began with the outcomes expected of a graduate and worked backward, rather than to use the existing distributive approach that required students to take a certain number of courses in a prescribed set of disciplines. A number of open sessions were held to share the work of the group, including an all-faculty meeting between semesters; committee members made special efforts to keep department chairs informed. The committee took their work to the Faculty Forum in April 2004. To their disappointment, the committee discovered that the January session and interacting with the chairs had not generated sufficient support. As one faculty member noted, “Faculty were reluctant to pass something that would have such a profound effect, not feeling like they had invested in it.” As a result, the proposed curricular framework was rejected.

That summer, with this failure still an open wound, Assisi began its curricular revision process anew. In contrast to the previous year’s effort, which was primarily done in committee with results shared only periodically, the 2004 campaign began with a half-day retreat for the whole faculty. Updates throughout the fall, including work sessions at faculty meetings, continued the transparency of the process. In addition, the committee created conceptual maps that showed the link between the proposed curricular framework and the Franciscan values which had so much support. Interestingly, the mission statement for the general education curriculum intentionally used the descriptor “Franciscan” and not “Catholic.” As one faculty member described, “We focused more on Franciscan because of...the feeling that those values are universal and accepted by people of many different religious beliefs and practices.” In March 2005, eleven months after the previous proposal was voted down, a new curricular framework—similar to the one previously rejected—was approved. Work on the specifics of implementation began immediately in order to have the curriculum ready for fall 2007.

The resulting curriculum was different from the previous curriculum in three ways. First, the curriculum was built on an outcomes-based approach instead of the previous distribution model. The number of single-discipline courses was reduced, as a premium was placed on courses that could help students meet multiple outcomes. This was a critical decision because the demands of professional accreditation left relatively little space for general education. In addition, departments needed to demonstrate how their courses achieved the outcomes of the curriculum; the idea that there would be a steady supply of students to

any one discipline disappeared once outcomes could be fulfilled in other departments. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Franciscan values were included in the curricular outcomes. For example, environmental awareness was an outcome, a clear reflection of the Franciscan commitment to environmental stewardship.

Ignatius University

Ignatius University is a Jesuit institution in a major metropolitan area. Like Assisi, Ignatius serves both traditional undergraduates and adult students; unlike Assisi, undergraduate education is delivered in a specific school—Ignatius College. Revision of the general education curriculum lies primarily within the college, which is therefore the unit of analysis for this study. Ignatius College serves approximately 1500 full-time students, with business, preprofessional (law, medicine, etc.), science and mathematics, and nursing the most popular academic programs. The College had grown by approximately 50% in the preceding decade and had seen a commensurate growth in faculty and staff, although in many other respects there had been relatively little change within the College during that time.

The Jesuit identity is very apparent at Ignatius. Three phrases—“*cura personalis*” (care for the whole person), “how ought we to live,” and “men and women in service of others”—were used repeatedly by individuals involved in the curricular revision process. That shared commitment is intentionally cultivated at Ignatius. Before receiving an interview, job applicants are asked to draft a statement on how they would fit into the Jesuit values at Ignatius. Candidates being interviewed are asked about the relevance of these values. Finally, first-year faculty members participate in year-long activities designed to heighten their awareness of the Jesuit, liberal arts nature of Ignatius. The liberal arts and *cura personalis* are intimately related, an example of a mutually reinforcing relationship between academic values and those of the sponsoring organization. Other key features of the College include a collegial culture and a relentless focus on student learning.

The general education curriculum at Ignatius had been revised slightly in the early 1990s. A new Dean of the College arrived shortly after the turn of the century and soon realized that curricular revision was needed. He described two primary reasons for change, “There was a lot of activity at a national level in general education and liberal arts education for the 21st century, and I think it was time to take a look at

what we'd been offering and update it. The other factor...was that we've hired a lot of new faculty in the last five or six years. I think it was at a place where the faculty needed to feel a greater sense of ownership." In addition, a Core Philosophy Statement for general education had been drafted in the late 1990s but never meaningfully applied.

The Dean indicated his intentions in a letter to faculty during spring 2006, and kicked off curricular revision at a day-long retreat with faculty leaders that summer, during which the process of revision was decided. Each faculty member was assigned to a work group of approximately ten members for the 2006-07 academic year, and each group was asked to answer a number of questions about the extent to which the existing curriculum met the key curricular goals from the Core Philosophy Statement (ethics, diversity, development of the whole person, collaborative and interdisciplinary learning, global awareness, and rigor). Each group was also asked to nominate a member to participate in compiling and advancing the work of the small groups. Involving every faculty member was an intentional effort to build in support, and it worked. A faculty leader reflected, "Faculty bought in to having an initial voice and being heard...It was a brilliant way to (get) faculty to buy-in to a process, to look for change."

From that work, three models eventually emerged—one that modified the existing curriculum only slightly, another that moved completely to an interdisciplinary approach and shrunk the size of the curriculum, and a hybrid model which kept disciplinary study at the introductory level and encouraged interdisciplinarity as students advanced further. These three models were shared with faculty at a day-long work session in October of 2007. From that session, it became clearer that the matrix approach—a blend of traditional discipline-based education and interdisciplinary study—had the most support. In addition, this session reaffirmed support for the Core Philosophy Statement as a legitimate point of departure for building the curriculum. Finally, it was evident from the meeting that there was insufficient faculty support to decrease the size of the general education curriculum.

The hybrid model was a compromise between those who believed that a move to a pure outcomes approach was appropriate and those who saw the necessity for maintaining disciplinary study. One faculty member described the reasoning behind such a blend, "Interdisciplinarity has no value or meaning if it happens right off the bat. People have to have some foundation of an understanding of what the disciplines are before they can do interdisciplinary work in a meaningful

sense.” Supporters of a more substantial change saw the writing on the wall. As one such faculty leader expressed, “We could tell at a certain point that we were going to [keep a largely distributive core]. Most of us then tried to figure out, ‘How can we salvage as much as we can?’”

Based on this feedback, the Dean drafted a curriculum and assigned the College Curriculum Committee to review, edit, and build upon that draft. The Dean’s draft was not the final version, but was a significant step in advancing the work of curricular revision. One participant noted, “He was the one that did the intellectual spade work that had to happen. In some ways, a committee may not have been able to do it.” The Committee worked with the Dean’s draft, circulating a copy to department chairs in January 2008. After a series of meetings in the early spring, a new curriculum was voted on by the faculty and approved, with over 90% support, in April 2008—a remarkably quick process.

The content of the curriculum changed significantly in some ways and stayed the same in others. First, as mentioned, there was greater room for interdisciplinary study at the intermediate and advanced levels. Students would be required to complete courses in four areas—diversity, global environment, justice, and the search for personal meaning—outlined in the Core Philosophy Statement, and could accomplish these requirements through study in any discipline. Second, a six-credit course, “Introduction to Jesuit Liberal Arts Education,” was created to help freshmen deepen their understanding of the Ignatius setting. Two important changes were considered but not made—the size of the curriculum remained constant (about half of the required credits to graduate), and a two-course religious studies requirement also continued to exist. On the whole, the new curriculum clearly reflected the outcomes outlined in the Core Philosophy Statement, the importance of *cura personalis* and disciplinary study, and the centrality of Ignatius’ Jesuit, liberal arts identity.

Findings

The study revealed important insights into the role that values play in general education revision at Catholic colleges. Not surprisingly, values from both the sponsoring organization and the academy played prominent roles. This section of the paper will explore how values from those different sources were relevant to the process of general education revision and how they interacted during this process.

Values of the Sponsoring Organization

In each case, the values of the sponsoring organization were used as guiding principles for the revision process—the Franciscan and Jesuit values, respectively, were consciously utilized as the foundation for building the new curriculum. Both Assisi and Ignatius were able to use features that emerged from the values of the sponsoring order to give voice to the Catholic identity of the institution. Interestingly, both chose to emphasize their charism rather than their Catholic identity. Equally interesting is that *Ex corde Ecclesiae* was rarely mentioned on either campus, which may indicate that the document's influence has already run its course.³⁰

The values of the sponsoring organization played a prominent role in curricular revision without the organization directly participating in the revision process itself. In each case, the sponsoring organization and the senior leadership of the university had defined a set of values to serve as guiding principles for the university. In fact, when revision processes struggled, it was often because it was not evident to the campus community that the espoused values were being faithfully applied. In neither case did the sponsoring order intervene directly in the curricular revision process, although in both cases members of the sponsoring order did participate according to their faculty or staff roles.

Sponsors' values were used as points of reference without such intervention because the faculty had sufficiently engaged in conversations about the Catholic identity of each institution well before the curricular revision process began. Campus leaders had consciously infused these values into the daily life of the university through discussions of the values during the hiring process, new faculty orientation, and awards honoring individuals who exemplified the values. As a result, the Franciscan and Jesuit values were viewed as legitimate points of departure for building the general education curriculum. Such clarity was essential because it allowed leaders to focus on reconciling other value sets that proved challenging during the revision process. In addition, the use of clearly outlined and commonly shared values also meant that the revision process was more transparent; clarity around these values, supplemented by leaders who explicitly linked these values and the process and content of curricular revision, led to greater process legitimacy.

³⁰ Charles J. Russo and David L. Gregory, "Ex corde Ecclesiae and American Catholic Higher Education: The Calm before the Storm or Dead in the Water?" *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education* 19 (2007): 147-158.

In each case, leaders of the revision process could (and did) refer back to these value sets during the journey of curricular revision.

Four significant findings emerge regarding the role of sponsoring organizations. First, as suggested by other scholars,³¹ the sponsoring organization and its values are extremely relevant to the actions of Catholic colleges and universities. The values of sponsoring religious orders, almost completely ignored in *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, are particularly salient since over 95% of CCUs in the United States are sponsored by religious orders.³² Second, this study suggests that by expressing and clarifying key values (which guide the curriculum revision process) sponsoring orders play an indirect but essential role in institutional change. This finding extends previous work that suggests that the primary impact of sponsoring organizations occurs through the direct actions of on-campus members, within the governance relationship, and in pooling of resources.³³ Third, this study reaffirms that there are many legitimate ways of expressing Catholic identity.³⁴ This finding suggests that meaningfully expressing the values of the particular sponsoring order is a potential way to differentiate in a crowded marketplace.³⁵ Finally, it appears in these two cases that the values of sponsoring organizations are being successfully transmitted and carried out by lay members, confirming the beliefs of those who have suggested that such a transition would begin,³⁶ and perhaps assuaging the fears of those who believe that the decline of vowed religious on campus will inevitably lead to a decreased role for the values of sponsoring organizations.³⁷

³¹ Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, *Out of the Cloister: A Study of Organizational Dilemmas* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1977); Dennis H. Holtschneider and Melanie M. Morey, "Relationship Revisited: Catholic Institutions and their Founding Congregations," 47 (Washington, DC: Association of Governing Boards, 2000); Morey, *Catholic Higher Education*; Richard Woods, *Mysticism and Prophecy: The Dominican Tradition* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998).

³² Richard Yanikoski, "Do Catholic Universities Make the Grade?" *U.S. Catholic* 72, no. 11 (2007): 18-20.

³³ Holtschneider and Morey, "Relationship Revisited."

³⁴ Richard G. Malloy, "The Truly Catholic University," *America* 191, no. 10 (2004): 8-13; Morey, *Catholic Higher Education*.

³⁵ Alice Bourke Hayes, "Comments on 'Relationship Revisited,'" *Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education* 21, no. 1 (2000): 42-45.

³⁶ Hayes, "Comments on 'Relationship Revisited'"; Monika K. Hellwig, "The Survival of Catholic Higher Education," *America* 185, no. 2 (2001): 23; Kevin E. Macklin, "A Response to 'Relationship Revisited,'" *Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education* 21, no. 1 (2000): 48-51.

³⁷ Holtschneider and Morey, "Relationship Revisited."

Values of the Academy

Values that emerge from the academic tradition were also heavily in play during the revision process. In these two cases, the institutions involved needed to reconcile three issues emerging from the academic values: what it means to be collegial, the role of disciplinary and interdisciplinary study (respectively), and the relative importance of the liberal arts versus advanced study in the major.

Each of these universities carried the features of a collegial culture, a culture that values participation, consultation, and an egalitarian approach.³⁸ When revision processes did not meaningfully engage faculty, progress halted. The initial attempt at curricular reform at Assisi, for example, was dismissed out of hand—and curricular revision stalled for years—because the process was outside the boundaries of what was understood to be collegial at Assisi. In contrast, the process of curricular revision at Ignatius was collegial from the start. As a result, that process ran smoothly, moving from initiation to approval in the span of two academic years.

Both institutions struggled with the relative importance of disciplinary and interdisciplinary study within the general education curriculum, though the resolution was easier at Assisi. Each of the values previously discussed—the values of the sponsoring organization and a commitment to a collegial approach—are relatively easy to perceive within the culture of each campus. In contrast, the level of support for the role of disciplines did not emerge except during the process itself. A disciplinary approach was not identified as a core value of either institution, yet resolving the balance between disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches was an important challenge to overcome. If navigating these multiple value sets is akin to steering through icy waters, the level of support for disciplinary study is like the giant iceberg that lies below the water, dangerously hidden from view.

Since there is finite space within any given curriculum, the size and composition of the general education curriculum signals the extent to which an institution values liberal study relative to advanced study within the major. Both universities therefore needed to reconcile the relative importance of liberal study and advanced study within the major. Though both universities serve students who primarily pursue study in professional programs, they took different approaches to the relative

³⁸ Birnbaum, *How Colleges Work*; Bergquist, *The Four Cultures of the Academy*.

size of the general education curriculum. At Assisi, the size of the general education curriculum was constrained in order to accommodate the requirements of advanced study in these majors. In contrast, support for the liberal arts curriculum was so strong at Ignatius that significant reduction was not supported, even if that meant reducing the number of credits available for advanced study or increasing the number of credits needed to complete to graduate. This difference is a manifestation of different levels of relative importance on the value of liberal study versus advanced study in the major.

Relationship between These Two Different Value Sets

Circumstances where Catholic and academic values conflict certainly receive plenty of attention, often around public situations such as commencement speakers or campus plays. If conflict were the predominant relationship between Catholic and academic values, and if the general education curriculum at an institution is truly a reflection of its Catholic³⁹ and academic⁴⁰ values, then we would expect to find conflict between these two value sources during general education revision. Deeper study, however, reveals a more subtle relationship. Confluence between these values, not conflict, was the dominant relationship in place during curricular revision at the two sites in this study. For example, faculty at Ignatius frequently used “Jesuit” and “liberal arts” together, including in the name of the introductory course designed for freshmen. To them, the strength of the liberal arts, expressed largely in the size and breadth of the general education curriculum, flows directly from the Jesuit identity and mission of the university. At Assisi, where stewardship of the world’s scarce resources is a prominent value of the sponsoring Franciscan order, the revised curriculum was infused with a greater role for environmental studies. This study suggests that Catholic and academic values are frequently in alignment as it pertains to the knowledge essential for students to acquire within general education.

³⁹ Joseph, “Philosophical Foundations”; Rausch, *Being Catholic in a Culture of Choice*; Murphy, *A Catholic University*

⁴⁰ Anne Colby, et al., *Educating Citizens: Preparing America’s Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003); Tierney, *Curricular Landscapes, Democratic Vistas*.

This echoes alignment between Catholic and academic values in areas like diversity and workers' rights.⁴¹

In fact, the greatest conflicts around values in this study were among values emerging from within the academic tradition, not between academic and sponsors' values. As discussed above, the relative importance of the liberal arts and advanced study as well as the balance between disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches caused greater conflict than any conversations around sponsors' values; each of these is a clash of values from within the academic tradition. Some scholars have suggested that academic values should shape curricular development;⁴² others suggest that these values are revealed through it.⁴³ This study suggests that both are accurate—academic values both shape and are revealed through significant change processes. While sponsors' values had been clarified to the point where they were not significantly disputed during these processes, academic values had not been discussed previous to the change process. As a result, they were disputed during the process.

Recommendations

As discussed, it is not possible to extrapolate the findings of this study to other types of institutions or other types of change. At the same time, these findings suggest specific actions that may be applicable to other change efforts at other CCUs. This section will discuss lessons that may be applicable for sponsoring organizations and leaders at Catholic colleges and universities. These recommendations are drawn from the findings presented above.

⁴¹ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions," (Washington, DC: USCC Publishing, 1998) 2008, August 27 (1998); American Association of University Professors, "Diversity & Affirmative Action," 2008, August 27; American Association of University Professors, "Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession," 2008, August 27 (2003).

⁴² Sarah T. Dangelantonio, "The Franklin Pierce Plan," *New Directions for Higher Education* 125, Spring 2004 (2004): 29-38; Victoria Munoz Richart, "Cascadia Community College: Finding the 'Cascadia Way,'" in *Changing General Education Curriculum*, ed. James L. Ratcliff, et al. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 51-68; Tierney, *Curricular Landscapes, Democratic Vistas*.

⁴³ F. Garvin Davenport, "The Hamline Plan: Mentoring, Modeling, and Monitoring the Practical Liberal Arts," *New Directions for Higher Education* 125 (Spring 2004): 69-84; Haig Mardirosian, "The Reforms in General Education at American University," *New Directions for Higher Education* 125 (Spring 2004): 29-50.

Advice to Sponsoring Organizations

This study suggests three steps sponsoring organizations can take to ensure that institutional mission and values are central to the process of general education revision. First, sponsors can ensure that their values are consistently expressed and transmitted to trustees, the president, and other senior leaders. When these values are central to conversations at the highest level, they complement market forces and academic values during the decision-making process. Decisions informed by the values of the sponsoring organization advance the perpetuation of the Catholic identity of that order and can potentially lead to a significant positive point of differentiation in a crowded marketplace. Second, it is appropriate for members of the sponsoring organization to request that significant decisions—for example, general education, policies for hiring and promotion, and practices around the topic of institutional recognition—be explicitly grounded in mission and values. This step accomplishes two important things. Most obviously, it ensures that the values are truly considered in such decisions. In addition, such a step can also lend legitimacy to these highly charged processes. Using mission values explicitly—mapping the process and content of proposed change to previously agreed upon and commonly shared values—can provide a common point of departure and a reference point during the journey of any significant change. Finally, though it may be tempting, members of the sponsoring order who are not members of the campus community on a day-to-day basis should avoid direct participation in change processes. If they have clarified and expressed values to senior leadership and created processes by which evidence of their use is provided, direct intervention should not be necessary. In fact, given the importance of process in the academic setting, direct intervention may signal a lack of confidence in leadership and become a distraction from the change at hand. Through emphasizing the relevance and use of core values and requesting evidence of their use, sponsoring organizations should be able to influence significant change in the institutions they sponsor without participating directly in the process of change.

Advice for Leaders at Catholic Colleges and Universities

While the role of the sponsoring organization is important in setting the broad context for the application of their values, leaders at Catholic colleges and universities are central to putting these values into operation. Campus leadership must translate the values of the

sponsoring organization if the Catholic identity is to remain a point of distinction for the institution. This study suggests four ways in which senior leaders at Catholic colleges and universities can ensure the meaningful application of their sponsors' values.

Perhaps the most profound step senior leaders can take is in the human resources area. It is essential to hire for values, ensure appropriate orientation to these values, and highlight them on an ongoing basis. For example, a process that requires candidates for faculty or administrative roles to demonstrate their awareness of (and, better yet, enthusiasm for) the core values of the institution helps to identify candidates who would be a good mission fit and encourages those not interested in such an environment to end their candidacies. In addition, celebrating awards for individuals who performed in accordance with the values, observing feast days from the tradition of the sponsoring organization, and displaying art work and other visible markers helps keep the Catholic identity and sponsors' values before the entire community. For CCUs sponsored by religious orders, pilgrimages by selected individuals to the place of the order's origin can also be an effective tool in creating a deeper understanding and appreciation for the values of that order.⁴⁴ Through taking active steps to cultivate shared understanding and support for the mission values, leaders at Catholic colleges advance the likelihood that their institutions will sustain fidelity to those values during times of change and also increase the likelihood that change clearly linked to these values will be successfully carried out.

Once the shared values inspired by the sponsors' values have been cultivated, leaders can facilitate change by explicitly applying these values as a point of reference during significant change processes. Leaders in each of this study's cases were able to emerge through difficult points in the process by referring the work of curricular revision to the values of the sponsoring organization. When the process of general education revision reaches a difficult point—as significant change processes inevitably do⁴⁵—leaders who can refer back to the values of the sponsoring organization have a powerful tool to assist in moving the process forward.

⁴⁴ Charles S. Weiss, "Sustaining Institutional Mission through 'Pilgrimage,'" *Liberal Education* 95, no. 3 (2009).

⁴⁵ John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1996).

In addition to cultivating and utilizing shared values around the topic of Catholic identity and sponsors' values, leaders are also well-served to identify and clarify academic values before beginning a significant change process. Leaders at CCUs and at other institutions engaging in the process of curricular revision would be wise to spend sufficient time clarifying academic values in advance of significant change processes.

Finally, it is essential for leaders to conduct change processes that are consistent with institutional values. In academic settings, effective change processes are aligned with dominant values and institutional culture.⁴⁶ In CCUs, where values like community and justice are strongly held, their pursuit must be evident not only in the content generated by such changes but also in the process through which they are generated. Genuine, open, and sustained participation by faculty is essential in these settings. Leaders must therefore exercise leadership delicately by creating inclusive processes, posing guiding questions, and intervening only as needed in order to keep the process moving. Leadership by fiat appears no more successful in CCUs than it does in other types of institutions. Such leaders are therefore well-served to keep sponsors' and academic values prominent in their thinking about the processes by which they implement change, at the same time as they work to achieve mission and values-specific content changes.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study was primarily concerned with the process of a particular kind of change (revision of the general education curriculum) in a particular kind of institution (moderately selective Catholic colleges and universities). The key findings highlighted above appear relevant to other change processes at Catholic colleges and universities but further research into such processes may illuminate important subtleties or significant differences. Scholars may wish to consider the role of Catholic values during changes such as presidential transitions and strategic planning initiatives (other cases when both Catholic values and the values of the academy are in play) to determine the extent to which the findings and suggestions included herein are

⁴⁶ Bergquist, *The Four Cultures of the Academy*; Adrianna J. Kezar and Peter D. Eckel, "The Effect of Institutional Culture on Change Strategies in Higher Education: Universal Principles Or Culturally Responsive Concepts?" *The Journal of Higher Education* 73, no. 4 (2002): 435-460.

relevant in such processes. In addition, it is possible that more selective CCUs feel more insulated from the need for change and therefore have curricula—and revision processes—where the weighting of different values is different. Future researchers may wish to see the degree to which the findings and suggestions in this document are relevant in other settings.

Conclusion

Leaders in Catholic higher education are faced with a number of challenges. Perhaps highest among them is maintaining institutional viability and distinctiveness through meaningful application of the values they inherit from their various Catholic sponsors. Sponsoring organizations can aid in change processes through expressing values clearly and requesting evidence of their explicit use on campus. By taking such action, direct participation by members of the sponsoring order in specific change processes becomes unnecessary. Senior leaders at CCUs extend the work of sponsoring organizations. Through carefully cultivating a shared understanding of these values, applying them explicitly, clarifying academic values also involved in the process of significant change, and conducting a process legitimate within the institutional context, leaders at Catholic colleges and universities can successfully lead change efforts that achieve this essential balance.

Appendix

Interview Protocol

- How were you involved, and why (i.e., why were you chosen and why did you choose to participate)?
- Why was the decision made to revise the general education curriculum? Who issued the call to change, and how (i.e., announcement at meeting, e-mail, committee charge, etc.)? What were the stated goals of the revision?
- Tell me the story of how the general education reform happened? Who did what? What were some of the critical decision points? How were they resolved? What made the process work in the end? Who ultimately needed to give final approval?

- How was the Catholic identity of the college considered in this process? How did the stated sponsorship values have an impact? What role did the sponsors have (direct or indirect)?
- How did discipline-specific values or viewpoints emerge? How did they either propel the process or need to be overcome?
- When were Catholic values and other values in alignment, and how did that help?
- When were Catholic values and other (academic, disciplinary, or otherwise) sets of values in conflict, and how were those resolved?
- How were voices of diversity (ethnic, LGBTQ, religious, etc.) included or considered? Student life staff? Students? Employers? Graduate programs?
- What three words would you use to describe the University?
- What values are so central that you couldn't envision a time when the University would change them, regardless of the consequences? How are those reflected in the process that led to the curriculum?
- What lessons could other leaders at CCUs learn from this process?

