

# Infusing Catholic Identity throughout the Campus Community<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This article, originally presented as a plenary address at the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities' 2011 Annual Meeting, addresses a bottom-up methodology for infusing the spirit of Catholic identity more deeply throughout a campus community. The author begins with an exploration of some theoretical underpinnings of this approach and then uses examples from St. Catherine University and other institutions to illustrate how such an infusion of Catholic identity and spirit can take place.

## Introduction

The goal of this paper is to share a particular approach for strengthening Catholic identity on a college / university campus. This approach provides a methodology for keeping our Catholic heritage and tradition alive, vital, and engaging on our campuses. Although what I suggest here is not the only possibility, it is an approach that has been implemented and found to be valuable, workable, and exciting.

This approach—one we call “infusion” or “integration of Catholic identity”—calls for broad engagement across the institution, particularly among the faculty and staff who work most directly with students. It is a faculty-led and faculty-driven effort, one that requires neither a department of Catholic Studies nor a position of vice president or of director of mission. With the president as institutional mission leader and the assistance of a steering committee, a faculty member co-ordinates

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<sup>1</sup> Occasionally, the *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* prints speeches or other works that go through a modified review process. That is, they do not proceed through the full blind peer review. Such articles, as in the instance of this article, are included because of their value and applicability to the particular *Journal* issue.

faculty and staff development around this key element of the university mission.

### **A Case Example: St. Catherine University**

At St. Catherine University, our president first voiced the integration approach in her proposal to Patricia and John Myser, from whom she solicited the program endowment to support the Initiative on Catholic Identity. In the president's view, this endowment<sup>2</sup> was needed to enable deep mission integration to flourish. If faculty and staff could steadily and deliberately integrate the Catholic tradition of intellectual inquiry and social teaching within the curriculum and cocurriculum and if faculty and staff could be deeply engaged in that ongoing process, then St. Catherine could achieve greater mission integration and, as a result, strengthen its Catholic identity. The program referred to in this article was henceforth referred to as the Myser Initiative on Catholic Identity at St. Catherine's University. With strong faculty leadership at the center, the president noted, our Catholic identity would be more likely to "knit itself into the fabric" of the community and take hold throughout the educational process.

Such an approach requires an attitude of engagement, participation, accountability, and to some degree, an expectation of the small steps that slowly build faculty understanding and willingness to think about their work in new ways. It calls on faculty to wrestle with the question, "What explicit difference does it or should it make that I am teaching—whatever my discipline—in this Catholic university, with this mission, this culture, these students, and at this time?"

Before describing our experience with the infusion approach, this paper will briefly overview the rationale that supports faculty- and staff-driven efforts to infuse the richness and power of our Catholic tradition in the curriculum and cocurriculum.

### **Rationale Behind the Infusion Approach**

Briefly, the infusion approach begins with conversations in small groups to deepen meaningful conversations about Catholic identity.

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<sup>2</sup>This endowment joins with other mission-strengthening initiatives and endowments in the liberal arts and women's education (the other two key elements of St. Catherine's mission). St. Catherine's also has distinguished faculty chairs for mission.

Gradually increasing numbers of diverse persons are involved and become committed to deeper implementation of the Catholic identity aspect of the institution's mission. Ultimately, many forms of infusion emerge throughout the university community through the creativity of the faculty and staff.

To achieve a deepened understanding of, respect for, and appreciation of an institution's Catholic identity, a process of social change is required among staff, faculty, students, and administration. Thus it is relevant to consider works on social change, on organizational culture and change, on systems thinking, on networking, on learning communities, on dialogue, and even on quantum physics to best enable the change process. For many years, the limitations of mechanistic models have been studied, and the thinking of visionary scholars in various fields has provided alternatives to the command and control approach to structuring organizations and implementing changes within them.<sup>3</sup>

In a small but significant article, two faculty members from Michigan State University reflected on their experience and asked, "Is it possible to promote change in the academy by just talking?" They reminded the reader of the simple but galvanizing truth that the passion for new ideas, for engagement with remarkable people, and for meaningful work is what drew us to the academy to collaborate with other similarly committed people.<sup>4</sup> Our approach to Catholic identity is all about tapping

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<sup>3</sup> A few significant works include: Adrianna Kezar, "Understanding and Facilitating Organizational Change in the 21st Century: Recent Research and Conceptualizations," *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report*, 28(4) (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2001); Kathleen Allen and Cynthia Cherry, *Systemic Leadership: Enriching the Meaning of Our Work* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000); Darin Barney, *The Network Society* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2004); Fritjof Capra, *The Hidden Connections: Integrating the Biological, Cognitive and Social Dimensions of Life into a Science of Sustainability* (New York: Doubleday, 2002); Dee Hock, *Birth of the Chaordic Age* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1999); William Isaacs, *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together: A Pioneering Approach to Communicating in Business and in Life* (New York: Doubleday/Currency, 1999); Adam Kahane, *Power and Love: A Theory and Practice of Social Change* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2010); Harrison Owen, *The Power of Spirit: How Organizations Transform* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2000); Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, Revised and Updated Edition (New York: Doubleday/Currency, 2006); Margaret Wheatley, *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future*, expanded second edition (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Frank A. Fear and Diane M. Doberneck, "Collegial Talk: A Powerful Tool for Change," *About Campus* (March/April 2004), 11-16.

into the power of such passion and the desire for deep integration of meaning with what we do every day.

The quest to make the contributions of Catholic identity real throughout the educational process has everything to do with a process of organizational change, a permeation of the whole with a deepened sense of meaning, spirituality, and purpose. It is holy work, centering on the whole person and focusing, in the end, on preparing students to live responsibly and constructively in a world that is global and deeply interconnected.

The challenge before us is to discern how to share a compelling faith-vision in this time, given what and who we have become—multicultural, religiously pluralistic, and sometimes antagonistic to one another. We are called to reintegrate the realm of the spirit into our lives and to find a new way for a new time.

### *The Importance of Meaningful Conversations*

Notable scholars such as Adam Kahane, William Isaacs, Peter Senge, and Margaret Wheatley suggest that meaningful small group conversations are at the heart of an infusion approach and that such conversations are, in themselves, powerful and enabling.<sup>5</sup> In her studies of chaos theory and leadership, Margaret Wheatley comes to the compelling and frequently-quoted conclusion that such simple and meaningful conversations among people who care about a particular issue are what begin the process of change. She writes:

The world only changes when a few individuals step forward. It doesn't change from leaders or top-level programs or big ambitious plans. It changes when we, everyday people gathering in small groups, notice what we care about and take those first steps to change the situation.<sup>6</sup>

A key example of this principle comes from the well-known story of Wangari Maathai,<sup>7</sup> who graduated from the former Benedictine College for Women in Atchison, KS. A small group of local African women talked together about the effects of deforestation in their area and, as a result of their conversations, started planting trees. Before long, thirty million

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<sup>5</sup> See references to their works listed in Footnote #3.

<sup>6</sup> Margaret Wheatley, *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future*, expanded second edition (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2009), 5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

trees were planted in East Africa, and the land was reforested. The Nobel Peace Prize she received for this effort brought world attention to how the conversations of a small group initiated dramatic ecological change.

Marianne Knuth, founder of a learning network dedicated to sustainable agriculture in Zimbabwe, described her experience by saying that the power initiated by the opening of minds grows through the “magic of connecting with one another....We meet in another place—outside of mere intellect. We meet.... through the doors of our hearts, not the doors of our minds.”<sup>8</sup>

These meaningful conversations usually take place in voluntary, self-organizing groups of committed people; frequently, these conversations are held in small groups that meet in a circle to symbolize the respect for each other that will prevail as participants listen and interact. Creativity is released in these groups because people feel safe to speak freely and feel connected to one another.

Creating such a bond in these groups takes time and a commitment to the task at hand. We have to be willing to sit together, to listen to one another respectfully, and to speak publicly of our hopes and dreams, as well as of our fears. The process also requires careful listening without judgment, without preparing our own parrying points, and without one-upping one another. Assumptions have to be suspended and others’ points of view recognized and respected. Learning how to articulate our own thinking honestly, clearly, and with concern for the climate of the group takes practice.

Most importantly, such meaningful conversations take us together to a deeper level of relationship because they focus on our beliefs and actions. Such work creates an unusual spaciousness among us, but also requires a careful balancing of dialogue and discussion. This deeper level is important if we are to address such matters as our Catholic identity because discussions of such serious issues tend to become sessions where participants advocate for their own particular point of view, and fail to listen to the views of others.

Taking a different approach, William Isaacs calls for dialogue: the “invisible architecture,” the “field” of meaningful conversation; the

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, Revised and Updated Edition (New York: Doubleday/Currency, 2006), 374.

“container” within which meaningful conversations can take place.<sup>9</sup> Isaacs sees specific domains where dialogue can make a particular contribution, serving as the best solution and perhaps the only one. He says that where people have massive differences of perspective and worldview, traditional hierarchical structures do not work. Developing the habit of dialogue stretches our minds to perceive points of view we might not naturally understand or accept. Such a stance may be particularly important when discussing controversial matters that are widely understood as “not up for discussion.”<sup>10</sup>

Although participants in discussions frequently vary widely in their experiences and in their degree of openness to change, the infusion approach has the capacity to create a transformational *shared* and deeply held *vision* in our institutions. This is a vision of what we can accomplish together by more deeply embodying our Catholic identity. What Peter Senge<sup>11</sup> and others have written concerning business organizations is relevant in seeking widespread permeation of a new perspective within an institution.

### *The Power of Shared Vision*

As we work to enable our college and university communities to live out a more holistic view of life—one that includes the transcendental, the deeper intersections of faith and reason, our world, and the realities around us—we are really struggling to develop a shared vision. Senge’s thoughts about harnessing the power of systemic, nonlinear thinking provide valuable insights for us in our work to deepen the sense of Catholic identity and its contributions to human understanding within our institutions.<sup>12</sup>

Senge argues that *shared vision* is not an idea but “a force in people’s hearts that is compelling enough to acquire the support of more than one person.”<sup>13</sup> Such a vision is much more powerful in motivating transformation than a purely intellectual idea. Shared visions provide

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<sup>9</sup> William Isaacs, *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together: A Pioneering Approach to Communicating in Business and in Life* (New York: Doubleday/Currency, 1999). See especially Chapter One.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

the *focus* and the *energy* for learning together in ways that enable people to learn generatively, to accomplish the vision for which they hope.

A shared vision results from meaningful conversations about important ideas that invite and gain the commitment of others. It enables people who previously may have mistrusted one another to work together. “Visions spread because of a reinforcing process of increasing clarity, enthusiasm, communication and commitment. As people talk the vision grows clearer. As it gets clearer, enthusiasm for its benefits builds, and soon the vision starts to spread in a reinforcing spiral of communication and excitement.”<sup>14</sup>

### *Importance of Supportive Leadership*

Supportive leadership of the shared vision from the top is essential in such important and meaningful work. In his book, *The Hidden Connection*, Fritjof Capra talks about the kind of leadership that means “creating conditions rather than giving directions, and using the power of authority to empower others...enabling the community as a whole to create something new.”<sup>15</sup> This kind of leadership, inspired and supported by senior administrators, fosters initiative and creativity within all areas of a university and is at the heart of a successful infusion approach.

In sum, the rationale for the infusion approach is grounded in the understanding of our ultimate purpose. Harvard professor J. Bryan Hehir says that Catholic institutions must continually reweave their identity in response to the questions that society puts to them.<sup>16</sup> In *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, Pope John Paul II wrote that a central purpose of Catholic educational institutions is to put faith in dialogue with culture.<sup>17</sup> To enliven the sense of Catholic identity within our institutions and our culture, it is necessary to foster a transformational vision rooted in Catholic traditions of intellectual inquiry and social teaching.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>15</sup> Fritjof Capra, *The Hidden Connections: Integrating the Biological, Cognitive and Social Dimensions of Life into a Science of Sustainability* (New York, Doubleday, 2002), 122.

<sup>16</sup> J. Bryan Hehir, “Identity and Institutions,” *Health Progress* (May-June, 2008): 18.

<sup>17</sup> Pope John Paul II, “*Ex corde Ecclesiae: On Catholic Universities* (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1990), sec. 3, article 43.

Given the growing understandings of quantum physics, chaos theory, ecological realities, the far-reaching interdependencies of a globalized world, and the dominance of a technological mindset, new ways of probing into the deeper meanings of life are emerging. The lives and the world for which we prepare students are at once more complex and more diverse; thus, an ever-deeper sense of ultimate meaning is required. Meaningful conversations among faculty and staff, leading to shared visions supported by far-sighted executives, can release untold energy and creativity to enable us to educate for the challenges ahead in a spirit of Gospel-inspired solidarity.

### **Practical Applications of the Infusion Approach**

Our goal at St. Catherine University (St. Kate's) is threefold: (1) to infuse understanding, respect, and appreciation for our Catholic identity within the university culture; (2) to make our Catholic identity evident in the relationships among us; and (3) to make our Catholic identity clear and explicit within the ambience, the curriculum, and the cocurriculum of the entire institution. In short, we want to *knit* this sense of Catholic identity deeply into the fabric of the university.

The following sixteen “approaches” offer descriptions and examples of that which has been learned thus far at St. Kate's and elsewhere.

#### *1. Accentuate the Positive*

We began with an effort to set a positive and inclusive tone. This has been our aim throughout our efforts. While we do not circumvent the difficult parts, we strive to keep the focus positive. We try to build a shared sense of the positive contributions of our Catholic identity, of the gift it is to a holistic perspective of self and the world.

#### *2. Learn What's “Out There”*

Using a survey at a workshop held at the beginning of the academic year, we sought faculty and staff perceptions about Catholic identity. We asked them to tell us their hopes and fears, and what they thought we should do first. They discussed their answers in small groups before submitting them (anonymously if they wished). The information collected led to an article distributed across the institution that was



used in the initial planning of university events. The survey was invaluable in showing us the wide diversity of views about Catholic identity at the university. Responses ranged from: “I haven’t the ghost of a notion of what Catholic identity is about” to “Haven’t we done enough on this already?”

### *3. Form a Small, Broad-Based, Steering Committee*

To steer the process, it is necessary to identify a small group that both embodies the diversity of the faculty and staff and is also connected to the various aspects of community life relevant to the task. To form our steering committee, we invited people from both campuses, of various faiths and of no faith, who worked in key academic disciplines, in campus ministry, in student affairs, and in the multicultural and international student programs. Small enough to have meaningful conversations and diverse enough to be aware of the many opportunities and complexities in this work, this group has enabled broad collaboration in the effort toward an integrated Catholic identity throughout the university.

### *4. Begin with the Faculty and Staff*

The faculty, especially those members with tenure, is most likely to be a part of the institution over a long period of time. Thus, beginning the integration process within the faculty is critical if the goal is permeation of Catholic identity throughout the educational process. Spending time and resources to help faculty and staff understand and appreciate the Catholic tradition will enable them to educate and guide in that spirit.

### *5. Focus on Living the Mission*

Commitment to mission is the glue that holds our institutions together and that enables achievement of our goals. A statement of mission that is relevant, identifiable among the campus community, reiterated frequently throughout the institution, and that explicitly expresses the commitment to our Catholic tradition is foundational for any process of deepening Catholic identity. Pervasive, fully evident, and ongoing presidential support is absolutely essential in this area. Some St. Kate’s examples of this emphasis on mission and presidential support are illustrative. For instance:

- A presentation on the Catholic identity element of the mission is a regular part of the annual orientation program for new faculty each August. Follow-up sessions have been requested by new faculty to deepen this understanding of what it means to teach at a Catholic college and have been requested by new faculty.
- Student affairs staff implements the new Association of Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities (ASACCU) best practices document,<sup>17a</sup> which offers explicit ways to integrate their work through Catholic identity infusion activities.
- In their personal meetings with each faculty member seeking tenure, the president and senior vice president discuss fidelity to all three key elements of the mission, including Catholic identity, and ask each how he or she plans to carry out that fidelity in his or her work in the future.

#### 6. *Make the Mission Everyone's Responsibility*

Infusion of Catholic identity throughout the institution is the responsibility of everyone on campus. It is not just the responsibility of a certain individual, such as a vice president for mission, or of certain departments, such as Theology, Religious Studies, or Campus Ministry. Living out Catholic identity must be part of the mentality, a shared vision about *why* we do what we do. This is why we decided to start with small, voluntary groups engaging in meaningful conversation; here we focus on what the mission statement says about Catholic identity, embodying our common commitment to learning together. Having a director of a Catholic identity initiative who is a faculty member and not a theologian or a member of the campus ministry staff helps to emphasize the point that mission is everybody's job. A director who already has credibility and acceptance among faculty and staff is beneficial to the work of an infusion approach.

#### 7. *Develop and Use a Common Language*

To establish and strengthen Catholic identity, a campus community requires clarity and a common vocabulary. In his book, *Inventing Catholic Tradition*, Terrence Tilley notes that it is essential to develop a common language, a way to communicate, a habit of thought.<sup>18</sup> We need

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<sup>17a</sup> The Association for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities. "Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities." <http://asaccu.org/images/principles.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Terrence W. Tilley, *Inventing Catholic Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 123-149.

to be able to have the meaningful conversations, to talk with one another about why we do what we do, and to articulate the principles that define us. We have to know about the emphases of our particular institution and how these areas of importance are rooted in Catholic traditions of intellectual inquiry and social teaching. We need to identify these *together* for our own community.

Because a common language about Catholic identity is essential for an infusion process, we knew that we had to make the elements of Catholic contribution to intellectual inquiry and to teaching about social justice more concrete. We clarified the meaning of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition and Catholic Social Teaching (CST) for our work in higher education, and rooted them in the common heritage of the university, which was founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet (CSJ). We began with a review of literature and with what our charism means for higher education. This led us to study two theologians whose work specifically fosters understanding about the contributions of Catholic identity to the intellectual life and to higher education: Monika Hellwig and Terrence Tilley.<sup>19</sup> From their work and a review of literature related to other U.S. colleges sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, we developed a common language about what scholarly inquiry in the Catholic tradition meant for our university.<sup>20</sup> For CST, we simply used the summary of principles published by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and disseminated by our Archdiocese.<sup>21</sup>

### *8. Encourage Visible Symbols of Mission*

The common language has to be visible. To achieve this, we have developed recognizable symbols for our mission. We use a special rendition of the Chapel's rose window as well as a recognizable typeface. We publish and distribute the text of the annual lecture to the ACCU presidents and have received requests for lecture copies to use with faculty and trustees, and from serious researchers elsewhere. In addition, a

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<sup>19</sup> Monika Hellwig, "What Can the Roman Catholic Tradition Contribute to Christian Higher Education?" in *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Survival and Success in the Twenty-first Century*, eds. Richard Hughes and William Adrian (Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmann Publishing Co., 1997); Terrence W. Tilley, *Inventing Catholic Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> Joan Mitchell, CSJ, "All Women Can Be: The Spirit of the Sisters of St. Joseph" in *The Reflective Woman*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Acton, MA: Copley Custom Textbooks, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> Office for Social Justice, St. Paul and Minneapolis, "Catholic Social Teaching," [http://www.osjspm.org/catholic\\_social\\_teaching.aspx](http://www.osjspm.org/catholic_social_teaching.aspx).

separate web page on our mission is under construction. At St. Catherine University, we have a custom of making bookmarks to carry important pieces of information; therefore, we have a Catholic identity bookmark with themes of Catholic habits of intellectual inquiry on one side and principles of CST on the other, for use in various classes. Every student receives a bookmark in an initial class<sup>22</sup> that all students must take. Faculty have been creative about how they have used these bookmarks with students: one faculty member uses it after each discussion of the various readings by asking students to share which aspect of the CIT or CST is reflected in the reading; the bookmark is also being used in *Principles of Business Management* classes to guide the discussion of ethical dilemmas evident in case studies.

Another aspect of making Catholic identity visible is to link it explicitly to as many other new and ongoing events and projects as possible through endorsements, cosponsorships, and interdepartmental collaborations. The aim is to show how the Catholic identity of the institution undergirds many diverse activities. Collaboration between campus ministry and student activities and the listing of these linkages on posters and flyers increase visibility, foster integration, and build the shared vision.

### *9. Develop Multidisciplinary Thinking*

Catholic institutions aim for holistic education that exposes our students to various modes of knowing, showing that the full human being comes to truth through exploration in fields such as science, art, literature, history, theology, and philosophy. If we overcome the “silo” mentality in which most faculty members were educated, we can then hear one another and learn together. In circles of meaningful conversation, small voluntary groups will stimulate enthusiasm as the participants generate creative ways of embodying Catholic identity within their fields. For example, at St. Kate’s we cosponsored a lecture by Kenneth Miller on Evolutionary Biology with the biology department and the St. John’s Bible exhibition with the library and the art gallery.

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<sup>22</sup> Every first-year undergraduate takes a core course called *The Reflective Woman*. The course opens students to an understanding of what it means to be a woman in a multicultural world, what a holistic approach to truth is about, and what it means to be committed to social justice.

### *10. Deal with Difficult Questions in a Scholarly Way*

As higher educational institutions, we are trying to educate and to raise the faith-dimension—the value-dimension—of reality to a level of serious dialogue; we are not trying to proselytize. We seek understanding, respect, and appreciation for the Catholic tradition and for other traditions as well. Habits of dialogue, distinct from discussion developed in the conversational circles, enable us to recognize the commonalities and the differences, and to talk about them with respect and appreciation. Making available collections of resources facilitates discussions grounded on the best of scholarship from various perspectives. We try to facilitate recognition of the dark times in the Catholic story and distinguish between the actions of the institutional Church and the beliefs of the people of God. Learning together how to deal with the difficult questions by seriously reflecting on various perspectives is one of the major contributions our institutions can make to our societies.

### *11. Use Various Methods to Reach People*

Formal faculty development programs such as seminars and lectures on Catholic identity themes help to develop the intellectual background for the work, but these must be complemented with voluntary small group opportunities if the power of the Spirit is to be released within the community as a whole. The infusion approach involves many ways of touching the heart as well as the head. Because we all learn in different ways, we need to have lectures, book discussions, large groups, small groups, rituals, opportunities for prayer, aesthetic expressions of the principles, workshops, and planning times for curricular integration. We also must remember to share examples of how the infusion approach can be done and has been done at our institution and others.

As indicated previously, spending time in circles of meaningful conversation is critical. Without this kind of interaction, knowledge about the meaning of Catholic identity can be sterile instead of generative of new kinds of leavening activity. Therefore, we suggest starting with small, voluntary, conversation circles. Here are several ways that we have used various methodologies to reach people.

*A. Summer Workshop.* Probably the most beneficial activity of this approach has been having a week-long planning workshop for conversations about Catholic identity, interacting with people who have already done such work, and having focused time to work on

integration projects. This summer workshop is open to fifteen faculty and staff who apply from many departments. People are encouraged to come with a departmental colleague so they can collaborate on a project. For faculty, this is a stipended summer focus-week, and recently, staff members have also participated. The aim is to give opportunity for focused time on an idea about how to infuse the spirit of Catholic identity into curriculum and cocurriculum.

The first day of the workshop is devoted to input on Catholic habits of intellectual inquiry, given via a DVD of a talk by Monika Hellwig and a presentation by a theologian who is a member of the steering committee. The second day focuses on Catholic Social Teaching (with which people at St. Catherine University are more familiar) and features a panel of workshop “alums” who have integrated some aspect of Catholic identity into the curriculum of their departments, a course, or a program. A variety of resources such as books, periodicals, CDs, and DVDs are available for perusal.

This workshop is intended to be a positive experience of input, resources tailored to needs, and consultations as desired. Time for work on participants’ projects is provided on the third and fourth days, and lively discussions on various topics have occurred on portions of these days. On the final day, members of the group share their developing projects. Each group from the workshop has asked for some “booster” activities, and the group of alums is spreading the word about their positive experience in the workshop, encouraging others in their department to participate.

The projects resulting from this workshop have included tying professional codes of ethics to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and integrating this throughout departmental curricula in physical therapy and occupational therapy (based on a model pioneered by the Social Work Department). This integration has been visually incorporated into a grid that every student uses throughout the course work. In its graduate courses, the Nursing Department uses such a chart in ethics courses. One workshop participant has focused her dissertation research on how the alums of our nursing program are integrating spirituality into their practice after graduation.

This workshop has become the most powerful venue of meaningful conversations. Whole departments are beginning to participate, and participation of definite percentages of ranked faculty is an explicit goal of the most recent strategic plan. A representative outcome of this workshop is reflected in one of the recent evaluations:

This was one of the most intellectually exciting and spiritually fulfilling experiences I have had at CSC. Though I am not Catholic myself, I was always comfortable with CSC's mission and embraced it. But now I see my own place in it, and share its goals in a way I did not before. My path to contributing is now clear to me. (2008 Participant)

*B. Lunchtime Discussions.* Another small group conversation takes place in scheduled, lunchtime discussions that are available to all. These events are announced long in advance with e-mail invitations sent to prior participants; posters placed in prominent positions also highlight these lunches. The discussions can focus on preparatory readings or topics addressed by invited guests or faculty panels. The lunchtime discussions are always intended to be small groups in settings of circles or semicircles to foster interaction. People of all faiths are glad for the opportunity to share about the faith-dimension of their lives, and faculty, staff, students, and alumni participate. These discussions have featured theologian Mary Bednarowski on religious imagination, Archbishop Harry Flynn on Mother Teresa and on his pastoral letter on racism, and faculty panels on John Allen's book regarding trends that are revolutionizing the Catholic Church.

*C. Breakout Sessions.* Another venue for small group conversations are breakout sessions at faculty and staff development meetings. At St. Catherine University we offer such sessions at the annual opening faculty workshop and also at the Teaching and Learning Day for faculty and staff, which is held each January; these sessions give Catholic identity equality with other teaching and learning goals. One January, we showed the DVD of Bill Moyers' interview with gay author Richard Rodriguez on what Rodriguez's Catholic faith has meant in his life. This interview attracted many first-time attendees to our sessions.

*D. Annual Events.* Large annual gatherings that involve the university community as well as the general public are another kind of event around which many conversations take place. For example, the Mission Integration Committee at Fontbonne University (another university within the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet tradition) chose to begin their work of promoting Catholic identity by celebrating St. Joseph the Worker day on May 1st. The celebration consisted of a presentation to the faculty as a whole on CST, and then the faculty participated in small groups in an afternoon of various community service activities.

At St. Kate's, we also have an annual award and lecture series that provides students, faculty, staff, alums, and the general public with an opportunity to hear from someone who has integrated Catholic

identity into his or her life. Awardees have included Lisa Sowle Cahill; Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ; Bryan Hehir; Therese Schroeder-Sheker; and Jill Ker Conway. Sometimes, student and faculty groups have had an opportunity to interact with the awardee in classes or in small groups. The lecture is publicized widely among the alums and the general public of the area and carries a monetary award and a formal citation, signaling its seriousness as an annual public event of the university. The event is also opened by the president or senior vice president. We encourage faculty to include the lecture in their syllabi; in addition, we host a preparatory discussion session, make it part of student requirements for the CORE courses, and highlight it as an important annual event on college calendars and in the local press. Preparation and follow-up activities for students and faculty surround the lecture, which is published afterward and distributed to the presidents of all of the Catholic colleges and universities as well as to requestors. This annual event provides many opportunities for meaningful conversations and is part of the university's contribution to the educational ministry of the local Church.

### *12. Develop Accessible Resources for Faculty and Staff*

To facilitate ongoing study and conversations, we have worked with the library to attain resources and to make them available during the Faculty Planning Week and the lunch sessions. Some written and audio resources have also been collected specifically for the Initiative, and we are working on how best to make them accessible.

### *13. Be Open to Surprises as People's Creativity Blossoms*

As engaged, committed individuals participate in meaningful conversational circles, they develop creative ways to incorporate the spirit of Catholic identity into their courses, curricula, and departmental projects. The creativity is amazing, the work proceeding in myriad ways by different groups in various fields and departments. This creates interesting, but sometimes challenging, surprises for organizers and planners. What we are about is depth, which takes many forms according to the rhythms of individual and institutional development. Some kinds of permeation activities have already been mentioned, but an enterprising Latin teacher developed modules, based on Christian hymns, both to teach the elements of grammar and to have discussions of the texts. The Development Office created a series of "talking points" for staff to use,



both with those alums who feel we are not Catholic anymore and those who think we are being too Catholic. The Nursing Department has now adopted a basic text on spirituality and healing for use with all students. Business staff is working on an Ethical Evaluation Framework to help its students address ethical dilemmas. A Physical Therapy professor says that Catholic identity issues have just become part of the culture of the department now, incorporated in some way in all of its courses.

#### *14. Keep Alumni, Trustees, and Sponsors Informed and Involved*

At St. Catherine University we have cosponsored events with a committee of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet on social justice issues. At these events, we jointly sponsored a speaker from NETWORK: National Social Justice Lobby, bringing CSJ's, local community members, and students together for joint action on key social issues. A joint University-CSJ committee has been formed for the ongoing education of trustees on Catholic identity issues. All of our publicity also goes on the e-mail circuit of the CSJ of the St. Paul Province, and the Sisters lend their name as cosponsors of our lecture series, and participate in our events as they are able.

#### *15. Recognize That This Is a Multi-Year Project*

Infusion takes time. People are at different places. This process of permeation reaches into the depths of human understanding, and has emotional as well as rational elements. We are now beginning to develop assessment tools that measure this qualitative change.

#### *16. Develop a Secure Funding Base*

Because infusion is a multi-year project, it requires the ability to plan for events and outcomes in the future. Thus, a multi-year budgetary commitment, or an endowment that assures funding and longer-term planning for key developmental events, is essential. Attaining this secure funding base is one of the evidences of presidential support. Having an endowment that makes it possible to count on funding for projects each year is a great boon. Moreover, showing gratitude through continued formal and informal communication with the donors is important since they, too, like to celebrate the fact that their gifts are accomplishing their purpose.

### *Summary*

These sixteen points are meant to summarize that which we have learned about an infusion process in the first five years of our work. Of course, we also express our Catholic identity through beautiful Eucharistic liturgies, interfaith prayer services, celebrations of our CSJ heritage, multiple social justice activities, and various works of service to the community and to the local church, especially through the Theology Department's work with local churches. The infusion approach characteristic of the Myser Initiative complements the many activities at St. Catherine University that permeate the educational process with a deeper understanding of, respect for, and appreciation of our Catholic identity.

### **Conclusion**

Being faithful to our Catholic mission is both a matter of integrity and key to our identity. Faithfulness to mission makes us who we are as institutions, and it gives us the strength as communities to accomplish our educational purposes. Both theory and practice support St. Catherine University's conviction that, to make the Catholic identity aspect of our mission a living force among us, an infusion approach will best serve to weave into the fabric of our university community an understanding of, respect for, and appreciation of our Catholic identity. We seek a shared vision, embodied in our curricular and cocurricular activities, which requires a process that involves both head *and* heart. We believe the process should include a broad range of people in small-group, voluntary, meaningful conversations that stimulate their commitment and creativity to find their own ways to express Catholic identity within their particular area—and so to permeate the educational process with this identity's riches.

As a result of her international work on change processes, Margaret Wheatley has developed a simple theme, advanced in two editions of her book, titled *Turning to One Another*. In poetry, stories, and unadorned prose, she voices this theme throughout: there is not a more powerful way to initiate significant change than to convene a conversation. When a community of people discovers that it shares a concern, change begins. There is no power equal to a community of people discovering what it cares about.<sup>23</sup> At Catholic colleges and universities we share a concern, so may many conversations begin and continue to bloom.

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<sup>23</sup> See Wheatley, *Turning to One Another*.