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Defining Catholic Higher Education in Positive Terms

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Debates about Catholic higher education in the United States sometimes focus too much on what Catholic colleges and universities should not do, rather than what they should do. This article attempts to reframe those debates away from the negative expressions of Catholic identity (i.e., denying guests a right to speak on campus based on their level of agreement with Catholic teaching) and toward more positive expressions, like promoting scholarship on Catholic history, culture, and theology. It reviews some key academic literature that approaches Catholic identity from this positive, proactive perspective, and attempts to categorize that literature into common, identifiable themes.

Keywords

Higher education, mission, identity, Catholic identity

It is all too easy (and intellectually lazy) to define Catholic higher education in terms of what colleges and universities should *not* do. Some argue that a Church-related university should *not* invite speakers or employ faculty who openly disagree with Church teaching, believing that Catholic institutions should never provide a forum for opinions and ideas contrary to Catholic ideals. On the opposite end of the spectrum, some argue that Catholic universities, as cosmopolitan intellectual communities, should *not* interfere with the academic freedom of their faculty or the personal lives of their students, many of whom may not adhere to Catholic beliefs.

Neither of these positions is particularly constructive, because both focus on what Catholic schools should *forbid* rather than on what they should nurture and cultivate. Both arguments tend to be politically divisive, and tend to over-simplify what it means to be a university with a distinctively Catholic mission. By emphasizing the negative, they undervalue the many attractive qualities of a Catholic intellectual tradition that has animated Church-related universities for centuries: a commitment to holistic personal formation,

interdisciplinary inquiry, and service-oriented learning outcomes, to name a few. It is time for Catholic institutions of higher education to define themselves not by what is disallowed, but by what is uniquely allowed, encouraged, and supported on their campuses.

The purpose of this article is to offer a modest framework to help Catholic universities understand their missions in positive, rather than negative, terms. It offers a review of scholarly literature that outlines what Catholic universities should *offer* (rather than what they should *deny*) to faculty, staff, and students, and it categorizes that literature into several broad themes that can serve as a rough guide for Catholic institutions seeking to understand their religious missions. While each individual Catholic college or university should consider its own circumstances as it reflects on its identity, and should always dialogue with its sponsoring diocese or religious congregation as it adapts its mission to the needs of the modern world, the literature review below may help some institutions of higher education to understand their Catholic identity in a proactive, rather than a reactive, way.

Catholic Approaches to Education: European Foundations

Education has been a key area of focus for the Catholic Church for millennia. Indeed, the very first universities that developed in the Middle Ages—Bologna, Oxford, Salamanca—could have been considered “Catholic universities” in the sense that they were staffed and sponsored by Church or monastic authorities. As such, Catholic philosophy on education and university mission can be traced back for centuries; Pope Alexander IV wrote to the University of Paris in 1255, charging it to be “dedicated to research, to teaching, and to the education of students who freely associate with their teachers in a common love of knowledge” (*Ex corde Ecclesiae*, 1990, para. 1). St. Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican theologian of the 13th century, became one of the most influential Catholic philosophers of all time due, in part, to his writings on epistemology and his academic methodologies. His beliefs strongly influenced the traditional Catholic notion that education should expand the life of the mind from all angles, fusing diverse subject areas and schools of thought into a single, inter-disciplinary understanding of the world (Byrne, 2004; Gleason, 1995). Such early Catholic writings focused primarily on what we, today, might call the scientific method; they were less preoccupied with the finer points of managing a university than with the nature of inquiry and the means by which humanity could uncover truths about the natural and spiritual worlds.

St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits in the sixteenth century, became interested in university education late in life and pushed the members of his order to establish universities organized into three main faculty divisions: humanities, natural philosophy (e.g., science), and theology (Buckley, 1998). In 1599, shortly after Loyola's death, the Jesuits published the *Ratio Studiorum*¹—essentially a curriculum plan for ideal university education. The *Ratio* followed a seven-year plan of study, emphasizing Latin, the classics, and the work of important Catholic thinkers like St. Augustine of Hippo. While modern audiences might see this curriculum as old-fashioned, during the late Renaissance it was eminently practical, giving students the skills they needed to advance socially and professionally in European elite society (Gleason, 1995). Because the Jesuits soon emerged as the largest and most influential religious order associated with Catholic education, their *Ratio* became the basis for Catholic university curriculum for centuries, and remained the standard for Catholic education in the United States long after its practicality had faded in an industrialized economy (Power, 1972).

Perhaps the most influential classic piece of literature on Catholic higher education is *The Idea of a University* by John Henry Newman, an English cardinal and convert to Catholicism who spent his early career as a powerful Anglican prelate at Oxford. Published in 1852 just as the modern model of a research university was beginning to take shape, Newman's book decried the trend toward compartmentalization of knowledge, urging universities to do away with specialized academic departments and develop true "renaissance men" who could integrate elements of natural philosophy and theology into a meaningful whole (Newman, 2001). Newman also viewed the university as an agent of social mobility, observing in his own country that Irish Catholics ended their education at age 17, whereas the more upwardly mobile Protestants ended theirs at 22 (Bergman, 2011).

The over-arching theme uniting these classic works of philosophy is a dedication to the whole mind—a belief that universality is preferable to specialization, and that educated, enlightened individuals should achieve mastery of a variety of subject areas. In today's language, we would call this inter-disciplinary learning, but at the time, it was seen as the end goal of all university education, designed to bring the learner closer to an understanding of the ultimate spiritual and intellectual truth. If there is a distinctively "Catholic" approach to learning, it is this (Brady, 2013). Such education was long seen as necessary for human happiness and decidedly superior to educa-

1 See <http://www.bc.edu/sites/libraries/ratio/ratio1599.pdf>

tion for trades or professions (Gleason, 1995). However, the history of Catholic higher education in America shows that this emphasis on long, intense intellectual formation in search of divine truth often found itself at odds with the pragmatic imperatives associated with economic mobility in American society (Power, 1972).

The American Experiment

As recently as the early 1900s, most American Catholic colleges were small, undergraduate-focused institutions offering a six- or seven-year classical curriculum rather than the four-year curriculum familiar to us today (Gleason, 1995). Small staffs of resident priests, brothers, and sisters ran the colleges on shoestring budgets, sharing responsibility for teaching, administration, discipline, and counseling (Power, 1972). Post-World War II increases in enrollment, along with stricter accreditation standards, forced the colleges to expand dramatically in the late twentieth century, professionalize their staffs, fundraise, and hire large numbers of lay faculty who diluted the presence of the founding religious orders on campus (Gleason, 1995). This has led to interesting questions about what differentiates Catholic higher education from other kinds of higher education today.

As a field, the serious academic study of American Catholic universities and their missions is arguably still in its early stages. Although the key questions about Catholic institutional identity have been debated for over a century in the United States, scholarly articles on the subject do not begin to appear in earnest until the 1970s, shortly after Vatican II. Even then, published work amounts to a trickle until the 1990s, leaving only about 20 years' worth of studies from which to meaningfully draw. The various perspectives on this topic have not yet coalesced into identifiable schools of thought; scholars cannot easily situate their work into a "Chicago School" or a "Berkeley School," as in other fields like monetary economics.

Instead, generally speaking, scholarship on this topic can roughly be categorized as "traditionalist" or "progressive" (my terms). Some "traditionalist" scholars take the view that Catholic universities have "sold out" to the needs of the secular academy, losing their distinctive identity and turning their backs on the Church that nurtured them. These authors tend to advocate a return to the "good old days" when Catholic institutions existed primarily as citadels of Western culture, and when religious practice was incorporated unapologetically into the classroom (Briel, 2012; Hendershott, 2009; Schutlofel, 2012). Scholars in the "progressive" camp are not true opposites of the

traditionalists, since both groups tend to care deeply about Catholic education, and hardly any scholars have argued publicly that Catholic colleges should abandon their religious identities. Nor do progressives necessarily see the Catholic culture on campus as doomed to irrelevance; they simply accept that the nature of Catholic education has changed, and they try to identify ways in which it can evolve pragmatically while maintaining its core values, whatever those are defined to be (Carney, 2010; Currie, 2011; Penzenstadler, 2000; Porth, McCall, & DiAngelo, 2012).

One of the earliest attempts to define the nature of modern American Catholic higher education was the “Land O’Lakes Statement,” a document drafted by leading Catholic university presidents in 1967, just as institutions like Georgetown, Fordham, and Notre Dame were emerging as modern research universities. Although current and future bishops were among its signatories, the Statement was not a mandate by the Church hierarchy; it was simply a strategic plan representing the collective wisdom of some of the most respected Catholic educators in the United States at the time. A Vatican document, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, authored by Pope John Paul II and published in 1990, provides a more authoritative set of guidelines. Both documents offer valuable instructions for how a Catholic university should live out its identity in practice, and both will be cited extensively in the paragraphs below. Much of the modern American scholarship surrounding Catholic higher education can be described as a reaction to and an interpretation of these two documents.

Elements of Catholic Institutional Identity

A close reading of the scholarship on Catholic higher education reveals general theoretical themes that appear again and again across articles and across individual cases. This article organizes the literature into four thematic elements of Catholic institutional identity: Academics and Teaching, Research and Scholarship, Student Life, and Administration. These categories are my own and may be criticized, but they attempt to organize the views of various authors who define Catholic identity differently and study it using varied, but recurring ideas and concepts.

Academics and Teaching

Teaching and learning are core functions of any college or university, and scholars of Catholic higher education pay close attention to this area. Much

of the literature on Catholic higher education focuses on academics and curriculum, and many of these articles emphasize one of three main sub-themes: the importance of interdisciplinary inquiry, the need to translate classroom learning into purposeful action, and the duty of Catholic institutions to teach their students about Catholicism.

Table 1
Elements of Catholic Institutional Identity: Academics and Teaching

Characteristic	Explanation	Sample of Relevant Literature
Interdisciplinary Inquiry	Brings multiple disciplines into dialogue with each other, especially with theology, philosophy, and ethics. Dialogue between faith and reason.	Byrne, 2004; Brady, 2013; Briel, 2009; Flanagan, 2010; John Paul II, 1990; "Land O'Lakes," 1967; Macintyre, 2001; Newman, 2001; Nichols, 2000
Education for a Purpose	Education is used in service to others, not for its own sake. Values are lived through applied learning, putting contemplation into action.	Bergman, 2011; Caldwell, Domhidy, Homan, & Garanzini, 2000; Flanagan, 2010; Gleinster Roberts, 2008; "Land O Lakes," 1967; Levine, 1986; Porth, McCall, & DiAngelo, 2009; Sanders & Clough, 2011
Informative about Catholicism	Students gain knowledge about Catholic history, culture, religious beliefs, and rituals. Understand the founding order's charism and mission.	Briel, 2009; Gray & Cidade, 2010; Heft, 2009; Hendershott, 2009; King, 2014; King & Herr, 2015; Porth, McCall, & DiAngelo, 2009

Interdisciplinary inquiry. One of the oldest distinctively "Catholic" characteristics of education, dating back to Newman's *Idea of a University* (Newman, 2001), is the notion of interdisciplinary learning. Both *Ex corde Ecclesiae* (John Paul II, 1990) and the "Land O'Lakes Statement" (1967) draw attention to the importance of exposing students to multiple subject areas and incorporating a theological perspective into all disciplines. Quoting documents from Vatican II, *Ex corde* states:

In promoting this integration of knowledge, a specific part of a Catholic University's task is to promote *dialogue between faith and reason*, so that it can be seen more profoundly how faith and reason bear harmonious witness to the unity of all truth. While each academic discipline retains its own integrity and has its own methods, this dialogue demonstrates that 'methodical research within every branch of learning, when carried out in a truly scientific manner and in accord with moral norms, can never truly conflict with faith. For the things of the earth and the concerns of faith derive from the same God' (Part I, paragraph 7, emphasis in original).

How best to promote this dialogue between faith and reason is a matter of debate. Flanagan (2010) argues that a university's identity and priorities are reflected in its curriculum, and that the core curriculum of any Catholic university must reflect its religious mission. Brady (2013) correctly notes that Catholic schools must have outstanding programs within each discipline, or those in the academic profession will not take them seriously. He argues that students at Catholic schools should be exposed to the depth of the Catholic intellectual tradition, integrating various fields of study in the tradition of Aquinas and Newman, and that dialogue with non-Catholic traditions is not just possible, but essential to that process. He further posits that the values of the Catholic faith and the values of the academy are complementary, as "a reasoned faith implies faith in reason" (p. 194).

Roche (2003) argues that Catholic universities and their interdisciplinary approach to knowledge are, in fact, better suited to promote meaningful education than are hyper-specialized, large secular institutions:

Bridging the liberal arts college and the research university, America's leading Catholic universities are the ideal size for interdepartmental dialogue – with enough scholars to form clusters of strength but not so many that faculty members cannot seek out intellectual partners in conversation from other departments. Aristotle suggests in the *Politics* that there is a quantitative limit to the *polis*... This could be said of the university as well, and many research universities challenge this limit, effectively discouraging dialogue across the disciplines and elevating by default overspecializations, which is one of the greatest dangers to contemporary intellectual inquiry. (p. 38)

Roche (2003) concludes by suggesting that secular research universities could improve many of their practices by emulating their Catholic counterparts, just as Catholic schools have borrowed liberally from the secular university model in recent decades.

Education for a purpose. An important element of Catholic identity with which virtually all students, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, can identify is the need to serve the less fortunate. Many universities have begun to emphasize community service as a convenient, inclusive way to express their missions. Gleinster Roberts (2008) writes about her experience studying and evaluating ways in which Duquesne University incorporated community service into its curriculum, concluding that service opportunities give her students a richer experience than classroom teaching alone, and better reflect the charism of Duquesne's founding religious order, the Spiritans. Byrne (2000) describes a similar program at Boston College, designed to encourage students to use their learning for practical, service-oriented community work. He summarizes the tension between Catholic universities, which should be an agent of good for the community, and the values of the modern academy in this way:

Over the past thirty or so years, we have witnessed a great transition in the academic standards and structures at our Jesuit colleges and universities, and our standards now may be said to emulate those of the great secular universities. Their ideal of higher education received its most influential contemporary articulation from Max Weber, whose well-known fact-value dichotomy has led to a correlative divorce...between the academic quest for knowledge and public pursuit of practice.

Unfortunately, this way of conceiving the purpose of the university tends to obscure the fact that the great modern emphasis on science and higher learning was itself derived from the Enlightenment's hope that modern forms of reason would liberate human life. (p. 265)

If service learning and education for practical ends is a goal of Catholic education – one that the broader academy has wrongly shunned in our generation – then Catholic universities have a special obligation to preserve this lost art in American higher education, or so the argument goes. Numerous scholars (Bergman, 2011; Caldwell, Domhidy, Homan, & Garanzini, 2000; Roche, 2003; Sanders & Clough, 2011) have taken this line of argument.

Informative about Catholicism. To help teach students about the Church itself, several Catholic universities (beginning with Minnesota's University of St. Thomas in 1993) have begun to add "Catholic studies" to their lists of major offerings. Such initiatives sometimes take the form of a research center (Sanders & Clough, 2011) but most often have been organized into an academic program or department. Briel (2009) argues that Catholic studies programs are crucial to universities' efforts to infuse Catholic tradition into the curriculum, as they not only provide students with an option to study that tradition formally, but also serve as a resource to coordinate such thinking across departments. Nonetheless, the trend has not been without its detractors. Heft (2009) counters Briel (2009) in arguing that Catholic studies programs tend to be poorly funded and relatively unpopular among students, which can lead to a sense that they are academic step-children of the university, causing faculty members to look down upon them (and, by corollary, the university's Catholic identity) as ancillary or inferior to better-established academic disciplines.

It stands to reason that a Catholic university should provide its students an opportunity to learn about Catholic history, Catholic culture, and Catholic theology. Just as the University of Hawaii offers courses in Hawaiian language, and just as the University of Virginia offers courses on Virginia history, so too should Catholic universities seek to disseminate knowledge relevant to Catholic identity. Some examples include the University of Notre Dame's course offerings in the Irish Gaelic language, Georgetown University's program in medieval studies, or Duquesne University's program in sacred music. Where would such important elements of Catholic history and culture be preserved, studied, and promoted if not at a Catholic university?

Research and Scholarship

The concept of a "research university" – an institution whose mission is primarily to create new knowledge rather than to teach – is fairly new to American Catholic higher education. It can be said to have begun with the founding of the Catholic University of America (originally a graduate-only institution) in 1887, but gained momentum around the middle of the twentieth century. In an influential 1955 article, an American priest, Msgr. John Tracy Ellis, criticized American Catholics for failing to produce scholars commensurate with their numbers, for sponsoring too many low-quality universities, and for allowing Protestant and secular institutions of higher education to take the lead in shaping American thought, culture, and government

(Ellis, 1955). In response, as Catholic universities added a research component to their traditional teaching missions, they began to reflect on how their religious identity should affect their scholarly ambitions – leading directly to the “Land O’Lakes Statement” in 1967.

Literature on this topic often emphasizes three areas in which Catholic universities are well-positioned to make a meaningful contribution to American intellectual life: research that incorporates an ethical and theological perspective, research about Catholics and about Catholicism, and research on interreligious understanding.

Table 2
Elements of Catholic Institutional Identity: Research and Scholarship

Characteristic	Explanation	Sample of Relevant Literature
Ethical and Theological Perspective	Research is informed by morals, ethics, and theological perspective.	Byrne, 2004; John Paul II, 1990; “Land O’Lakes,” 1967; Macintyre, 2001; MacKenzie, 2000; Roche, 2003
Service to the Church	Research is conducted on topics of interest to the Church, relevant to Catholic populations and Catholic culture, and fulfills the needs of Catholic organizations.	Carney, 2010; John Paul II, 1990; “Land O’Lakes,” 1967; Monzell, 1969
Interreligious Dialogue	Research promotes mutual understanding between Catholics and non-Catholics, brings Church into dialogue with others, and promotes intellectual openness.	Brady, 2013; Ferrari, Bottom, & Matteo, 2014; Ferrari & Janulis, 2009; John Paul II, 1990; “Land O’Lakes,” 1967; Penzenstadler, 2000; Porth, McCall, & DiAngelo, 2009; Roche, 2003; Rodden, 2012

Ethical and theological perspective. Byrne (2004) and Roche (2003) both see research excellence as inherently compatible with Catholic identity. However, they both emphasize that Catholic universities have a unique responsibility to incorporate a theological and moral perspective into their research, and to promote a culture in which scholars feel comfortable doing so. Byrne (2004) sees this “research vocation” (his title) as essential to a university’s mission to serve the Church and the broader human family.

The Land O’Lakes Statement (“Land O’Lakes,” 1967) asserts that Catholic institutions are uniquely positioned to explore the “philosophical and theological dimension to most intellectual subjects” (article 4), urging universities to cultivate an environment in which faculty (in all disciplines) can research the theological implications of their work. Roche (2017) takes a similar view, arguing that a university’s Catholic identity can liberate faculty to ask questions and pursue theologically-informed lines of inquiry that might be (at best) overlooked or (at worst) frowned upon at secular institutions.

Ex corde Ecclesiae (John Paul II, 1990) likewise urges Catholic universities to seek solutions to new ethical problems that emerge in each generation, and to maintain “concern for the ethical and moral implications both of its methods and of its discoveries” (Part I, paragraph 18). With respect to graduate and professional education, it explains that “the programme of studies for each of the various professions is to include an appropriate ethical formation in that profession” (Part II, article 4, paragraph 5).

Porth, McCall, and DiAngelo (2009) discuss ways to incorporate an ethical perspective into even the most stereotypically narrow forms of graduate education – the Master of Business Administration. Reviewing the mission statements of Catholic business schools, they find that such schools generally do not mention their religious identities, and that their emphasis on ethics and social justice in the curriculum was largely indistinguishable from that of non-Catholic schools. They advocate for change, urging their colleagues to integrate business ethics more deliberately into their graduate programs.

Service to the Church. I include this sub-heading in the discussion because it is mentioned explicitly by both “Land O’Lakes” (1967) and *Ex corde Ecclesiae* (John Paul II, 1990), although relatively little scholarship has focused on this point. The “Land O’Lakes Statement” calls on Catholic universities to embrace their “special obligation to carry on...activities, appropriate to a university, in order to serve the Church and its component parts” (article 7). It also laments that “Catholic universities in the recent past have hardly played this role at all. It may well be one of the most important functions of the Catholic university of the future” (article 5).

Ex corde states:

Through teaching and research, a Catholic University offers an indispensable contribution to the Church. In fact, it prepares men and women who, inspired by Christian principles and helped to live their Christian vocation in a mature and responsible manner, will be able to assume positions of responsibility in the Church. Moreover, by offering the results of its scientific research, a Catholic university will be able to help the Church respond to the problems and needs of this age (John Paul II, 1990, Part I, paragraph 31).

Monzell (1969) discusses the role of Catholic schools in maintaining Catholic cultural traditions and Carney (2010) mentions the potential for a Mercy-affiliated college to serve “as a ‘think tank’ on issues of concern to the Sisters of Mercy” (p. 109), but other scholarly articles on this specific topic are rare. Nonetheless, to some extent, many universities have heeded the call to serve the institutional Church. Georgetown sponsors the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (a social science institute that collects statistics for Catholic dioceses) as well as an Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life (which promotes a Catholic perspective on policy issues in the nation’s capital). Notre Dame sponsors the Alliance for Catholic Education, a kind of “Teach for America” program for Catholic elementary schools. Various university presses publish scholarly work relevant to Catholic institutions, including journals like the *Journal of Catholic Education* (Loyola Marymount University) and the *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* (Villanova University). Carlow University sponsors the Carlow Roundtable, a series of conferences for faculty and administrators at Mercy-affiliated colleges and universities, designed to promote dialogue on the Mercy tradition (Carlow University, 2011). It is clearly within the mandate of any Catholic university to create knowledge relevant to the Church, to bring Catholic interests into the scholarly sphere, and to use its research capacity to help the Church respond to contemporary issues.

Interreligious dialogue. A key challenge for Catholic schools is the need to help Catholic and non-Catholic students alike to achieve appreciation for the Catholic tradition, as well as for other traditions. This takes place through the work of research institutes like Georgetown’s Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding as well as informally through interreligious dialogue between diverse faculty, staff, and students on campus.

There is some scholarly evidence that universities are falling short in this end. Ferrari, Bottom, and Matteo (2014) conducted a survey on two Catholic college campuses, finding that Catholic students reported feeling a stronger sense of community on campus than did non-Catholics (although both groups felt that the schools were making concerted efforts to promote diversity and inclusion among all religious groups). In a separate study, Ferrari and Janulis (2009) found data suggesting that Catholic faculty and staff are more likely than non-Catholics to support their University's mission, but that both groups equally supported diversity and inclusion on campus. It remains important for Catholic universities to find ways to integrate all students into their campus communities and make all feel welcome. Indeed, *Ex corde Ecclesiae* explicitly acknowledges that non-Catholic faculty and students have an important place in Catholic schools, calling on the universities to respect "their religious liberty" (John Paul II, 1990, Part I, paragraph 27) and offer them "initiatives for reflection and prayer in accordance with their own beliefs" (Part I, paragraph 39).

Penzenstadler (2000) argues that religious diversity itself is inseparable from the Catholic tradition, and that fully embracing a diverse campus community is not a challenge to Catholic identity, but the fulfillment thereof. She argues convincingly of the "importance of not ignoring alien experiences and drawing all voices into conversation in the search for truth" (p. 310), explaining that respect for other cultures is entirely consistent with core Catholic theology:

All were accepted into the community of Jesus – outcasts, strangers, women, the grieving, the powerless, the persecuted. They were meaningful contributors to the vision of a community based on love, justice, and peace. From this principle of community that is inclusive flows a way of being, teaching, and learning. (p. 309)

Student Life

Universities cannot exist without students to teach, and so the mission of a university must be reflected at least in part in its student body. The Jesuit tradition of *cura personalis* – care for the whole person – is a defining feature of nearly all Catholic higher education, Jesuit or otherwise. The purpose of Catholic education is not simply to form competent scholars and professionals but also to form men and women capable of leading full, meaningful

lives – spiritually, morally, emotionally, and socially, as well as intellectually. Literature on student life at Catholic institutions (a significant portion of the whole) tends to emphasize the importance of lived values, holistic personal experience, and religious expression/sacramental experience.

Table 3
Elements of Catholic Institutional Identity: Student Life

Characteristic	Explanation	Sample of Relevant Literature
Lived Values	Community members participate in activities that promote human dignity, social justice, and equality. Service activities are tied to religious identity.	Bergman, 2011; Caldwell, Domhidy, Homan, & Garanzini, 2000; Flanagan, 2010; Gleinster Roberts, 2008; Kender, 2000; "Land O Lakes," 1967; Levine, 1986; Porth, McCall, & DiAngelo, 2009; Sanders & Clough, 2011
Holistic Personal Formation	Community members have the opportunity to grow personally, emotionally, spiritually, and professionally as well as academically. University promotes personal formation in the classroom as well as in residence life / co-curricular activities.	Brady, 2013; Byrne, 2000; Hendershott, 2009; Ferrari, Bottom, & Matteo, 2014; Gray & Cidade, 2010; James & Estanek, 2012; King, 2014; King & Herr, 2015; "Land O'Lakes," 1967; Macintyre, 2001; Porth, McCall, & DiAngelo, 2009
Sacramental Experience	University provides opportunities for Catholic and non-Catholic students to worship and practice their faith openly on campus and participate in religious events and activities.	Brady, 2013; Gray & Cidade, 2010; James & Estanek, 2012; King, 2014; King & Herr, 2000; John Paul II, 1990; Lackner, 2003; Overstreet, 2010

Lived values. Brady (2013) argues that a Catholic university's success can be measured, to some extent, by the degree to which its students learn to integrate the lessons they learn into their everyday lives. Hendershott (2009) considers this a primary part of the mission of any Catholic university and laments that many institutions have, in an effort to appeal to as broad an

array of students as possible, become shy or apologetic about efforts to instill Catholic moral principles into their students.

In response to the criticism that Catholic universities are failing to cultivate the Catholic faith among their students, Gray and Cidade (2010) analyzed survey results from self-identified Catholic students enrolled in a wide range of institutions, gauging attitudes at the beginning and end of their college experience. They observed whether these students changed their opinions on social issues like abortion, the death penalty, and poverty during their time as undergraduates, and whether their changes in attitude moved toward or away from established Church teaching. They then compared the results among students at Catholic colleges with results from students at other types of colleges. Data suggested that, regarding most social issues, Catholic students on Catholic campuses were slightly less likely to move away from the Church than were students on other types of campuses.

Holistic personal formation. James and Estanek (2012) emphasize the need to incorporate Catholic moral principles into student affairs policy, informing such issues as residential life and student conduct. Certain religious principles, such as honesty and respect for others, are fairly universally recognized among Catholics and non-Catholics alike, while other principles, such as a ban on birth control or cohabitation, can be more controversial. Nonetheless, James and Estanek (2012) view a university's Catholic mission as a net positive influence on all students, and one that all students can learn to appreciate regardless of their religious beliefs.

King (2014) surveyed students on various aspects of campus life, from opposite-sex visitation policies in the dorms to drug and alcohol policies. His results suggested that students experience and understand their institution's Catholic identity primarily through co-curricular and residential programs, including on-campus prayer and worship, the presence of other Catholics in their peer groups, and the degree to which Catholicism is discussed openly in the dorms and in the classrooms. Drug and alcohol policies, the presence/absence/content of sexual education programs, and other parts of the student code of conduct were important, but much less central to the students' perception of Catholic identity than was the overall experience with peers. King (2014) concludes that collaborative, grassroots efforts that encourage students to embrace the university's Catholic mission on their own initiative are preferable to heavy-handed, top-down administrative efforts to enforce Catholic identity via restrictive student conduct policies. Student perceptions

were influenced most by what they were able to see and do in their daily lives, not by what was forbidden or mandated of them.

Sacramental experience. A final element of student life at Catholic universities is the ability to practice one's faith on campus, regardless of one's personal religious preference. This can be challenging because, as some scholars observe, members of the millennial generation can be significantly less likely than their parents and grandparents to observe religious traditions (Overstreet, 2010).

In the aforementioned statistical study by Gray and Cidade (2010), the authors found that all students across all types of institutions showed a decline in Mass attendance and other types of spiritual practice while in college, but that this decline was less pronounced among students at Catholic colleges. The study thus suggests that Catholic colleges are at least "doing no harm" (p. 235) and are providing a slightly more nurturing environment for the Catholic faith than are non-Catholic schools. Another empirical study (albeit at just four New England campuses) showed similar results, indicating that Catholic students decreased their attendance at religious services during their time at Catholic colleges (Bolduc, 2009) – but unlike the Gray and Cidade (2010) study, it did not compare these results to potentially worse outcomes at non-Catholic institutions.

Relatively little scholarship has paid attention to campus ministry programs at Catholic universities scientifically, but some scholars have theorized about campus ministry conceptually and historically. This may be because, as Lackner (2003) explains, campus ministry was once assumed to be a side function of the community of priests that staffed each campus, and was often not formally organized as a professional unit of the university until after Vatican II. Ironically, the Church hierarchy has, at times, paid more official attention to campus ministry at non-Catholic campuses. Lackner (2003) cites a 1986 pastoral letter from the US bishops, *Empowered by the Spirit: Campus Ministry Faces the Future*, which addresses this issue primarily from that perspective, urging campus ministers at secular institutions to provide a welcoming place for Catholics to worship.

Administration

Although academics, research, and student life are all important elements of Catholic institutional identity, the implementation of all of the above falls on the shoulders of university administrators. Naturally, even the best scholarship on Catholic university identity will be meaningless unless administra-

tors understand and execute it well. Literature on Catholic university administration therefore focuses principally on how to cultivate appreciation for Catholic identity among employees (through professional development and targeted hiring), how to communicate the mission to internal and external audiences, and how to make decisions informed by Catholic values.

Table 4
Elements of Catholic Institutional Identity: Administration

Characteristic	Explanation	Sample of Relevant Literature
Professional Development for Employees	Employees at all levels have the opportunity to learn about Catholic identity and feel empowered to incorporate it into their careers and vocations. Mission-based hiring practices.	Whitney & Laboe, 2014; Sanders & Clough, 2011; Sullins, 2004
Communication	Identity is openly and accurately communicated to internal and external audiences.	Gambescia & Paolucci, 2011; Bonglia, 2010
Values-Based Decision-Making	Administration understands and utilizes Catholic values in decision making	Briel, 2012; Bonewits Feldner & D'Urso, 2009; Currie, 2011; Flanagan, 2010; John Paul II, 1990; Porth, McCall, & DiAngelo, 2009

Professional development for employees. What happens in the classroom is inextricably tied to the quality of the faculty leading the discussions. Many scholars have stressed the importance of hiring for mission, and seeking out faculty who understand and support the university's religious goals (Briel, 2012; Flanagan, 2010, Roche, 2017). This is not to say that universities should automatically give hiring preference to Catholic scholars over non-Catholics. Porth, McCall, and DiAngelo (2009) note that universities cannot simply assume that Catholic faculty support their mission, or that non-Catholic faculty are unfamiliar with Catholic tradition or incapable of sustaining it: "A hiring practice that gave preference to Catholics would not, by itself, guarantee...faculty competence" (p. 17). In other words, both Catholics and non-Catholics alike can benefit from training to help them appreciate and maintain the university mission.

Ex corde Ecclesiae stipulates that universities should strive to maintain a majority of Catholics on their faculty (*Ex corde*, 1990), but schools have routinely fallen short of that standard throughout their history, particularly in their professional programs (Gleason, 1995). Sullins (2004) found that Catholic universities generally do not give preference to Catholic faculty in the hiring process, but that Catholic faculty are comparatively more likely to remain employed at a Catholic institution for their entire careers. He noted that the long tenure of Catholic faculty means that many schools do, in fact, maintain Catholic majorities in their instructional staffs, and that these majorities cannot be ascribed to pure happenstance, as they exceed the proportion of Catholics in the population of the United States. Thus, many universities remain compliant with *Ex corde* through serendipity rather than deliberate policy.

Perhaps the most interesting contribution to this discussion comes from Whitney and Laboe (2014), who describe a faculty development program at DePaul University that, they believe, successfully introduces faculty to the institution's Catholic tradition and helps them incorporate the charism of its founding religious order, the Vincentians, into their teaching. They identify six practices at DePaul that enabled one faculty member, despite his original misgivings, to better understand and buy into the University's mission. In paraphrase, the six practices are:

1. Developing personal relationships between newly hired faculty and senior colleagues who already understand and embody the university's mission.
2. Providing faculty with resources (literature, workshops, etc.) to help them learn about the mission.
3. Offering formal and informal assistance to faculty who wish to learn about the university's Catholic mission and widely publicizing those resources.
4. Publicly recognizing faculty who successfully live out or contribute to the university's Catholic mission.
5. Offering opportunities to explore the implications of the Catholic mission at the school or department level, demonstrating how it is relevant to each individual discipline.
6. Offering faculty opportunities and incentives to share their expertise on this topic with colleagues, once it is developed.

Sanders and Clough (2011) describe a similar process at St. Xavier University in Chicago, where a newly established Center for Religion and Public Discourse has engaged the faculty and helped to promote understanding and appreciation of the school's religious mission, even among those professors who were initially skeptical of it. Rather than emphasize hiring for mission, these two studies show how the right professional development activities can nurture support for the mission among all faculty, regardless of their initial level of understanding.

Communicating the mission. Many scholars have pointed out challenges or inconsistencies in the way Catholic universities talk about their institutional missions. Bonewits Feldner and D'Urso (2009) observe that Catholic universities have multiple stakeholders, and with diverse constituents come diverse communications challenges. Alumni, students, parents, academic peer institutions, Church authorities, and others all have varying preferences about what type of institution the university should be, and schools can sometimes struggle to communicate to all of these audiences using the language that each wants to hear. Bonglia (2010) writes of this challenge as it affects university fundraisers, who must often engage in dialogue with donors who come to the table with diverse priorities and beliefs regarding Catholic identity.

Gambescia and Paolucci (2011) examined the websites of 207 Catholic colleges and universities in the United States to determine how prominently the institutions mention their religious character online. They sought out references, either on the home page or on a secondary page easily accessible by one or two clicks, to each institution's Catholic affiliation, sponsoring religious order, embrace of the Catholic intellectual tradition, on-campus spiritual opportunities, service opportunities, efforts to hire for mission, and history. After an exhaustive review of primary and secondary web pages, they discovered that Catholic colleges, on average, exhibited 3.7 of these seven characteristics on their websites. Interestingly, only 40% of institutions identified themselves as Catholic on their homepages, and just 28% did so on their human resources pages.

Values-based decision making. Increasingly, many Catholic colleges and universities are creating new administrative positions charged with overseeing institutional mission and identity. This phenomenon roughly coincides with the trend toward lay presidents; when the top administrator is no longer a priest, brother, or sister, many colleges and universities have realized that they can no longer take for granted a Catholic perspective in the administration, and have hired a new generation of administrators specifically charged

with maintaining their institutions' Catholic identities proactively. Because this phenomenon is so new, few academic studies have yet been completed on it. However, the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) recently conducted what may be the first survey of vice presidents for mission (VPMs). The resulting report, titled the *AJCU Mission and Identity Survey*, shows just how prevalent such offices have become. Of the 28 Jesuit institutions in the country, 26 have established a VPM or its equivalent (the only exceptions being Spring Hill College and the University of Scranton). The universities that have established such an office used a variety of titles for the position, including "vice president" (14 institutions), "special assistant" or "assistant to the president" (five institutions), "vice/associate provost" (three institutions), or "director"/ "facilitator"/ "executive director" of an office that has some responsibility for articulating and developing university mission (Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, 2014).

The only institution to place this function in the hands of more than one individual was the University of San Francisco, which utilized a "University Council for Jesuit Mission," co-chaired by three senior administrators. The fact that most of these positions work closely with the campus president, and/or serve as high-ranking administrators in their own right, indicates the privileged place they have come to occupy in the university hierarchies. Interestingly, only 17 of the 26 VPM positions identified in the AJCU survey were occupied by a priest (Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, 2014), which reflects both the shortage of religious vocations in the United States as well as the overall shift toward lay control of these institutions.

The *AJCU Mission and Identity Survey* indicates that all 26 VPMs and their offices provide some orientation programming for staff, while a slightly smaller number provide orientation for faculty (p. 5). The intensity of these orientation programs varies widely, from six-month seminars for new administrators at the College of the Holy Cross (p. 10) to online videos posted for voluntary viewing at Canisius College (p. 9). Most commonly, the VPMs reported that they speak publicly at university functions and keep a visible presence at events like trustee meetings, faculty assemblies, graduations, and new student open houses. Unfortunately, the AJCU report also makes it clear that most VPMs and their offices do not engage in a robust effort to measure the effectiveness of their work on campus, and empirical assessments of their activities are rare. Many universities echo the sentiments of the University of San Francisco, which reported a desire to "improve in this area (measurement and assessment)" when resources permit (p. 34).

Carney (2010) writes of the relationship of Mercy-affiliated schools to the Conference for Mercy Higher Education (CMHE), the organization established by the Sisters of Mercy in 2002 to promote Mercy values in its member institutions. She is optimistic overall that the Conference for Mercy Higher Education can and will maintain the Mercy charism and identity among its member schools, and that it will develop into a valuable conduit for keeping those institutions linked now that their formal ties to each other, and to the Sisters, have evolved.

Similarly, Currie (2011) writes from a Jesuit perspective, situating modern debates about Catholic identity in the context of historical controversies surrounding the Jesuits and their adherence to Catholic doctrine. He concludes that administrators at Jesuit schools cannot passively expect their institutions to maintain a Catholic identity, but that they must proactively engage with the Jesuit order and other Church officials to ensure a vibrant and living relationship. Likewise, Flanagan (2010) writes optimistically about faculty enthusiasm for maintaining Franciscan heritage on campus, although he admits that faculty at his institution generally ignore the formal principles outlined in *Ex corde Ecclesiae* in favor of more informal initiatives, like dialogue with each other and with the Franciscans who live at the university.

Conclusion

This article is far from definitive, but it attempts to make a modest contribution to the discussion surrounding Catholic university mission and identity by categorizing some often-repeated arguments into identifiable themes. The examples drawn from the literature for each category are meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive; although many of the works cited here are widely read and are of excellent quality, there are many equally excellent books and articles that have been omitted. None of the arguments outlined above are original to me, but I have attempted to highlight some key documents and frequently cited authors who are associated with each theme.

Too often, critics define Catholic higher education primarily in terms of what colleges and universities should *not* do. Arguments that characterize Catholic higher education in this way over-simplify a richly complex educational tradition in ways that alienate many observers and blind them to that tradition's numerous virtues. In fact, Catholic higher education has many outstanding qualities that secular higher education cannot replicate as fully or as easily, and university administrators should follow the example of Pope Francis by emphasizing these positives as they define and express their

unique mission. Catholic identity is not something to be downplayed or hidden, but should be emphasized as a positive attribute when recruiting faculty, staff, and students (Roche, 2017). One need not be Catholic to appreciate the benefits of studying and working at a Catholic university, or the ways in which Catholic institutions can outperform their secular counterparts in many aspects of research, teaching, and student life. The literature review above has attempted to distill into coherent categories some of the major arguments about that proactive approach to Catholic identity.

Understanding these nuances requires effort, reflection, and dialogue, but the results can be well worth the effort. Although there are challenges associated with expressing a Catholic institutional identity in the twenty-first century, modern college administrators can take comfort in knowing that there is a large (and growing) body of scholarly work from which to draw as a guide.

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