

**MISSION MATTERS:
A National Study of Mission Leaders and Mission Units in
Catholic Higher Education**

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Research Inquiry

This study (with support from the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities) is the first attempt to describe a growing trend in Catholic higher education directly related to strategic initiatives designed to renew or bolster Catholic identity. The trend is that of the appointment of a senior level administrator and campus organizational structure that is specifically responsible for the integration of the Catholic mission. After the first Mission Unit was established in 1980 more campuses have done the same at an increasing rate since 1995. At the time of the completion of this study we verified that 139 out of the 220 Catholic colleges and universities in the US have an appointed senior level Mission Leader. Almost one half of all currently active Mission Leaders were appointed within the last five years and one-third of all Mission Leaders were appointed in the last three years with more campuses currently in the process of establishing a Mission Leader and mission unit.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to learn about the increasing institutionalization of mission operations in Catholic higher education in the U.S.. Since the promulgation of *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, Catholic higher education leaders and their associations have continued to develop a wide range of mission-supporting initiatives. Individual campuses and their sponsoring religious communities have increased the profile of their Catholic identity through public conversations, charismatic leadership and participation in nationally sponsored initiatives designed to increase mission leadership capacity. Among the mission-strategies being employed, a growing number of Catholic colleges and universities are appointing a Mission Leader or Mission Committee to provide a comprehensive set of resources across the campus to support the integration of the Catholic mission and or the sponsoring religious community charism. In spite of this growth, little research has been conducted about these emerging leadership positions outside of Jesuit sponsored institutions. This study aims to identify characteristics about Mission Committees, Mission Leaders, the administrative units they oversee, the sphere of institutional influence they administer, and the perceptions that Mission Leaders have about their role and responsibilities.

Respondent Pool

Mission Leaders were defined as someone other than the president who has direct responsibility for the integration of mission across the campus. Mission leaders included a senior administrator of a department or office of mission and the senior coordinator or chairperson of a campus-wide mission committee. For this study we refer to the campus organizational structure that coordinates mission activities as a Mission Unit (i.e., office, center, or committee).

180 individuals from Catholic colleges and universities in the US were initially invited to voluntarily participate in a research study about mission leaders at Catholic colleges and universities, the mission units they oversee, and the mission activities they coordinate. Potential respondents were identified first from a database provided by the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities. Additional potential respondents were identified by the Boston College research team through a phone survey and website search of all of the Catholic colleges and universities in the US. At the completion of the entire survey data collection process we verified that there are **139** Mission Leaders currently employed and active at Catholic higher education institutions that are represented across every Carnegie classification of Catholic colleges and universities.

Methodology

Through an online 64-item survey instrument and document analysis of mission leaders' curriculum vitae and institutional job descriptions this study identifies: 1) common mission leader characteristics, 2) common characteristics in mission unit structures, strategies, and activities, 3) mission leader/unit activities across campus, and 4) common characteristics of and challenges to effective practices in matters of campus-wide mission integration. As a result of the study we have assembled a complete and current directory of Catholic higher education Mission Leaders in the US. We have a 71% survey response rate; 29% CV response rate; 27% Job Description response rate. These response rates provide us with an overall Confidence Interval of 95 and a Sampling Error of 0.

Results

The results of this research include: a national profile of Mission Leaders, perceptions of effective leadership, challenges, and professional development activities; a description of organizational structure of mission units, their activities and available resources; a macro-level view of institutional mission integration; common practices and approaches to mission integration; organizational structures; and strategic initiatives. As a result of this research effort, we hope to provide leaders in Catholic higher education with a greater understanding of Mission Leaders that could support professional development efforts, mission assessment strategies, and institutional planning for mission initiatives. With each of these areas of inquiry we hope to contribute to the continued effectiveness of mission leaders, the programs they lead and the strategies that they employ.

A National Profile of Mission Leaders and Mission Units

Mission Position Profile

At the completion of a local search process, you were appointed to a full-time position as a Vice President by the authority of the President to whom you report.

Mission Leader Profile

White, Catholic, Male, 60 years or older, religious clergy, member of sponsoring religious community, earned doctorate in non-theological discipline, served previously in higher education on the faculty as an academic administrator, or in a leadership position with sponsoring religious community; you are the first-generation mission leader at your institution. You describe yourself as a coordinator, facilitator, collaborator, educator, mentor, animator, catalyst, and a resource person. You have experience, knowledge, witness, and passion for the sponsoring charism; knowledge of Catholicism, theology, and CIT; an ability to collaborate with diverse campus groups; knowledgeable of academic culture and higher education structures and; have excellent communication skills. **(This profile is changing as the second generation of Mission Leaders is being hired)**

Mission Unit Profile

The title of the unit is Mission & Ministry, it was established under the leadership of the president, you serve on the following university committees: President's Council; Institutional Catholic Identity Committee; Board of Trustees Mission Committee; Institutional Strategic Planning Committee; Senior Academic Officer's Committee. The Mission Unit employs: 3.4 full-time professional staff; 1.3 part-time professional staff; 1.3 full-time support staff, 1 part-time support staff; 1 graduate student assistants; 5 undergraduate students. Your annual operating budget (excluding salaries/benefits) is <\$50,000. You are not funded by outside grants or by income from a mission endowment fund.

Mission Unit Activities

The Mission Unit supports the integration of Catholic identity and the charism of the sponsoring religious community with equal importance. The Mission Unit **coordinates or is significantly engaged** in the following activities with campus constituencies: Hiring and selection process for administrators; orientation programs for faculty, administrators and staff. The Mission Unit is **moderately involved** in continuing formation programs with the following campus constituencies: Administrators, staff, faculty, trustees, and students. The Mission Unit is **not engaged** in the faculty tenure and review process or annual review process with administrators and staff. The most defining program for the Mission Unit is related to continuing mission formation. The Mission Unit participates in some form of assessment of the effectiveness of mission integration on campus.

ACCU Annual Meeting 2010: Presentation Outline

- Description of Trend
- Mission Position Profile
- Mission Leader Profile
- Mission Unit Profile
- Mission Unit Activities

Additional Questions for Analysis and Discussion

- Why is a ML/Mission Unit an attractive strategy?
- What are the challenges to being an effective ML?
- What characteristics = an effective ML?
- What would improve the effectiveness of the ML?
- What resources should be invested in the ML Unit?
- How is mission effectiveness assessed?

A complete and current Mission Leader Directory is available at the ACCU

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