

## MIGRATION

Extreme poverty, violent conflicts, natural disasters, and human rights violations remain the primary reasons people uproot and risk their lives to migrate to the United States. Catholic higher education institutions strive to promote educational opportunities that allow our students to encounter the experience of migrants through cross-cultural immersion and border experiences, community-based learning, and study abroad programs built on solidarity and interchange between peoples. Catholic colleges and universities establish scholarships for students with immigrant backgrounds to develop the knowledge and skills of our new wave of immigrants.

## GENDER/RACE/ETHNICITY

Societal injustices remain based on gender, race, ethnicity, economic status, and other factors beyond an individual's control. Catholic higher education will continue to examine such factors and educate university communities on the role that CST principles can have in enabling the full realization of human potential. One particular issue within this group stands out: HIV & AIDS are public health issues that destabilize families and communities and have a disproportionate impact on women and girls. CST themes can provide a framework for addressing this epidemic as an issue of social justice that requires interdisciplinary collaborations among the natural and social sciences and the humanities on our campuses.

## PEACE

Catholic social teaching incorporates a rich tradition of reflection on peace. This tradition includes both the ethics of war and peace (just war and nonviolence) as well as the spirituality, theology, ethics, and praxis of peacebuilding (conflict prevention, conflict management, and post-conflict reconciliation). Since peace is not just the absence of war, but the result of justice motivated by love, peace calls for the development of just institutions that can address questions that individual nations cannot address alone. Catholic colleges and universities are uniquely positioned both to educate about, reflect on and contribute to the development of this tradition, as well as to serve as a resource to the many "artisans of peace" in the Church who are transforming conflict around the world.

## HUMAN RIGHTS LANGUAGE

Human rights language has long been employed in official CST and it can engage interlocutors from a wide range of traditions on matters of social justice and human dignity. Linked to the notion of duty as essential to the idea of rights, this language helps students reflect on the substance of CST and its relevance to the broader human community.

## CONCLUSION

Catholic colleges and universities have made steady progress engaging CST during the past decade. Looking forward, there is hope for further integration of CST in the curricula, research, and institutional operations of Catholic higher educational institutions. We have much to offer the human community as it embraces the profound challenges of the coming years. Catholic colleges and universities will continue to be at the forefront of ensuring that the Church's social teaching contributes to addressing these challenges. To that end, Catholic colleges and universities will strive to develop institutional plans and secure the necessary funding to support faculty and administration in the integration of CST in educational activities, research, and corporate endeavors. By matching determination with conviction, justice can become ever more a reality in our time.



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# Catholic Higher Education and Catholic Social Teaching

## A VISION STATEMENT

*In 1998*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching" to clarify and proclaim the essential place of the social teaching of the Church in the Catholic faith and in Catholic education. Catholic colleges and universities have fruitfully enacted many of the document's recommendations for higher education. In light of those successes and in recognition that much has changed in our world in the decade since the document was written, Catholic higher education returns in 2009 to recommit itself to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and to advance a vision that includes new reflections and creative responses.

Catholic Social Teaching is the tradition of thought in which the Church seeks to advance justice in the world by engaging social, cultural, political, and economic realities in our day. Thus, CST is both fitting and essential to the Catholic university's mission: the education and formation of its students, the research it undertakes, and the conduct of its corporate and institutional life. See [www.usccb.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching/excerpt.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching/excerpt.shtml) for CST overview.

## EDUCATION AND FORMATION

CST assumes that participation in societal life, local and global, public and economic, is an inherently moral undertaking. To that end, CST can be a powerful tool in preparing students for the ethical and moral dimensions of professional practice and good citizenship.

Many Catholic colleges and universities strive to incorporate CST across the curriculum. While this can be a challenging responsibility, it can be done in a manner consistent with the educational and accreditation standards of each academic discipline.

The goal of incorporating CST across the curriculum can serve as one way of deepening the dialogue between the disciplines in which each makes its own “distinct contribution in the search for solutions.” (Ex corde Ecclesiae, 32)

CST should also be employed as a lens through which to assess the education we offer. Do graduates approach their careers as vocations in service to the common good? Do students understand higher education as a privilege that brings a corresponding responsibility to contribute to society with special attentiveness to the vulnerable, less fortunate, and powerless?

Community-based learning illuminated by CST provides a profound opportunity for students to connect higher education with active participation in society. Community-based service learning has the potential to bring students into solidarity with the community they serve, integrate the intellectual resources of CST, incorporate the mission of the institution and its Catholic identity, and, through evaluation and reflection, provide a foundation for life-long reflection and service. Through ongoing dialogue with on-campus groups (faculty, campus ministers, and administrators), as well as off-campus groups (neighborhood organizations, non profits, and businesses), service learning opportunities can find root in the academic and spiritual life of the campus and, at the same time, meet an authentic need of the local community.

## RESEARCH

Research is of significant interest to most faculty and central to the service of the university to the Church and society (Ex corde Ecclesiae, 32). CST depends upon an ongoing analysis of changing societal conditions in light of its moral and ethical principles. Devoted to seeking justice and serving the world,

Catholic higher education commits itself to academic research grounded in CST. While Catholic social ministry agencies can be an integral partner in this research, colleagues of any faith disposition or none are encouraged to conduct research and frame research questions using the principles of CST (e.g., the common good) for the good of all society. Universities are particularly encouraged to promote solidarity-based research through university sponsored fellowships and research grants.

## INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

Catholic higher education offers a living context that calls the educational community into a deeper understanding and practice of Catholic Social Teaching. For that reason, schools continue to strive to incorporate CST into all aspects of their institutional life. CST has been used to evaluate Catholic higher education’s employment and labor policies, environmental practices such as energy consumption, recycling, food service sourcing, and neighborhood relationships. While much more needs to be done, practicing the ideals taught in the classroom regarding finances, justice, and neighborliness provides a living witness of CST.

## Toward a World Made New...

According to the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine* of the Church, the dignity of the human person is the foundation of Catholic social teaching. The *Compendium* states that the dignity of the human person, the sanctity of human life, and life and justice issues must be addressed in fostering the common good of all, from conception to natural death. Too often, justice and life issues are seen as the concerns of competing constituencies. We envision a time when our graduates and the world community will understand and engage the whole spectrum of concerns that constitute what John Paul II termed a “culture of life.”

We live in a global society made increasingly complex through ongoing revolutions in transportation options, communication technologies, economic exchanges religious convictions, cultural diversity, and political developments. While globalization holds the threat of greater conflict, it also presents opportunities for the advancement of human dignity

and the common good and, therefore, progress toward a “culture of life,” replacing the dominant competitive paradigm with cooperation. The following issues profoundly impact the “culture of life” for people around the globe and command the careful attention of our colleges and universities.

## ECONOMY

Times of economic crisis present an opportunity to rethink the economic models that have dominated the most recent moment of globalization. Yet, in economics and business school curricula, CST is too often relegated to courses on professional ethics. The new economic realities of our time call for a deeper engagement between economics and CST. Catholic universities are envisioned as places where the questions and ideals of CST continue to query the assumptions of orthodox economic thought and where CST evolves in dialogue with the most rigorous contemporary economic research. Concepts such as the dignity of labor, the common good, the preferential option for the poor, and human solidarity are essential to forge a more just, merciful, and sustainable global economy. Students formed in a CST vision and methodology learn that economic responsibility is not reduced to competitiveness and the maximization of profit.

## ENVIRONMENT

Global climate change and environmental degradation pose fundamental challenges to our contemporary form of life. Just as care for the sick and respect for the sanctity of life have made Catholic universities centers of research on bioethics, our era desperately needs a similar combination of ethical reflection and scientific research grounded in care for God’s creation. To address these global moral challenges, students need education in the complex science of climate change and resource consumption in tandem with a rich moral formation. Research and course work on the science and morality of environment and climate change can be reinforced and grounded by making our campuses practical laboratories in sustainable living. Furthermore, Catholic higher education is called upon to help the world see and justly respond to the fact that environmental degradation will adversely affect the world’s poor in profound ways.