



ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

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NEWS RELEASE

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ACCUCU Conference Addresses ‘What We’ve Learned’ To Carry Catholic Higher Education Forward

Will also honor outstanding Catholic educators, scholars, and leaders

Washington, DC — The Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities opens its 2021 Annual Meeting today, drawing on lessons learned from the pandemic, cries for social justice, financial stresses, and more. Attendees will hear from noted scholars and experts and join conversations designed around the theme, “What We’ve Learned: Catholic Higher Education for a World on the Verge.”

“The theme of this year’s meeting touches more than the all-too-real challenges of race, public health, economy, and political and institutional stability,” explains ACCUCU President Rev. Dennis Holschneider, CM. “It goes within, to the place where we try to understand ourselves, both alone and together. It goes to that place where we commit to the work that gives us purpose, most especially the transmission of wisdom and knowledge to those who will make the world after us.”

Nearly two dozen sessions will tackle issues such as student learning, student health, capital development, the free tuition movement, division within the Church, and much more. Among the keynote speakers are:

- Rev. Bryan Massingale, Professor of Theology at Fordham University, and Marie Lynn Miranda, Provost at the University of Notre Dame, who will each raise difficult questions about longstanding social injustices.
- Barbara Mistick, President of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, will join Terry Hartle, Senior Vice President at the American Council on Education, to discuss the Biden-Harris Administration and higher education.
- Rev. Friedrich Bechina, FSO, the highest ranking official in the Vatican’s Congregation of Education, will explain the thinking of Pope Francis on Catholic higher education.
- Arthur Levine of the Steinhardt Institute of Higher Education Policy at New York University will discuss the future of American higher education.

Like other conferences this year, ACCUCU’s gathering will be held online. The event includes a series of pre-conference sessions held for distinct groups: presidents who are new to Catholic higher education, leaders who aspire to a presidency, women executives, diversity officers, senior student

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affairs officers, and mission officers. All are taking advantage of a new online learning platform that ACCU will be using for new educational programming to begin later in 2021.

Honors Bestowed on Distinguished Educators and Leaders

The 2021 Annual Meeting will also feature recognition of three individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the field of Catholic higher education, each in their own way building and inspiring the next generation of leaders.

Brother James Gaffney, FSC, will be presented with the Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, CSC Award. Named after the late president of the University of Notre Dame, the Hesburgh Award is ACCU's highest honor, bestowed for exceptional contributions to Catholic higher education. Not unlike Fr. Hesburgh, Brother James served for over 30 years at his beloved Lewis University in a wide array of roles. His trademark kindness, warmth, and easy laughter were appreciated by his fellow Catholic college presidents, especially through the years of developing the implementation of *Ex corde Ecclesiae* in the United States. Just as notable were Brother James's encouragements to think through how Catholic institutions would remain vibrantly faithful to the Church and to their congregation-based missions.

M. Shawn Copeland, Ph.D., will accept the Monika K. Hellwig Award for extraordinary achievements in Catholic intellectual life. Dr. Copeland is the author of a number of important books, including *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race and Being*. Her colleagues recognized both her stature as a theologian and the importance of her life's work when they voted her president of the Catholic Theological Society of America. Because of her scholarly work, the academy is more aware of the rich and fraught history of Black Catholics in America, and of the greater commitment to pastoral attention and incorporation that is required.

Denise Doyle, Ph.D., will be recognized for personal service of exceptional quality to Catholic higher education with the Presidents' Distinguished Service Award. Dr. Doyle was an early proponent of supporting faculty to learn and deliver the Catholic Intellectual Tradition in their classrooms. She gave early thought to how an institution might hire and train for mission and accepted every invitation she received to share her wisdom on these matters, as U.S. Catholic higher education began to follow the same path. Sharing what she had learned and then learning from others, Dr. Doyle is known for always inspiring university leaders to this noble work.

Following the conference, tribute videos for each award winner, as well as additional resources from the sessions, will be available at www.accunet.org.