ACCU Announces Rev. Dennis Holtschneider, CM, as Its Next President

Washington, DC—The Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities will welcome Rev. Dennis Holtschneider, CM, Ed.D., as its next president in 2019.

Fr. Holtschneider will be stepping down from his position as executive vice president and chief operations officer for Ascension, the world's largest Catholic health system, which he joined in 2017. Prominent in the field of Catholic higher education, Fr. Holtschneider served as president of DePaul University in Chicago, the nation's largest Catholic university, from 2004 to 2017. A frequent speaker, consultant, and writer on issues facing colleges and universities, he has served on the boards of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, the American Council on Education, and ACCU, which he chaired from 2010 to 2012. He currently chairs the Niagara University Board of Trustees and the Institute of Advanced Catholic Studies at the University of Southern California.

“Dennis brings with him unparalleled experience with and commitment to ACCU,” said Thomas Mengler, J.D., president of St. Mary’s University in Texas, and chair of the ACCU Board of Directors. “He is known and respected by our member presidents, as well as those beyond the world of Catholic higher education, for his depth of thought and his unwavering commitment to Catholic mission. He will bring great vision to ACCU.”

Vice chair of the ACCU Board and president of Chestnut Hill College Sister Carol Jean Vale, SSJ, noted Fr. Holtschneider’s history of engagement on some of critical issues facing Catholic higher education. “A scholar and lecturer on Catholic higher education, Dennis is not only an authority on governance, leadership, and Catholic sponsorship, he also shows his genuine passion for the people inside our institutions. His attention to social issues makes Dennis an ideal leader for ACCU.”

A Detroit native, Fr. Holtschneider earned a bachelor’s degree in mathematics from Niagara University in 1985. He studied for the priesthood at Mary Immaculate Seminary and was ordained in 1989. He received a doctorate in administration, planning and social policy in 1997 from Harvard University. Currently, he is a faculty member for several higher education leadership programs at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, as well as the Boston College Institute for Administrators in Catholic Higher Education.
Fr. Holtschneider has been honored widely for his work on a variety of issues. He holds eight honorary degrees, was listed among Diversity MBA Magazine's "Top 100 under 50" for fostering Diverse Executive Leaders, and holds various recognitions for his work on national immigration reform. In 2015, the American Council on Education honored him with its Council of Fellows Mentor Award.

Fr. Holtschneider observed, "Catholic colleges and universities are amazing institutions. They number among the finest research institutions. They move students from the bottom 20% of income distribution to the top 20% of income distribution better than any other sector of higher education. Their students graduate in higher numbers and with less debt. Ever faithful to their religious missions, they educate students to give back to a world in need. It will be a privilege to support these institutions as they do the sacred work of preparing the next generation for lives of faith and service."

On behalf of the ACCU Board of Directors, Mengler also reiterated gratitude to outgoing president Michael Galligan-Stierle for his 13 years of service to the organization: "Michael’s energy has driven the association to accomplish great things and those efforts will bear fruit for many years to come."

Mengler also added the Board’s appreciation of Rick Artman and Academic Search Inc., which led the search process, for its diligence and focus in helping the association identify its next leader.

The ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, founded in 1899, serves as the collective voice of U.S. Catholic higher education. Through programs and services, the Association strengthens and promotes the Catholic identity and mission of its member institutions so that all associated with Catholic higher education can contribute to the greater good of the world and the Church.