



President's Message

Correspondence from the ACCU President

September 3, 2026

Colleagues:

Happy Labor Day. Students are settled; classes have started, and you can take a breath. I have heard lots of hopeful reports about enrollment, though I know that revenue is more complicated than raw numbers.

Let me put two requests at the top of my September message. First, I want to draw your attention to the January 29, 2027 Presidents' Reception, hosted by Archbishop Caccia at the Nunciature, in advance of the Annual Meeting. You can register [here](#). Alas, this is Washington, DC, and security is always an issue, so I need you to register early.

Second, after discussion with the ACCU board Executive Committee, I seek your collective counsel on how Catholic higher education is responding to Secretary McMahon's "call to action." If you are willing to share your strategy and any links or documents — by the end of the month, I will summarize and post on the ACCU Presidents Only page.

Speaking of the [ACCU website](#), the new design "soft" launched this week, in preparation for Annual Meeting registration. Stage two is a refresh of the brand narrative (mission language, value proposition, etc.) which will happen by calendar year end, incorporating the work of the December 2025 Summit on the value proposition, and ready for "prime time" at the Annual

Meeting. ACCU could not accomplish all of this without the leadership of our new Executive Director of External Affairs, Kathryn Harrington.

We have 20 new presidents joining the ACCU family this fall. Here they are: Todd Pfannestiel, Avila University; Jack Butler, SJ, Boston College; Ron Tulley, Calumet College of St. Joseph; Jennifer Glowienka, Carroll College; Ronald Brandon, Christian Brothers University; David Dausey, Duquesne University; Brother Keith Warner, OFM, Franciscan School of Theology; Carolyn Noll Sorg, John Carroll University; Christopher Sindt, Lewis University; Carrie Newcomb, Mercy College of Ohio; Leamor Kahanov, Notre Dame de Namur University; Abigail Van Vlerah, Notre Dame of Maryland University; Shonna Riedlinger, Ohio Dominican University; Shawna Cooper Whitehead, Regis University; Michael Lewis, Saint Anselm College; Maura Mast, Seattle University; Brenda Kelly, The College of Saint Scholastica; Sister Maria Gemma Salyer, OSF, University of Saint Francis (IN); Ann Marie Fallon, University of Saint Mary (KS); and Øystein Lund, St. Mary's University, London. My thanks to the members of the Institute for New Presidents Planning Task Force (Glynis Fitzgerald, Tom Poon, Marco Clark, Harry Dumay, Kathleen Jagger, and Lisa Lori) and our mentors (Nancy Blattner, John Cech, Daniel Curran, Fr. Larry Hostetter, David King, Sr. Joan Lescinki, CSJ, Brennan O'Donnell, Fred Pestello, Amy McCormack, Barbara McDonald, and Thayne McCulloh) who are helping to orient and support our new colleagues.

This summer ACCU, with the leadership of Senior Associate Tom Flynn, overhauled the infrastructure of Advising Services, providing more transparency and accountability, now that the program is in its sixth year. This is still a work in progress, with board consultation, however, evaluations are consistently excellent. You can find the new Scope of Practice statement [here](#).

I also am providing a link to the [flyer](#) for the December 6-10 IFCU women's leadership Conference in Rome and Florence. Registration is limited to 20 participants from around the world, so again, consider registering early. My appreciation to ACCU's IFCU representative and Gonzaga University President Katia Passerini for co-chairing this gathering and hosting us at the Gonzaga Florence campus.

My best wishes for a successful fall semester. The world needs Catholic higher education — and your leadership.

Sincerely,



Donna M. Carroll
President

ACCU Presidential Opinions

Marco Clark: “Something distinctly its own”

Marco J. Clark, President of Holy Cross College, reflects on the shared mission of Catholic education to form students in faith, wisdom, and courage while preparing them to serve others.

When Catholic higher education meets A.I.: We can’t let new technology override moral wisdom

Robert A. Dowd, C.S.C., President of the University of Notre Dame, reflects on the role of Catholic higher education in ensuring that moral wisdom and human dignity guide the use of artificial intelligence.

ACCU Programing

Institute for New Presidents Virtual Sessions

ACCU’s Institute for New Presidents offers virtual sessions throughout the academic year to support new presidents through conversation, mentorship, and shared reflection on Catholic higher education. The first virtual session will be on Friday, **September 25**. View the full schedule and register [here](#).

Presidents’ Reception at the Apostolic Nunciature

Join us for a special reception at the Apostolic Nunciature in Washington, DC, on January 29 from 6–8 p.m., held in conjunction with the ACCU Annual Meeting. The evening will feature remarks by His Excellency Most Reverend Gabriele Caccia, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, followed by cocktails and conversation. Each ACCU member president may bring one guest. There is no additional cost to attend, and complimentary transportation will be provided for registered attendees. Register [here](#).

Community Engaged Scholar-Practitioner Network (CESPN)

2026 Annual Gathering

October 8-9, 2026

Loyola University New Orleans | New Orleans, Louisiana

The CESPN 2026 Annual Gathering brings together community-engaged scholars, practitioners, and researchers from ACCU member institutions for professional development, collaboration, and discussion on service-learning and community engagement.

ACCU Partner Events/News

ACE Experience 2027 (ACEx2027)

March 2-7, 2027

Marriott Marquis Washington, DC | Washington, D.C.

The ACE Experience 2027 brings together higher education leaders from across the country for a week of dialogue, learning, and collaboration focused on the future of higher education.

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