

President's Message

Correspondence from the ACCU President

November 5, 2026

Colleagues:

Washington is a buzz with the implications of the mid-term election results. We will see what evolves, and how rapidly.

In the meantime, a number of our schools have yet to comply fully with the Financial Value Transparency Reporting requirements and could be at risk of losing access to federal grants and loans, so let me begin this message with a sobering reminder. The extended due date is January 15, 2027. You can register here for the November 10 ACE/DOE webinar on reporting requirements, if you need further instruction.

While ACCU is not a lobbying organization, I want to assure you that we have been actively tracking comments on the proposed 91 Fed. Reg. 56811 Racial Nondiscrimination in Private Schools — that is, the proposal to eliminate tax-exempt status for private institutions based upon a broad definition of racial discrimination. With the ACCU board's endorsement, we have lent our support to the lobbying efforts of both the USCCB and NAICU.

Since I am talking politics, let me also mention that most of our colleges and universities are somehow addressing Secretary McMahon's Call for Action letter, tweaking language, but believing that, as mission-driven institutions, we already

demonstrate the educational commitments that the DOE is requesting. Some presidents are reworking welcome messages. Others are using AI to query their websites for appropriate evidence. Most are keeping their boards informed, but are not communicating concern. The above two issues are of greater worry.

Speaking of worry, several members have asked why ACCU is not participating in ACE's National Student Success Initiative. It is a commendable initiative intended to positively influence public perceptions of higher education. However, it identifies aspirational outcomes that are already evident in Catholic higher education — and the student success framework has little reference to mission-driven education, so it did not seem like a good fit. That was the consensus of the private, faith-based sector in general.

ACCU is collaborating with ACE and CCCU to offer a faith-based college and university convening on March 2, 2027 at the Catholic University of America in advance of the annual ACE Experience. More details to follow.

As to the everyday business of the association:

- The 2027 Annual Meeting program page is operative, and we will continue to add details as final speakers are confirmed. Take a look.
- Summit 3.0: Catholic Higher Education and the AI Revolution (November 19–20) is fully subscribed. The Georgetown Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life has been a great partner.
- You should have received the latest ACCU newsletter, UPDATE, last week. Here is another link, as well as a link to the just-released Volume 43, No. 2 of the Journal of Catholic Higher Education.
- The October 29 Aspiring Presidents virtual seminar was a great success, with presentations by Marc Camille (Albertus Magnus) and Katia Passerini (Gonzaga).

- And finally, we now have dates for the 2027 grant-funded seminar on religious pluralism, co-sponsored with Interfaith America — June 16–18. Application details to follow soon.

As always, I am so appreciative of the active participation of colleagues in advancing the work of the association. Let me call out in particular the 15 authors of our first presidential essay series, Sustainability through Collaboration: Shaping the Future of Catholic Higher Education: Kelli Armstrong, Nancy Blattner, Brian Bruess, Sandy Cassady, Rev. Peter M. Donohue, OSA, Tom Evans, David King, David Livingston, Rev. James J. Maher, CM, Lizbeth Martin, Dan Myers, Amy Novak, Beth Ross, Greg Weiner, and Marylou Yam. ACCU will self-publish this monograph, co-edited by Senior Associate Tom Flynn, early in the new year.

In closing, I want to mention the six ACCU members whose outstanding service-learning programs were recognized at the October 26–27 global Uniservitate Symposium in Rome — University of Dayton, University of San Diego, Australian Catholic University, DePaul University, Loyola University Chicago, and Gwynedd Mercy University. Congratulations. I heard that the presentations were terrific.

'Tis the season of thanksgiving. Even in difficult times, we count our blessings.

Sincerely,



Donna M. Carroll
President

ACCU Presidential Opinions

Why Division III Should Reject a 5-Year Eligibility Model

Daniel J. Myers, President of Misericordia University, argues against extending NCAA Division III athletic eligibility to five years, citing concerns about student costs and the educational purpose of college athletics.

The Bad Idea Gaining Traction in Higher Ed

Christina Clark, President of La Roche University, raises concerns about three-year bachelor's degrees and emphasizes the importance of preparing students with the skills needed for a changing workforce.

The Work of Accompaniment

Robert K. Vischer, President of the University of St. Thomas, discusses the role of Catholic higher education in accompanying students and preparing them for life during an episode of the Practicing Catholic Show podcast.

What Does It Mean to Control Technology Instead of Letting It Control You?

Katia Passerini, President of Gonzaga University, discusses the role of artificial intelligence in higher education and the importance of maintaining thoughtful oversight as technology continues to evolve during an episode of The EdUp Experience podcast.

ACCU Programming

Institute for New Presidents
Friday, November 13, noon–1 p.m. ET
Marketing and Branding for Mission (third of six virtual sessions)

This session will explore how Catholic colleges and universities can communicate their mission through effective marketing and storytelling. Participants will learn practical approaches to developing marketing and communication plans centered on Catholic identity. Click here to register.

Presidents' Reception at the Apostolic Nunciature

Join us for a special reception at the Apostolic Nunciature in Washington, DC, on **January 29** from 6 to 8 p.m., held in conjunction with the ACCU Annual Meeting. The evening will feature remarks by His Excellency, the 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.

Register Now: 2027 Annual Meeting

January 30–February 1, 2027
Grand Hyatt Washington | Washington, DC

Join ACCU presidents and senior leaders in Washington, DC, for the 2027 ACCU Annual Meeting, featuring opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and fellowship within Catholic higher education. Click here to register.

Call for Member Updates

ACCU invites member institutions to share news of upcoming anniversaries or the passing of former presidents. We would appreciate these updates so we can recognize important milestones and remember those who have served Catholic higher education. Please send any updates to ACCU at accu@accunet.org.

ACCU Partner Events/News

University of Notre Dame: Practical Virtues
November 10, 2026

The University of Notre Dame will launch Practical Virtues, a new website supporting its Virtues & Vocations initiative. The initiative brings together scholars and educators to explore ways to develop character in professional education. Learn more.

IFCU: Strengthening the Constellation — Women Leadership and Catholic Universities
December 6–10, 2026 | Rome and Florence, Italy

The International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU) will host a five-day program for women leaders in Catholic higher education, focusing on leadership development, Catholic identity, and collaboration. Application Deadline: November 10, 2026. Learn more.

Lilly Endowment: National Initiative to Strengthen Chaplaincies at Colleges and Universities

The Lilly Endowment is offering grants to help colleges and universities strengthen their chaplaincies and offices of religious life to better support students in their faith. Concept Papers Due: January 11, 2027. Learn more.

ACE Experience 2027 (ACEx2027)
March 2–6, 2027

Marriott Marquis Washington, DC

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.

Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities

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