



Secretariat of Catholic Education  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
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**Identifying the Impact of Catholic Campus Ministry and  
Assessing the Formation Needs of Campus Ministers**  
A Case Statement for a National Study of Catholic Campus Ministry

**I. Rationale for a National Study of Campus Ministry**

The Secretariat for Catholic Education seeks to advance Catholic identity in higher education and to rejuvenate the vision for Catholic campus ministry nationally. We propose a two pronged study of 1) the impact Catholic campus ministry has on those who participate and 2) the formation and development of those who minister on campus. Our planning process will engage practioners, institutions, networks and organizations active in campus ministry in order to provide strong leadership and support for this initiative.

1) The impact of Catholic campus ministry on those who participate

Describe factors in forming and sustaining Catholic identity. Identify elements of campus ministry programs that positively impact Catholic identity and use information to create a program profile for effective campus ministry.

Potential factors include:

Sacramental life	Spiritual Direction	Retreats
Prayer	Devotional Practice	Evangelization
Outreach	Service	Community
Leadership	Catechesis	Appropriation
Interfaith	Ecumenical	Conscience

2) The formation of those who minister on campus

- a. Study the demographics of current Campus Ministers
- b. Identify formation components including human, spiritual, intellectual, and apostolic formation.
- c. Explore the spiritual disciplines and professional development practices that sustain their ministry.
- d. Consider contemporary challenges and needed skills for productive ministry on campus.

Campus Ministry serves the evangelizing mission of the Church in higher education through formation, discipleship, service and prayer. In order to advance Catholic identity and culture in higher education, this research initiative seeks to identify factors in forming Catholic identity, program profiles and necessary formation elements. The collaborative process will build bridges among current practitioners, institutions, networks, organizations, stakeholders and bishops that will strengthen the mission of the Church in higher education. The cooperation of campus ministry partners will extend the reach of the study while the data gathered will play an instrumental role in rejuvenating the vision for Campus Ministry nationally.

## **II. Contemporary Context**

### *A. Recent studies on Religion and Culture*

These are exciting and challenging times, particularly for people of faith on college campuses. A study entitled, *Flux in Faith*, (Pew 2009) observed the migration of believers and nonbelievers from one tradition to another or to no tradition at all. This movement is not uncommon and Catholics are no exception. A notable fact that adds a level of urgency to the work of campus ministry recognizes that Catholics who stay engaged in the Church through age 24 are more likely to remain life-long Catholics. The study also articulates two main reasons people give for leaving the Church: 1) they don't feel fed or 2) they simply drift away. Furthermore, why they leave seems to contribute to where they go. For example, those who leave because they do not feel fed, tend to migrate toward more bible centered, evangelical traditions, while those who leave because they drift away, lacking a strong connection to the community, are more likely to become "nones" or those who claim no religious affiliation.

*America's Changing Landscape* (Pew, 2015) illustrates the drastic decline of Christians in America and the rise of the religiously unaffiliated, often referred to as the "nones." From 2007 to 2014 the number of Catholics in America declined by nearly 3 million people. Catholicism has lost more adherents through religious switching than it gained. Nearly 1/3 of American adults say they were raised Catholic while almost 13% have left the Catholic faith. Among millennials, in 2007, 22% identified as Catholic and by 2014 the number dropped to 16%. Within the same time period, the number of individuals who are religiously unaffiliated, particularly among millennials, has grown

from 25% of the population to 35%. Colleges and universities have not escaped this trend. Between 2007 and 2014, the percentage of college graduates who identify with Christianity declined by nine percentage points and now roughly a quarter of college graduates describe themselves religiously as “nones.”

*Understanding Former Young Adult Catholics* (Notre Dame 2013) provides further insight into the religious and spiritual life of young adults. While these young adults no longer identify "as Catholics" and do not participate in religious practices, such as Mass attendance, they still believe in God. According to the study, 57% of young adult former Catholics believe in God and another 24% say they are "unsure." Of these former Catholics, 57% say they still pray sometimes. Young former Catholics tend to have a flexible and tentative view of God: 33% see God as personal and involved in people's lives with 26% not sure.

Emerging young adults live in a diverse religious environment, including their parents. For example, 24% of former young adult Catholics grew up in families where their parents were either not religious or practiced a different faith. Also, 24% of former Catholics said their families "never" talked about religion. By contrast, 66% of those who stayed Catholic grew up in two parent families of one shared faith. Their relationships reflect this religious diversity, while many reported their closest friends shared similar religious views (52%), less than half (49%) of their closest friends are religious. Emerging adults tend toward religiously diverse, rather than homogeneous, friendship circles" (p12).

While this age group is moving away from organized religion, they still believe in God, they pray, and they want to explore the possibilities of other religious practices. Church teachings presented more as wisdom and less as dogma could have a greater appeal. Young adults need opportunities to freely question and explore faith perspectives. They tend to view the teachings of science as incompatible with religion (59%). They respond best when religious perspectives are conveyed in "an open, confident, exploratory, and dialogical mode" (p 24). Cardinal Wuerl called for creative engagement that opens up opportunities. The Gospel message is not new, but the means through which we share it needs to change.

### *B. Campus Ministry Studies*

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) released a special report in 2005 entitled “The Impact of Catholic Campus Ministry on the Beliefs and Worship Practices of U.S. Catholics.” Among those who reported attending college and participating in campus ministry, nearly two in three say their Catholic faith is “among the most important parts of their lives.” Those involved in campus ministry during their college years are more likely to attend Mass, to describe themselves as “very involved” in a parish or other religious activities, or to register in a parish more frequently than those who did not participate in campus ministry. Nearly 4 in 10 of those involved in campus ministry expressed interest in studying religion or theology at the college level, compared to 2 of 10 that were not involved in campus ministry.

Campus ministry programs foster a sense of Christian stewardship illustrated by the fact that 92% of those who participated in campus ministry report giving to a Catholic parish or another Catholic organization in the past year. Finally, this research shows that those active in campus ministry are more likely to report considering a religious vocation or encouraging others, more so than those who did not participate in campus ministry.

### *C. Bishop’s pastoral responsibility for campus ministry*

#### *The Presence of the Church in the University and in University Culture*

(Congregation for Catholic Education, Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Pontifical Council for Culture 1994) articulates well the Church’s mission in the university: to support Catholics engaged in university life, to proclaim the Gospel and to cooperate with all those concerned for cultural development of the human person. In creating the Pontifical Council for Culture, then Pope John Paul II wrote “a faith that does not become culture is a faith that is not fully received, not entirely thought through and faithfully lived.” (JPII letter 5/1982)

*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, an Apostolic Exhortation by Saint John Paul II, (ECE II. Article 6.1, 1990) requests the promotion of the pastoral care of all members of the university community, especially those who are Catholic. “Priority is to be given to those means which will facilitate the integration of human and professional education with religious values in the light of Catholic doctrine, in order to unite intellectual learning with the religious dimension of life.” Qualified staff are to be appointed to this work in

“cooperation with the pastoral activities of the local Church under the guidance or with the approval of the diocesan Bishop.”

The US bishops articulated their vision for campus ministry in a 1985 pastoral letter entitled *Empowered by the Spirit*. They expressed their commitment recognizing “that this ministry is vitally important for the future of the church and society... where priests, religious and (lay persons) who have been judiciously chosen and trained can serve as on-campus sources of spiritual and intellectual assistance to young college people.’(Declaration on Christian Education)” (EbS 103)

Canon Law reinforces the responsibility of the bishop “to be zealous in his pastoral care of students, even by the creation of a special parish or at least by appointing priests with a stable assignment to this care” (Canon 813-814).

#### *D. Rejuvenating the vision for campus ministry*

Campus Ministry, now more than ever, remains vital to the life of the Church. Bishops have a pastoral responsibility to understand its impact and to determine ways to strengthen its effectiveness.

The 1985 pastoral letter recognized a new period in the history of campus ministry. The Secretariat of Catholic Education seeks to rejuvenate the vision of campus ministry through dynamic engagement of the faithful. We begin a “new era,” where campus ministry forms the faithful into vibrant communities of faith and empowers those involved to share the light of the Gospel with the academic world. Appreciated and supported by the Church, a strengthened campus ministry makes the voice of faith resound from the center of campus life. The spiritual life of the Church on campus, renewed as a potent force, enables the academic community to live up to its own ideals. The faith community, embracing its Catholic roots, confidently enters into deep dialogue and productive relationships with other religious groups on campus. A flourishing Christian humanism will demonstrate the value of an educated, adult faith that has integrated the best insights of the culture. The Church on campus will be seen as a genuine servant community, dedicated to social justice, and an effective sign/instrument of the kingdom of peace and justice in the world. The Church and higher education will find productive ways to work together for the good of the whole human family. Campus

ministry, empowered by the Spirit, faces a future bright with promise. (EBS #105 paraphrased)

### **III. New Questions**

In studying campus ministry, we want to understand the path by which someone becomes a campus minister. It has been almost 50 years since the Federation of Newman Chaplains, an organization for priests who served in campus ministry, gave way in 1969 to the creation of the Catholic Campus Ministry Association (CCMA). The landscape of who and how campus ministry happens has changed dramatically. We want to know who contemporary campus ministers are? How were they formed spiritually, intellectually, and pastorally? Once they become a campus minister, what spiritual and professional disciplines sustain them in ministry? How are they equipped for the challenges of ministry on campus? What does it mean to promote a religious perspective on today's college campus?

Just as the face of campus ministry has altered over the years, there has been a sea change in academia. While there are still physical classrooms, there are also online classes where students and teachers never meet face to face. There are libraries, but the use of computers, tablets and the internet have reshaped where and how learning happens. Who is on campus and in the classroom is more ethnically and socio-economically diverse than ever before. So how do these changes in higher education impact the pedagogy of campus ministry? Within the learning environment, the cultural context has also changed significantly. The spectrum of response to religion from valued to tolerated or even hostile varies across geographies and campuses. How then does campus ministry thrive in this contemporary context?

The studies noted earlier look at the experience of religion from a young adult vantage point. The media suggests that young adults, the “nones” as they have been named, are leaving Churches, Temples and Synagogues in droves. Yet when visiting campus ministry, there are active and involved students. In talking with Campus Ministers, I hear about those who seek God and who serve others. Why do some young adults stay? What draws them? What engages or inspires them? What feeds them? How do they benefit from their Campus Ministry experience? What would make Campus Ministry even better?

#### **IV. Goals for a National Study of Campus Ministry**

1. Conduct a national study of campus ministry and maximize the study's reach by engaging Catholic colleges and universities, Newman centers, campus ministry organizations and other networks.
2. Explore the impact Catholic campus ministry has on individuals by identifying Catholic identity factors and positive influence program profiles for empowered campus ministry.
3. Identify necessary formation, enrichment and development components to equip campus ministers for impactful ministry in higher education.
4. Engage bishops, campus ministers, campus ministry organizations, networks, and stakeholders in rejuvenating campus ministry.

#### **V. Process for a National Study of Campus Ministry**

##### ***Stage 1 – Design***

a. Identify and convene a research team of social scientists, practioners, and stakeholders that are representative of the current field of campus ministry and with the expertise to determine the scope and methodology of the study. The members of the research team will serve as partners who share a vested interest in this endeavor.

b. The research team will design two survey instruments encompassing the demographics, formation, and habits of campus ministers as well as factors in forming Catholic identity and indicators of success for campus ministry programs for students in light of the 1985 pastoral letter *Empowered by the Spirit*.

c. The research team will consult with members of the Alliance for Campus Ministry (representatives from 10 campus ministry organizations and networks) and engage them in piloting the instruments.

d. The research team will revise and finalize instruments and protocol.

##### ***Stage 2 – Data collection***

The research team will implement two instruments.

Instrument 1: Campus ministers

Demographics, formation, spiritual disciplines, professional development and campus context.

Instrument 2: Current students

Catholic identity factors and program profile

### ***Stage 3 – Interpretation***

a. Following the conclusion of the study, we will gather members of the research team, members of the Alliance for Campus Ministry, collaborators and bishops to help interpret the collected data. The goal of the gathering will be to identify key factors in forming Catholic identity, profiles for effective campus ministry programs, and enrichment for professional development among campus ministers.

b. Several USCCB offices will be invited to participate in the dialogue: Subcommittee for Certification, Young Adults, Cultural Diversity, Clergy and Consecrated Life and Vocations, and Evangelization and Catechesis.

c. Proceedings of the gathering will be published as a resource.

### ***Stage 4 – Application***

a. The Alliance, stakeholders, collaborators and bishops will convene to discuss how best to utilize the data gathered regarding the formation and development of campus ministers and program enrichment.

b. During the gathering participants will identify strategic topic areas to address, possible models and measures for formation. The current formation/orientation institutes sponsored by the USCCB will be revised according to the data in collaboration with various campus ministry and higher education organizations.

c. Proceedings of the gathering will be published as a resource including the Catholic identity index and the program profiles for productive campus ministry.

## **IV Contributors (as of September 13, 2016)**

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