

standards drive these opportunities. Re-creating a rigid, one-size-fits-all classroom model that did not work the first time around for many of these adults is not the solution. We must become better at learning how adults engage and persist with learning opportunities. This may suggest a need to increase the types of opportunities to which access is being promoted. For example, learners expand their knowledge within the context of what they already know. This is especially true for adult learners. Thus, applied learning opportunities should take into account the variety of life experiences and expertise that adults bring to the new learning experience.

We may also learn important lessons from for-profit institutions. These proprietary colleges have seen enrollment among adult learners explode because they use innovative learning technologies and offer workplace-relevant courses at convenient times and places for working people. We should at least explore some market-based approaches that for-profits have adopted, such as giving learner-consumers a role in determining when and how courses are delivered.

In the short term, we should focus on duplicating what we have seen to work not only in providing individual adults with needed skills but also in fostering institutional and societal acceptance of the very idea of lifelong learning. New England states can tap the National College Transition Network for promising practices in ABE-to-college transition programs to increase the number of adults who attain higher education degrees. The region's higher education institutions—two- and four-year, private and especially public—will need to increase their flexibility on credits, costs and when and where students are engaged in order to remove barriers from students who are working toward degrees while balancing work and raising families.

We can dramatically increase the number of college educated citizens who live in our region. But in order to do so, we must fully embrace adult learners in ways that may challenge our current assumptions and that reflect their integral role in the future of New England.

Nicholas C. Donohue is president and CEO of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. Email: ndonohue@nmefd.org.

FOLLOW UP:

Yes, a Catholic College Can Exist

JAMES F. KEENAN, S.J.

In his essay, "Can a Catholic College Exist Today?" the new Assumption College President Francesco C. Cesareo offers a manifesto of his way of governing a Catholic institution "in the midst of pluralism" (*THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION*, Fall 2007). Cesareo extols adherence to a single Catholic intellectual tradition and insists that Catholic colleges neither condone nor endorse behavior that is contrary to the church's moral teachings.

As a professor of Theological Ethics at a large Catholic and Jesuit University, I would like to offer a different perspective. In January 2006, I and another Jesuit priest, Gregory Kalscheur, S.J., assistant professor at the Boston College Law School, were asked to chair a committee of the "Church in the Twenty-First Century Project." The Church 21 project had been launched by BC's president, Father William Leahy, S.J., in the wake of the abuse scandal that rocked the church in the United States and the local church of Boston in particular.

The committee—made up of diverse faculty and administrators at BC, including the vice president for mission and identity, the dean of the Law School and

the chair of the Theology Department—was to reflect on how BC's Catholic identity pertained to the university as a whole.

BC is evidently Catholic in many ways. Yet when this Catholic identity was cited university-wide, it was often occasioned by administrators arguing that a particular event should not occur, "because, after all, we are a Catholic University." Interestingly, on one occasion, many faculty members used this same argument against the administration for awarding an honorary degree to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

I began to think that our Catholic identity was like a stealth bomber. From whatever perspective of the Catholic tradition, people used it to censure a discussion. Furthermore, when they did, they were very passionate about it. Then, after this identity was invoked to oppose an event, it disappeared from the radar screen.

On the Church 21 committee, we saw the need to approach Catholic identity more positively and to engage the faculty more directly. In fall 2006, we hosted a university-wide luncheon, which attracted more than 150 faculty members, roughly 25 percent of the full-time members. We asked them to share their concerns and hopes about the Catholic intellectual tradition, or

the “CIT” as we had begun to call it. There, it became clear that our faculty had many differing impressions of the CIT. So we next invited Stephen Schloesser, S.J., associate professor of History, whose book, *Jazz Age Catholicism* had garnered critical attention, to present his read of the tradition. Schloesser presented the CIT as a tradition that engaged both the transcendent and the worldly. To ensure that this discussion of the CIT would be not be for Catholic faculty only, we asked a Jewish faculty member and a Muslim faculty member to give response to Schloesser’s presentation. Nearly 200 faculty members attended.

In light of the presentation, BC Provost Cutberto Garza decided that CIT discussions should belong not only to the predominantly Catholic Church 21 project, but also to the academic life of the university. Garza developed the “Provost Planning Committee of the CIT” with an additional 15 faculty members representing a broad university-wide and inter-religious constituency. Some of our leading faculty members were invited from sociology, law, business, philosophy, chemistry, theology, nursing, music and political science. Every invitee accepted the provost’s invitation. Our first action was to add a letter to our name: now we would be the Provost Planning Committee on Catholic Intellectual Traditions. Making “Tradition” plural reflected a very significant shift,

wherein we could appreciate the richness, depth, complexity and humanity of Catholic thought.

Throughout the spring semester of 2007, our committee met biweekly; we eventually proposed to the provost that he sponsor two two-year long faculty seminars for 2007-2009. The first was about “Ways of Knowing and Catholic Intellectual Traditions.” Was there something about doing research at a Catholic University that was distinctive? For example, does BC sponsor an environment that encourages sociologists to study morality and culture; nurses and educators, matters of disability; or, law professors, matters of conscience? Sociologist Alan Wolfe, director of BC’s Center for Religion and American Public Life, agreed to chair the seminar of yet another 14 faculty members across the university. A second two-year seminar, chaired by historian David Quigley featured a different point of inquiry, “The University and Catholic Intellectual Traditions.”

While these two new seminars have now been launched, the provost’s planning committee is working on a variety of faculty events for the coming spring. To highlight how religious traditions can contribute to peace and justice in the world, the philosopher Richard Kearney is hosting a panel on Inter-religious Dialogue; to listen to Catholic intellectuals from other contexts, the theologian Roberto Goizueta has invited

a major Latin American theologian to address us on the Catholic University in the Industrialized World of the 21st century; to understand how CITs influence literature, theologian Shawn Copeland is inviting a major American Catholic novelist; and so as to offer a more positive grasp of the CITs regarding sexuality, nursing professor Rosanna Demarco is launching a panel on sexual health and the CITs.

Two years later, the Catholic Intellectual Traditions are very much on the radar screen at BC, in part, because as intellectuals, the faculty is engaging them.

In answer to the question posed by Cesareo, about whether a Catholic institution of higher education can exist today, from BC I can answer, so far, so good.

James F. Keenan, S.J., is a professor of Theological Ethics at Boston College. Email: frkeenaj@bc.edu.



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