

Introduction

Paul Wadell, who authored our first article in this issue of the *Journal of Catholic Higher Education*, is known for his reflections on friendship and the moral life, contending that friendship is integral to authentic Christian life. In this present article, Wadell takes these reflections further, suggesting that friendship is an apt metaphor for understanding mentoring relationships, particularly between faculty and students. After exploring the fundamental characteristics of friendship, the author discusses the importance of listening to and respecting students' stories, while sometimes "guiding them to more hopeful ones." He then explains the key differences between mentoring and friendship, describing how an understanding of friendship helps in establishing and respecting boundaries within the mentoring relationship.

In our next feature, Gavin Hurley draws from his experience with writing courses at Lasell College. He provides insights for the design and execution of first-year writing courses that could be implemented at Catholic colleges and universities. The author first reviews the history of writing courses in American higher education and the acknowledgement that, in recent decades, students often lacked critical thinking, written communication, and reading skills as they entered college or university. Thus, the first-year writing course has taken on increased responsibilities. Hurley argues that a trivium curriculum can serve as a "[h]euristic to teach both effective writing and *veritas*-centered Catholic communication skills." Based on the classical trivium of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, the author asserts that the writing course described in this article is both "distinctively Catholic and mission-oriented."

The next article explores the question of inclusion as an expressed institutional value at higher education institutions, including Catholic colleges and universities. While perusing mission statements, for example, one cannot miss the emphasis on inclusion or inclusiveness as a core identifying feature. In our third article, Matthew Richard Petrussek raises a provocative question about how Catholic institutions can claim to be both *Catholic* and *inclusive*. He looks to Aristotle and Pope Francis to illuminate the promise and limits of inclusion at Catholic colleges and universities. The author states that Catholic institutions are correct in their embrace of inclusion, but they also must recognize that,

philosophically and theologically, “*exclusion* is the condition for the possibility of creating a welcoming academic community.”

Over the last few decades Catholic colleges and universities have worked at clarifying their special characteristics as undeniably Catholic, as well as truly American institutions of higher education. A host of individual scholars, as well as the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, have offered insightful responses and specific tools to assist Catholic institutions in the self-evaluation of their Catholic identity. Michael Rizzi adds another helpful way to think about Catholic identity in American higher education. Recognizing the diverse and complex nature of Catholic higher education, the author does not intend to provide criteria to rank the Catholicity of any particular institution. Rather, he explores a system of classification or taxonomy as a tool for understanding the “diverse ways in which Catholic institutions have grown, developed, and evolved within the United States over the past two centuries.” The author’s aim is to assist Catholic institutions in reflecting on their identity in relation to their peers, and to better understand their place in the Catholic Church in the United States.

The increase in mental distress among college and university students raises serious challenges for faculty, student life personnel, and administrators. Not only are counseling centers stretched to the limit, but student mental-health struggles also affect academic work, as well as co-curricular activities. What are the responsibilities of academic institutions beyond basic mental-health services? Contrary to the view of many in higher education who regard mental-health struggles as personal problems stemming from too many “coddled” students, Jessica Coblentz and Christopher Staysniak maintain that Catholic colleges and universities should understand student mental health as a matter of mission. Using the 1967 Land O’Lakes statement as a starting point, the authors contend that Catholic institutions have a special responsibility to be proactive in meeting student mental-health concerns. This responsibility extends beyond student affairs and mental-health professionals to include faculty and administrators who collectively are charged with promoting an integral humanism that supports students in every facet of their lives. The authors offer a number of concrete suggestions for ways that faculty, staff, and administrators can share in promoting students’ mental well-being.

Like many Catholic colleges and universities, Catholic elementary and secondary schools face financial, enrollment, and mission-related challenges. A number of Catholic institutions of higher education are assisting Catholic elementary and secondary schools in addressing their

most pressing problems. The last two articles in this issue discuss specific cases in which this engagement and intersection have borne fruit. In the first instance, Mary-Kate Sableski and Jackie Marshall Arnold describe a literacy professional development initiative sponsored by the Center for Catholic Education at the University of Dayton. The university partnered with the Archdiocese of Cincinnati's schools to help implement a new archdiocesan English/Language Arts Course of study. Utilizing a "gradual release model" of professional development, the program significantly enhanced the teachers' understanding of literacy best practices.

The final article by Philip Belfiore examines a longstanding partnership between Mercyhurst University and Catholic schools in the Diocese of Erie. With declining enrollments and increasing costs, Catholic schools often are hard-pressed to remain viable. Mercyhurst partnered with a local parish in the Erie diocese to develop a model that reconfigured the structure of a pre-K–8 parochial school. The result was a school that maintained academic excellence, retained a pedagogically sound level of instructional practice, and reduced the dependency on increased enrollment, tuition, and parish subsidy. The partnership, begun in 2004, has helped sustain the parish school, despite the closure of a number of other nearby diocesan schools in the intervening years. The experience of Mercyhurst offers other Catholic colleges and universities food for thought as they consider ways of serving the local Catholic Church.

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