



Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis

Melanie M. Morey, John J. Piderit

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Catholic higher education in the United States is undergoing dramatic changes, driven largely by the virtual disappearance of nuns, brothers, and priests from Catholic university campuses. Today Catholic colleges and universities are dealing with critical questions about what constitutes Catholic collegiate identity. What are appropriate ways to engage the Catholic tradition across all sectors of university life? What constitutes a critical mass of committed and knowledgeable Catholics necessary to maintain religious identity? What is an appropriate level of knowledge and religious commitment for those who lead, govern, and teach at Catholic institutions and how do they acquire it? Many people have strong - and strongly differing - opinions about the current state of Catholic higher education. Melanie M. Morey and John J. Piderit, S.J., waded into these waters with a study of 124 senior administrators at 33 Catholic colleges and universities across the United States. Exceptionally candid appraisals by administrators across a varied landscape attest that a cultural crisis is looming at a number of Catholic institutions.

Based on their research, Morey and Piderit describe the present situation and offer concrete suggestions for enhancing Catholic identity, culture, and mission at all Catholic colleges and universities. The authors define the critical issues and analyze and address them by using the rich construct of culture, particularly organizational culture. They provide four different models of how Catholic colleges and universities can operate and successfully compete as religiously distinctive institutions in the higher education market. After identifying the content of the Catholic tradition - intellectual, moral, and social - the authors analyze present performance among institutions in all four models. They derive criteria for identifying religious cultural crisis at institutions and provide specific policy proposals for enhancing religious culture. They also suggest principles for effectively leading and managing cultural change.

Morey and Piderit offer the first in-depth cultural analysis of the Catholic character of Catholic universities and colleges at a crucial time for these institutions. With new research and practical applications, this book is an invaluable resource for Catholic educators and anyone concerned about the future of Catholic higher education.

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