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**From “St. Mary of the Springs” to “Ohio Dominican University”:
The Challenge of Maintaining Mission and Identity in a Corporate World**

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Abstract

In the context of the current discussion about the challenges facing Catholic institutions of higher education in the United States, the case of Ohio Dominican University of Columbus, Ohio – in the aftermath of its centennial in 2011-2012 – will be explored from a historical perspective. Morey and Pideret’s seminal *Catholic Higher Education* (2006) argued that “a crisis in higher education is looming.” In such an atmosphere, it is critically important to remain true to the values of the founding orders – the Congregation of St. Mary of the Springs – now the Dominican Sisters of Peace.

Ohio Dominican has been buffeted by the winds of change in the 21st century, acknowledging that alongside the dangers of following the corporate model, opportunities exist to remain true to original guiding light of mission and identity. The Center for Dominican Studies on campus is a promising indicator that “hope springs eternal”, but it will require prayer and persistent vigilance on the part of those who remain committed to the ideals of the past as the best path to follow in the face of an uncertain future.

In her Inaugural Address of April 28, 1979 the last Dominican Sister President of Ohio Dominican College (originally founded as “St. Mary of the Springs”), Mary Andrew Matesich, O.P., focused her attention on “wisdom” as her guiding light. Quoting from the Book of Wisdom, she stated that “a great number of wise people is the safety of the world”, and then reminded the college community that the fathers of the Second Vatican Council, in *Gaudium et Spes/The Church in the Modern World* also noted the continuing value of and need for wisdom in the 20th century:

Our era needs...wisdom more than bygone ages if the discoveries made by man are to be further humanized. For the future of the world stands in peril unless wiser persons are forthcoming (Matesich 1979).

Tracing the history of the Dominican Order back to the 13th century, she created a strong foundation for her own presidency in the 20th century, which she honored and built up to great heights, earning national recognition for the small college until her retirement in 2001:

Into this chaotic world came Dominic Guzman, a man of great vision, keen intellect, deep spirituality, charismatic personality, and abundant organizational ability. He founded...the Order of Preachers to preach to the ignorant and illiterate who were caught up in the Albigensian heresy....and to study, write and teach in the great medieval universities...one of its significant innovations,

unique to the Order of Preachers, was the substitution of the obligation to study for the traditional monastic discipline of manual labor. Those who would preach and teach must be constantly engaged in the discipline of study...not isolation in the ivory tower of academe [but] part of a profound outward dynamic. The fruits of contemplation must be shared(Matesich 1979).

Posing her own question/challenge, she continued: “Who will take responsibility for the development of wise people?”...and offered a resounding, dedicated answer: “WE WILL” (Matesich 1979).

Sr. Mary Andrew’s strong will and vision would serve the college well, and she remained true to the Dominican charism and values during a period of continuing crisis in the history of American higher education. This crisis mentality prevailed on the campus of all colleges and universities, especially during the turbulent days of the sixties. But Catholic universities would face special challenges, in terms of maintaining their unique mission and identity in an increasingly secularized world (Morey & Piderit 2004). Sr. Matesich’s term of service as the college President was the longest in the institution’s history (23 years); since her retirement in 2001 at the turn of the century, Ohio Dominican has been buffeted by the winds of change – experiencing a good deal of turbulence and instability alongside expansion and achievements measured by business standards. At times, wisdom seems to have been in short supply, and dedication to the vision of the founding congregation waning.

Against the backdrop of the ongoing conversation/controversy surrounding the question of Catholic mission and identity, the history of St. of the Springs/Ohio Dominican, a college/university in Columbus, Ohio – the only Catholic university in the diocese- will be examined as a “case study” of the vicissitudes affecting many similar institutions. -to paraphrase the immortal words of Daniel Webster in “Dartmouth College . Woodward” (1819) - “it is.a small college...there are those who love it”. Some members of the old-time faculty look nostalgically back at what has been lost in the process of “moving ahead”, “growing the college/university” and following a business/corporate model in the “real world”. From the perspective of “faculty anxieties”, the advancement and growth of the past decade was accompanied by a “devolution/declension”, moving away from the Humanities foundation of the curriculum to a much greater emphasis on more practical/professional programs of study.

In the course of the last twelve years, the President’s office at Ohio Dominican has been occupied by a succession of five men: Dr. Jack Calareso (2001-2007); retired Bishop of the Diocese of Columbus, James Griffin, who presided over a year of healing while the search for a new president was underway) (2007-2008); Dr. Brian Nedwek (2008-2009 – serving a mere 8 months); Ronald Seifert, VP for University Resources, who served as Interim President while another national search was undertaken (2009-2010), and Dr. Peter Cimboric (2010 to present); Dr. Cimboric arrived just in time for the University’s Centennial Celebration: “A Century of Transforming Lives”.

Most of these lay Presidents followed “strategic plans” along the way based on marketing language: the necessity of following “industry standards”, finding ways to produce new “revenue streams”, and treating the students entrusted to our care as “customers”. This corporate mentality and language has taken over higher education today, as evidenced by a plethora of books and articles in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. According to Marvin Lazerson in “The Making of Corporate U”, higher education became one of “America’s most successful industries”, and faculty, once the heart of the institution, lost a central role in decision-making as the “ethos of the market” has become more powerful (Lazerson, 2010).

ODU’s current President, shortly after arriving on campus, was featured in an article (appropriately or ironically) in the local edition of *Business First*: “Ohio Dominican’s Peter Cimboric: Changing Fast” (Ghose, 2011). Dr. Cimboric brought with him many years of experience as Provost and Vice-President of Academic Affairs at several Catholic universities, and a restoration of faculty hope for positive change after years of “a lot of stress”. He stated that “there’s insidious impacts when that (turnover) occurs repeatedly over time...I intend to be here a long time” (Ghose, 2011).

CHANGE, in its myriad forms, has been the dominant theme at ODU since the end of the era when a Dominican Sister had been at the helm (continuously from 1911 – 2001) of the college. In and of itself, change can be a good thing. John Henry Cardinal Newman, well known for his insights on the

world of Catholic higher education – *The Idea of a University* – is also often quoted on the subject of change: “In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often” (Newman, 1845). Alas, university life does not exist in that higher world, so in addition to opportunities, change involves great risks, and in its wake comes loss as well as gain. This is surely true in the case of Ohio Dominican, especially since 2001.

A popular aphorism of the “wise historian” is that “in remembrance lies the secret of redemption”; a review of the changes in Catholic higher education writ large, and in the particular case of Ohio Dominican, then, might offer a path toward some recovery of what has been lost and a restored dedication to vigilance in protecting the university’s essential mission in the face of the challenges ahead. Throughout all of the changes of the last century, however, one constant has endured: the Dominican motto, based on the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, remains the core of the mission statement: ***Contemplare et contemplare aliis trader/ To contemplate truth and to share with others the fruits of this contemplation.***

Much of the ongoing discussion about American Catholic higher education –its history, character and the continued emphasis on maintaining “mission and identity” – has centered on the University of Notre Dame, a national symbol and flagship institution at the center of much of the debate

about the future. One of the leading voices in that debate for the past twenty years, Rev. Wilson D. Miscamble, C.S.C., a Professor of History at Notre Dame, recently had a collection of his essays and lectures on the topic published: *For Notre Dame: Battling for the Heart and Soul of a Catholic University* (Miscamble, 2013).

Fr. Miscamble's advice on saving the university's soul is applicable to other Catholic institutions as well. His voice – along with those of many other authors on the “crisis” in Catholic education – should serve as a clarion call to those seeking to preserve the rich heritage built by the founders of Catholic colleges and universities in the U.S –often in the face of great adversity and hardship. For the collective legacy is too valuable – irrespective of the founding order (i.e. Dominican, Franciscan, or Holy Cross) – to be squandered or surrendered under pressure from the current model of “business ethics” and “corporate values”. Rather, faith and the foundation of the teachings of the Catholic Church should serve as our strength.

Milestones in the timeline discussion about the nature and role of Catholic universities in the world include the Land O' Lakes statement of 1967 and Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Constitution, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae (From the Heart of the Church)* of 1990. The first is often perceived as a declaration of “autonomy” on the part of universities in the U.S. from the Church, leading to the erosion of their Catholic identity. John Paul II called for a return to and acknowledgement of the teaching authority/Magisterium of the Church on the

part of Catholic universities, and an affirmation that the only coherent foundation of any university is the integration of faith and reason. Rather than trying to be like many secular universities, choosing “prestige over truth”, the Catholic university must keep in mind that it has a counter-cultural role to play in society (Miscamble, 2013 and Rice, 2009). Particularly relevant issues, raised by Miscamble and others, which are applicable to smaller colleges and universities like Ohio Dominican, include composition of the faculty/faculty hiring, the curriculum, and the importance of challenging the pervasive corporate ethos which threatens to take over the very spirit of the university.

Fr. Miscamble began to sound the alarm about issues at Notre Dame, and Catholic higher education in general, in the 1990s. His first contribution to the debate came in the form of the “Miscamble Memo”, some specific proposals on “Constructing a Great Catholic University” (Miscamble, 2013). Written in response to the formation of a committee dedicated to the quest of building Notre Dame to be that “great Catholic University”, he noted that “the difficult issues emerge when one confronts how it is to be done” (Miscamble, 2013). Paramount to his perspective was the importance of faculty hiring, lest the faculties “be dominated by those who have no interest in, or allegiance to, the Catholic mission of the institutions, and who, in fact, might be deeply hostile to it”(Miscamble, 2013). Peter Steinfels, in a commencement address at Fordham, had spoken of “a dividing line...between those institutions determined to face those questions [regarding secularization] and those who

prefer to avoid them, proceeding with a calculated ambiguity or by simple default.” Fr. Miscamble was going on the record that:

Notre Dame must hold itself to a higher standard...than contemporary Georgetown...the university must be prepared to be a Catholic university at its heart, in the center of university life, and not just at the periphery...will we merely settle for a Catholic “gloss” on or around Notre Dame... a “public school in a Catholic neighborhood?” If this model prevails, the basilica, the chapels in each dorm, the lady on the dome and in the grotto... might remain on campus but the central academic project would not be guided by Catholic principles or by the call of Christ (Miscamble, 2013).

In a follow-up piece, a contribution to Father Theodore M, Hesburgh, C.S.C.’s collection of articles, *The Challenge and Promise of a Catholic University*, Fr. Miscamble noted that Notre Dame had some distinct advantages in meeting the challenge, including “the resources of the rich, if somewhat neglected Catholic intellectual tradition...and that emphasis on subjects appropriate to a Catholic university means no tempering of academic excellence but instead an opportunity to achieve real intellectual distinction (Hesburgh, 1994).

Focusing on the issue of “mission statements”, and the fact that some

Catholic institutions' had grown "tepid", indicating that "the vision is fading" (Miscamble, 2013). Fr. Miscamble expressed concern that Notre Dame "would maintain at most a calculated ambiguity toward its Catholic identity." He continued to insist that faculty hiring was the crucial issue, for "when a faculty is passive, the mission is likely to be anemic" (Miscamble, 2013). Arguing that implementation would mean devising strategies to "replace the neo-scholastic synthesis" since its collapse in the 1960s, he lamented the fact that "no overarching theory has emerged to replace it as a source of intellectual coherence... (for) Catholic universities have manifested rather poorly the unity and integration of knowledge claimed in their self-definition (Miscamble, 36-37). Preserving a faculty capable of a sustained commitment to forging a new theoretical rationale for the existence of Catholic universities- as a distinctive element in American higher education- would be essential to the future. Fr. Miscamble cautioned that the task ahead would be difficult, and would require courage:

Yet the Lord's ringing counsel to "be not afraid" and the recognition that fear and lack of vision are truly the principle obstacles in this venture should call committed men and women forward. Let us be about the work (Miscamble, 2013).

Taking up the work on another topic –the erosion of Catholic values as a result of applying corporate standards to higher education – would be Fr. Miscamble's

next great cause in his battle for the heart and soul of Notre Dame. Noting that the corporate mentality and language was a plague on all university “houses”, he was especially saddened that the walls of the Notre Dame “family” had been breached, “in such a way that notions of community are overwhelmed by the dictates of a mere commercial enterprise” (Miscamble, 2013). His purpose was to demonstrate that “Catholic institutions like Notre Dame” should be “mission driven” rather than “market driven” – underscoring, as always, the distinctive nature and special responsibility of Catholic universities in the U.S. (Miscamble, 2013). Recognizing the necessity of some economic changes- “one must recruit students, after all”-Fr. Miscamble nevertheless states “but in institutions dedicated to the search for truth, irony intrudes in the development of public relations strategies modeled on the corporate sector” and the proliferation of corporate language in the “academic lingua franca” continues apace” (Miscamble, 2013). Perhaps the most disturbing trend, to traditional academics, is that “the business emphasis on campuses has implications for what is taught there:

In a world where consumer demand guides the curriculum, the humanities are on the defensive. Computing and information technology, along with biotechnology, are all the rage. When the norms of...our practical and profit-driven culture prevail, it is likely that certain disciplines will be dispatched to the intellectual burial

ground(Miscamble, 2013).

Noting that “dangers loom along with opportunities”, he recommends that Catholic institutions, following *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, “must resist the temptation to pursue a path that might lead them to become mere training centers for those who staff the existing economic system:

The clarity of purpose of Catholic universities consecrated to the “cause of truth” and to “serving both the dignity of man and the good of the church” provides a real counterweight to the lure of money...Catholic institutions faithful to their mission will foster a vision of life and a moral compass within their students such that more than mere material success is used as a measure for the “good life” (Miscamble, 2013).

Governing boards and administrators must even accept “that bigger does not always mean better”, focusing on the higher things and following the social justice teachings of the Church, especially when providing “a living wage for their lowest paid employees”:

In short, a Catholic university should be a place where a serious critique of the consumerism and corporate capitalism that so dominates our age is consistently aired. A Catholic university overwhelmed by the commercial/corporate model will be incapable of such an endeavor” (Miscamble, 2013).

There are certainly other noteworthy voices in the discussion about Catholic higher education – and the promise and perils ahead. Many of those who express dismay over the current state of affairs nevertheless, in true Catholic spirit, preserve a sense of hope, for “hope springs eternal. For example, in addition to his pointed criticism in *The Dying of the Light*, Fr. Burtchaell moves beyond raging and asks what lessons can be learned from other religious sponsored colleges which lost their identities and presided over the “decomposition of the Christian endeavor”, learning, too late, that “so much that is onward is not upward”. In telling the stories of those “lost sheep”, he offers a wake-up call to current shepherds, reminding them that “the inertial forces” in those institutions was in their “faculties”, and suggests that in those cases “if the faith of the Christian sponsors was really “permeating” these colleges, it was more like mildew than grace” (Burtchaell, 1998). Finally, Fr. Burtchaell recommended a return to “authentic traditions”, and advises “authentic reform...the rediscovery of wholesome elements in a church’s past which has been lost, and taking them as cues for renewal.”(Burtchaell, 1998).

Fr. Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C., offered similar advice, suggesting that what was most needed “at this juncture of our history...are the qualities of the pioneer: vision, courage, confidence, and a great hope, inspired by faith and ever revived by love and education (Hesburgh, 1994) Among other contributors to Hesburgh’s collection of essays were two senior members of

Notre Dame's History Department. Philip Gleason, the Dean of American Catholic History, offered a keen disciplinary insight in "What Made Catholic Identity a Problem", reaching back into time for guidance and inspiration:

...the reservoir of good will is fed...by the realization that what is at stake is the continuity of a tradition venerable in age, rich in humane associations and honorable in its achievements, which it is our obligation to hand on in the form best suited to future needs (Hesburgh, 1994).

Rev. Marvin R. O'Connell, in "A Catholic University, Whatever That May Mean" opined that the "Land O' Lakes" statement started colleges "down the slippery slope", and, as was said of the English Bishops at another time of great crisis, the Reformation, "the fortress is betrayed by those who should have defended it" (Hesburgh, 1994).

In the introduction to Charles Rice's *What Happened to Notre Dame?*, Professor of Philosophy Alfred J. Freddoso employed very strident language, mourning over the fact that in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the faculty was "dominated by people ignorant of the intellectual ramifications of the Catholic faith...and a succession of high-level administrators lacking in a vision of Catholic higher education and intent on diffusing throughout the university a pragmatic mentality at once both bureaucratic and corporate (Rice, 2009). .Singing in the same choir as Fr. Miscamble, both professors refused to

“join the cheer-leading squad”, choosing to focus their energies against “the mentality of a frustratingly bureaucratic and soul-less corporation” which had infused their beloved Notre Dame – now “reduced to incoherence” (Rice, 2009). The tone of this discussion was evocative of the Gospel question, “for what doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?” – a question that could be asked of many other Catholic universities who sacrificed so much in the rush to get ahead –and gain “prestige” - in the competitive world of American higher education in the 21st century.

The crisis mentality afflicting Catholic universities has endured, from the time it was raised by historian David O’Brien in his 1994 book, *From the Heart of the American Church: Catholic Higher Education and American Culture*¹ to the present day- and the challenges regarding mission and identity show no signs of abating any time soon. How to strike the correct balance – to be both Catholic and American – remains unresolved. In the book’s foreword, Rembert Weakland, OSB, offered this advice: “We are eager to bring to bear on the challenges of our day the wisdom of our heritage”. And O’Brien suggested

...clinging to the twin poles of faith and reason, we search for a middle ground...once occupied with such grace and dignity by John Henry Newman...it is a ground hard to locate today...(O’Brien, 1994).

A dozen years later, Melania Morey and John J.Piderit, S.J.’s much studied

book, *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis* underscored many of the same points, adding that the “dramatic changes” in recent years were “driven largely by the virtual disappearance of nuns, brothers and priests from Catholic university campuses...as a vital presence” They feared that the loss of religious members of the founding congregations could “prove fatal for institutional Catholic character” (Morey & Pideret, 2006). And in recognizing the need for “heroic leaders” on Catholic university campuses, the authors provide an appropriate transition for the case study of St. Mary of the Springs/Ohio Dominican College/University.

The history of Ohio Dominican University was first told in Sr. Camilla Mullay, O.P.’s essay in *Cradles of Conscience: Ohio’s Independent Colleges and Universities*. (Oliver, Hodges and O’Donell, 2003). Sr. Camilla had served as Mother General of the Congregation of St. Mary of the Springs early in her career, and as Professor of History at the College/University before she retired in order to devote herself full-time to writing her Congregation’s official history. This essay, “Ohio Dominican University: Its Mission and Identity”, was her last publication, as she died before completing her manuscript, *A Place of Springs: A History of the Dominican Sisters of St. Mary of the Springs, 1830.-1970*. The book was subsequently brought to fruition when Sr. Ruth Caspar, O.P., retired Professor of Philosophy, stepped in as editor and completed the task of editing

and writing.

The *Cradles of Conscience* book, according to its editors, focused on the theme of “founding ideals”:

the mission of conscience peculiar to their identity and their circumstances was present at the beginning and still remains...

the essays concerning Lourdes, Notre Dame of Ohio, Ohio Dominican and Ursuline tell us about the consistent leadership that facilitated the adaptations their colleges made to the world around them...

these schools have often pragmatically made their way through the thickets of knowledge gauging the academic market and deciding what they could do to attract supporters and students while at the same time remaining true to, or at least in touch with, their sense of why they exist. (Hodges, O'Donnell and Oliver, 2003).

Sadly for Ohio Dominican, some of those claims would be sorely tested during the administration (2001 -2007) of the first lay president of the college, Jack P. Calareso. Dr. Calareso had grandiose ambitions , built upon “a strategic plan to become one of the country’s preeminent small Catholic Universities” (the college became a university in 2002). Although he attained many of the goals he and the Board outlined in his strategic plan, it was not without controversy, both on campus and in the larger community. True, there were significant accomplishments/gains, but those have to be balanced

against what was lost, and the turmoil that followed in his wake. The best insights into this “time of transition” for Ohio Dominican can be found by focusing on the early vision, sacrifices, and accomplishments of the pioneering founding Sisters of St. Mary of the Springs – a truly inspirational story in the annals of American Catholic higher education- and a comparison of the administrations of Sr. Mary Andrew Matesich, O.P. (1978-2001) and Dr. Calareso (2001-2007). It serves as an object lesson in the question posed by Morey and Piderit in their book on *A Culture in Crisis* –what happens to Catholic institutions in the face of declining vocations and the waning presence of sisters on campus, both in terms of retirements and the deaths of the “movers and shakers” who contributed so much to the college over the years? (Morey and Pideret, 2006).

Sr. Camilla’s essay on Ohio Dominican focuses on the thread of continuity woven throughout the tapestry of its institutional history, as well as the process of transformation over the years. Originally chartered in 1911 as the “Ladies Literary Institute of St. Mary of the Springs”, the college , “formally opened as a four year Catholic liberal arts college for women in 1924, with ten students and five faculty members...including two Dominican Sisters and one priest” (Mullay, 2003). Like many women’s colleges, it grew out of the roots originally planted as a secondary school, St. Mary’s Academy.

Sr. Stephanie Mohun, Mother General, embarked on a construction

program, floating a bond issue in 1929 with the congregation's property as collateral – just before the stock market crash and the beginning of the Great Depression. The congregation's "shared vision, from which sprang a mission rooted in faith and hope and carried out with charity and sacrifice in the face of hardship", enabled them to survive this crisis, and steadily, the college grew and prospered (Mullay, 2003). During its heyday in the 1940s and following, the College of St. Mary of the Springs garnered national attention due to its "Erskine Hall Lecture Series", featuring speakers such as Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen, *New York Times* writer Anne O'Hare McCormick, an alumna, and Ralph Bunche, UN Secretary General. (Mullay, 2003).

During these early years, "scholastic philosophy was the chosen means of correlating the courses and integrating the professional courses with the liberal arts....The spiritual atmosphere, combined with the scholastic, was unmistakable. The college served as a rich source of vocations for the Dominican Sisters as well, numbering 140 students who entered formation by the end of the 1950s. The Dominican charism infused the entire atmosphere of the college, from the *Veritas* motto to faculty endeavors to "inculcate such a love of Truth that the three ends of the Dominican Order – to Praise, to Bless, and to Preach, will be realized in the lives of its students (Mullay, 2003).

The winds of change swept across many college campuses in the U.S. during the 1960s, and St. Mary of the Springs was not immune to many of them. The presidency of Sr. Suzanne Urhane, commencing in 1964, witnessed

significant changes; according to Sr. Camilla, it is a “complicated story of strong centripetal forces impacting the college within a relatively short time” (Mullay, 2003).. Enrollment topped 1,000 students with a ninety member faculty, most of whom were lay. The college became legally separated from the congregation, and the name was changed from “St. Mary of the Springs” to “Ohio Dominican College”.

Another significant change was the decision to go co-ed, “spurred by the Bishop of Columbus who wanted Catholic men of the Diocese to have access to a Catholic college (he said he would bring in the Jesuits to establish a men’s college if the sisters refused). The health of Ohio Dominican wavered during this “coming of age” period: enrollment increased with the infusion of male students, but, according to the North Central accreditation body, finances remained a problem: “grave, but not yet critical”. On a more positive note, the NCA report recognized “a high esprit de corps and strong institutional loyalty among the faculty” and “the strong commitment to social justice that belonged to ODC’s heritage”. These numbers and facts serve as an indication that the Sisters had lived lives of struggle since founding the college, but their faith and hard work enabled them not only to endure, but to prevail.

By 1978, the next visit of the NCA recognized “a remarkably favorable change” which had taken place at the college:

“The college meets fully its commitment to do what it says it is doing”...the strong sense of academic quality...led the team to

conclude that it can continue to be a strong College in the future... one of the many strengths was “college wide understanding and agreement on the goals of the institution” (Mullay, 2003).

The future looked bright for Ohio Dominican, with Sister Mary Andrew Matesich, O.P., academic vice-president and dean, able to bring not only “ a vision for the future but an excellent grasp of what was needed to move the college toward it” (Mullay, 2003).

Sr. Mary Andrew’s tenure as academic dean would prepare her well for her own presidency (1978-2001) – an era of significant achievement and greater changes. Initiatives she helped set in motion, building on the legacy of the sister presidents who came before her, blossomed, and her own personal story would shine a spotlight on Ohio Dominican College, bringing it some very favorable attention in the national educational spotlight.

In the 1970s, as a result of winning “two substantial grants”, the college developed a new mission statement and designed a new liberal arts curriculum which would endure into the 21st century. The faculty had earlier voted for a new 4-4 credit/course load system – which effectively ended the college’s Thomistic core curriculum; the Humanities Program was designed to replace this synthesis. The author of the initial grant and subsequent director of the Humanities Program for many years was Dr. Ronald W. Carstens, Assistant Professor of Political Science. The title- “A Pilot Program in Integrated Liberal Studies and Critical Skills to Introduce a Diverse Student Body to Humanities

Education” was fully commensurate with the college’s reputation for reaching out to a diverse student population and its “First Generation Campaign”, growing out of its commitment to serve the local population and offer the benefits of a humanities based college generation to those students who otherwise would have lacked such opportunities.

The first grant for \$50,000 was awarded in 1978 when Sr. Suzanne Uhrhane was President; the second grant for \$197,000 was for the project “Integrated Humanities at ODC” in 1981, after Sr. Mary Andrew Matesich became President; and was hailed in an article in the local Diocesan newspaper. The endowment from that fund continued to support liberal arts education at ODU, most recently in the form of the Dominican Professorate Program. Dr. Carstens served in this capacity during the 2012-2013 academic year, demonstrating his life- long commitment to modeling the value of the humanities and upholding the standard of a liberally educated person.

Carstens also served as the editor of the well- respected national Journal of the Association for General and Liberal Studies, *Perspectives*, for many years—quite an honor for Ohio Dominican. In the 40th anniversary issue (Vol. 30, #2, Fall, 2000) Carstens reminded the readers that a long list of very distinguished scholars had been published in the journal, including Sidney Hook, Theodore Roszak, Victor Wolsford, Bruce Kimball and Ernest Boyer – names instantly recognizable to the liberally educated and well-read scholar/ professor. His commentary “From the Editor’s Desk” serves as a model of reflection on the

predominant themes “that constitute the discourse of liberal education for the last thirty years:

...First, those who care about liberal education seem to agree that life is more than a job, that we need to be educated for a higher purpose...Second, these articles support the disturbing proposition that “higher education” is and ought to be dangerous, for it prepares students to be uneasy with the world as it is...yet...in these last forty years, the university has declined in importance vis a vis the greater society that supports or decries it....Third, even as this decline has occurred, most of us believe passionately that ideas ought to matter... and the more the imagination is ignored, the dumber we get... a Fourth theme is that the failure of imagination has had serious social consequences...the Fifth element...(speaks) to the issue of power... (including) demands for understanding pluralism and diversity...and the Sixth theme: the call for education to be moral...has proved problematic as well as insightful...there is a real disagreement in the academy about what values ought to have priority in our academic discourse....the debate about just this myth has served as the engine of the Association’s meetings and publications. And perhaps this is the best we can have (Carstens, 2000) .Sadly, Dr. Carstens’ reflections were indicative of a major change looming on

the horizon at Ohio Dominican, for the college's much celebrated Humanities program did not survive for very long after Dr. Calareso arrived on the scene. After much heated discussion on the part of the faculty, and a vote of the minimum number required for it to pass, it was replaced by a new "Core Curriculum" in 2006. This change remains one of the most controversial of those during the Calareso regime, and many old-time faculty members still grieve over the loss.

Sr. Mary Andrew's service as President of Ohio Dominican College – destined to be the last time a member of the founding congregation would occupy the office – was characterized by a genuine coherence, grounded in Dominican values and appreciated by many on campus and recognized nationally as a model program. In 1999, the John Templeton Foundation recognized her achievements and singular contribution to higher education in the U.S. with a profile in its publication: *Colleges That Encourage Character Development*. Noting that she became President in 1978 at a time "when few women were college Presidents", she had become a "national expert on public issues affecting education...called upon for speeches, testimonies and to consult with government agencies". She doubled the enrollment of the college in her first 10 years, and her fund-raising campaign brought in millions – so, she was judged successful by the standards of her time. Most telling was the observation on her personal traits which had served the college so well:

"Sister Mary Andrew knows how to overcome obstacles"... defying

“the predicted downfall of small colleges without national reputations and large endowments”...and “her personal battle with cancer in the early 1990s...revealed her zeal and purpose.”²

Clearly, she inspired pride and admiration, both on her campus and beyond, and carved out a unique identity for her beloved college. There was nothing elitist about her, or her mission, and she earned a national reputation for all the right reasons, in keeping with the professed ideals of her vocation as a sister and the teachings of the Church she served so well.

Ohio Dominican’s commitment to educating “first generation college students” infused the orientation programs for new faculty members, and the faculty was heartened by participation in such a noble cause, despite the many practical challenges. Most noteworthy was the outreach to the community; the “village 219” programs that served the 43219 zip code/ surrounding neighborhood were recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice as an “urban mentoring demonstration site” and by the “Points of Light Foundation”. The “Village to Child” program brought at-risk children from the neighborhood to campus for tutoring and to take advantage of her pioneering program in the latest advances in computer and learning technologies, “The Invitation to Tomorrow”. Ohio Dominican was well ahead of the curve/on the cutting edge of computer technology, even when compared to many leading national universities, dedicated to “preparing students for life and work in the new millennium”. In a “collaborative learning environment, removing the barriers of

time and space”, Ohio Dominican was dedicated to providing its students an education grounded in a “rich sense of responsibility to go out into the world and do good.” Sister Mary Andrew Matesich practiced what she preached, and expected her faculty, staff and students to follow this example and the teachings of the Gospel.³

Sr. Matesich’s cancer returned in the late nineties, and she turned this setback into another opportunity to serve. Trained as a scientist –she earned a degree in chemistry at UC Berkeley at a time when women were few and far between in the sciences, and she stood out even more, “especially conspicuous” in the traditional habit of a Catholic sister – she decided to participate in a series of clinical trials for breast cancer patients at the Ohio State University. She saw this as an opportunity to help others, and was intrigued by the science; her valiant efforts inspire stories in the *New York Times* and a segment on the PBS program, “Religion and Ethics Newsweekly”, when she was interviewed by Betty Rollin. Cognizant of the risks and side effects of the trials, she persisted through a great deal of suffering and pain, and “she kept working”, telling reporter Denise Grady of the *New York Times* that “the board was spooked. They thought I’d be dead in four months. I had to get Dr. Shapiro to reassure them that I could work for another year.” When the complications and effects of her treatment necessitated her stepping down from the job she loved, Ohio Dominican entered into a national search for a new President. As she took up residence in the Sisters’ Assisted Living facility adjacent to the campus, she faced her death with dignity and strength: “We are

challenged as Christians by Jesus Christ to lay down our lives for one another.’ She died on June 15, 2005, mourned by the community she had served so well. And the college would never be the same thereafter.

The first lay, and male, president of Ohio Dominican Dr. Jack Calareso, who arrived with much fanfare – and an agenda for big changes – in the summer of 2001 (after serving for just one year as the President of Briar Cliff College/University in Iowa). The cover of Ohio Dominican’s SCENE Magazine had a photo of Dr. Calareso and his wife greeting students on it with the headline: A New Era: Ohio Dominican Welcomes First Couple.(*Ohio Dominican College Scene*, Summer 2001 (vol.24, #2). A feature article: “Change as Life: Long-Time ODC Professor Reflects on This Time of Transition”, written by Dr. Ronald W. Carstens, focused on Charles Ryder, “the Everyman of Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited*”. Dr. Carstens expressed mixed feelings about the significant changes ahead, for Ryder would suffer from disillusionment, but he also found comfort and confidence in the fact that the college was “standing as the direct heir of 700 years of Dominican tradition, standing itself within a tradition of faith and reason, which augured well for the future:

The curriculum of this college is one of the most coherent and sound in the country, and it will remain so because of the faculty...
St. Dominic knew that if he trusted his faith and got his brethren to study, all would be well.(Carstens, 20010>

Dr. Carstens also reminded his audience that “the sisters were sent to pray for and educate those who had been left out of the economic and social system of the 20th century”, expressing hope that the commitment to social justice on campus would remain strong:

Catholics believe that the Kingdom is here but not yet. This paradox guides all that we do. We know that the lamp will be lit in the hearts of all “sincere seekers of truth” (Carstens, 2007).

Reading this heartfelt essay years later, after Dr. Calareso’s master plan, “The Path to Preeminence” elicited mixed reviews and results at Ohio Dominican, serves as a reminder that too much change too quickly doesn’t always serve the ideal of the common good. Although the plan did some good things for the college, which may have been necessary in dealing with the economic realities of the 21st century, the ill winds unleashed by some of those changes led to a period of instability acknowledged by current President Dr. Peter Cimboric when he arrived at Ohio Dominican three years after Dr. Calareso left to become the President of Anna Maria College in Paxton, Massachusetts in 2007.

At that time, an article in the Worcester *Telegram and Review*, “Anna Maria’s “change agent”” offered an objective perspective on Calareso’s tenure at Ohio Dominican:

Jack P. Calareso swelled enrollment, attracted male students to a college once run by nuns, expanded course offerings, added new

buildings and increased the endowment (Melody, 2007).

From a more subjective perspective, it appears that Dr. Calareso's practice was to follow a standard blueprint, with plans to "sell" it again, according to local custom, at his next assignment. Among the most significant – some very controversial- changes introduced at Ohio Dominican were:

- changing/upgrading to the status of University, with the addition of graduate programs in the areas of LEAD/adult education MBA; Education; Theology; and a Masters in Liberal Studies

- new buildings: dormitories (in an effort to move in the direction of a residential campus rather than a commuter school), and the James Griffin Student Center, named in honor of a retired Bishop of the Columbus Diocese who served as the first interim President following Dr. Calareso's departure

- the death/destruction of Ohio Dominican's renowned Humanities Program, to be replaced by a new "Core Curriculum" in 2006-2007; this program has been on a roller-coaster ride ever since, still seeking coherence, stability, and more faculty "ownership"

- a football program (and the addition/upgrading of other athletic programs including a move to a more prestigious sports conference) – while this program has cost the university a great deal in terms of resources, necessary for a start-up of its kind, it succeeded in increasing enrollment and enhancing campus life; the over-all academic quality of many of these students-athletes in recent years has been very good

- The creation of The Charles School, a charter school serving as a high

school feeder for the university. This decision led to the greatest controversy on campus, especially on the part of many members of the faculty –who read about it in the Saturday morning edition of Columbus *DISPATCH*. The local press wrote about the controversy, and many faculty members believe it hastened Dr. Calareso’s decision to move on. One member of the faculty wrote a letter to the local diocesan paper, *The Catholic Time*, objecting to the initiative on many grounds, most importantly, the process, which was not in keeping with our Dominican heritage and values - especially dialogue – and closed the letter with a relevant reflection by Timothy Radcliffe, OP – former Master General of the Dominican Order (and a return visitor/lecturer on Ohio Dominican’s campus on several occasions) – reminding all concerned that universities should be “places of resistance to the imperium of the single vision”.

Other less public actions of the Calareso years – which changed/damaged the atmosphere of Ohio Dominican – included a series of firings/dismissals of some senior staff members, escorted off campus, corporate style and not to be spoken of again; short-term VPAA appointments, a trend which has continued; moving the last community of Dominican Sisters off campus, from their modest quarters in Sansbury Hall Dormitory (this move had the greatest symbolic effect, running contrary to the practice on many campuses, i.e. Notre Dame, of preserving the presence of members of the founding congregation in living quarters on campus); the end of the award-winning “Village to Child”

program, ostensibly because of federal regulations and the expense of bussing the children to campus after school. These decisions had a negative ripple effect across campus, with many members of the community questioning the allocation of limited resources, threatening the foundation and atmosphere that had prevailed during the years when a Dominican Sister had been at the helm of the college, guiding it safely into the future with integrity.

In the interest of fairness and balance, one initiative during the Calareso administration should be recognized as a resounding success, the creation of the Center for Dominican Studies in 2003. Built upon a generous foundation gift of \$500,000 from the Sisters of St. Mary of the Springs, the Dominican Center is dedicated to continuing the rich spiritual and intellectual legacy of the founding order, and maintaining the mission of the university— filling an especially important vacuum since Sr. Mary Andrew's retirement and the end of the Humanities program.

Under the leadership/direction of Sr. Catherine Colby O.P., who was also named Vice-President for Mission and Identity in 2008, the center has been a great blessing and a source of grace on the campus – and in the larger Columbus community. In the announcement of the creation of the Dominican Center, a list of its priorities included sponsoring lectures and symposia on Dominican values and history, in addition to the longstanding tradition of the annual lectures on the Feast Days of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Catherine

Sienna; partnerships with other Dominican Centers in the U.S., curricular development built upon the Dominican pillars of study, prayer, communion and ministry; sponsored participation of ODU faculty and staff at the biennial Dominican Colloquium, and research into the presence and influence of the Dominican spirit in higher education.

Before her untimely death in December of 2011, Sr. Catherine had spearheaded the university's Centennial Celebration, "A Century of Transforming Lives", and published a special edition of the Center's scholarly *Dominican Studies Journal*. It is a testament to her relentless work and dedication to spreading the gospel, and featured articles by internationally renowned Dominican scholars, as well as some of ODU's own faculty members. The first essay, based upon the Inaugural Lecture by Donald J. Georgen, OP, Ph.D., was titled "Challenges for Colleges and Universities in the New Millennium". It provides great insight into the Dominican spirit and hopeful assurances that it can endure, with proper nurturance and protection – whatever the challenges encountered on the road ahead.

This spirit of hopefulness - underscored in a passage from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans:

...we boast in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven

character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts the Holy Spirit...

will best serve as a concluding commentary on the recent history and changes which have occurred at Ohio Dominican in this 21st century, and how we might look to the future, guided and inspired by the spirit of those Dominican Sisters who went before us and never gave up in the face of adversity.

This theme is echoed in the history of many Catholic universities; for example, the voice of Notre Dame's thoughtfully critically but ever loyal Fr. Wilson D. Miscamble, C.S.C., reminds the faithful to "be not afraid" in recalling the story of Fr. Sorin's perseverance after the big fire of 1879 which "left the work of the previous three decades in ashes" and led him to tell his followers that he would never give up – confident in God's "providential care" (Miscamble, 2013).

Surely, despite some sentiments of disquietude since Sr. Mary Andrew's retirement, with no Dominican Sister coming forth to take her place, Ohio Dominican has weathered the many changes relatively well, compared to other Catholic colleges and universities which lost or gave up on their mission and identity. In addition to the heartening news that a former Professor of Philosophy from the founding congregation, Sr. Joan Franks, OP, has returned from her ministry in Africa to become the new Vice-President for Mission and Identity at Ohio Dominican this academic year, the spirit of other sisters called home to their heavenly reward remains with us. Catherine Colby OP, for example, was praised by John L. Allen in his national "All Things Catholic"

column(having just returned home after a lecture at Ohio Dominican) in the *National Catholic Reporter* at the time of her sudden death as “dreaming great dreams about what the Center for Dominican studies could continue to become...she was a classic embodiment of the best qualities of women’s religious life in America: tough, smart, willing to work as long as hard as it took to get something done, with a keen sense of humor and a bottomless reservoir of faith” (Allen, 2011).The singular achievements of Mary Andrew Matesich OP remain evident as well –she who took responsibility for the education of “wise people” in 1979, and became a wiser person herself in the process. Exemplary role models, these Dominican woman, educated on and to serve the small college campus in Columbus, Ohio; they responded nobly to the call of American Catholic Historian Monsignor John Tracy Ellis in his classic 1955 essay, “American Catholics and the Intellectual Life” when he noted that “the challenge of Catholic intellectual life remains unresolved...but we must persist in trying to meet that challenge creatively – and with **wisdom**”(Ellis, 1955) .Their legacy and memory inspires us still.

¹ O'Brien, David, *From the Heart of the American Church: Catholic Higher Education and American Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994).

³ It should be noted that the majority of students who attend Ohio Dominican, then and now, are not Catholics. There is an ecumenical spirit on campus, welcoming all interested in joining the learning community – and exposing them to the rich heritage of Catholicism in the process.