

Proposal for AJCU August 1-4, 2013 Conference

On Fire at the Frontiers: The Commitment to Justice in Jesuit Higher Education

DATE: May 18, 2012

TITLE: **Teaching, Learning and Practicing the Catholic Social Tradition: A Research Initiative**

CATEGORY: Formation and Learning

FORMAT: Alternative Session

PRESENTERS: Roger Bergman, Creighton; Jay Brandenberger, Christina Mondì, Margaret Pfeil, Bill Purcell, Todd Whitmore, University of Notre Dame; Kathleen Maas Weigert, Loyola University Chicago; Nicholas Santilli, John Carroll University

One of the challenges of Catholic higher education in the twenty-first century is to provide the kind of education that speaks to the core of the institution's identity and mission. "Born from the heart of the church" (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*), as Pope John Paul II described the origins of a Catholic university, our institutions have special obligations. One of them is found in para. 34 of that document: "The Christian spirit of service to others for the promotion of social justice is of particular importance for each Catholic university, to be shared by its teachers and developed in its students."

How is that done? How do we teach, and how do our students learn, the principles and practice of the Catholic social tradition? Several of us have been involved in teaching about this tradition and providing our students with ways of engaging it in their curricular and co-curricular choices. Several of us have devoted research to this area as well. We come together now, as a collaborative that bridges several Catholic Universities sponsored by two different congregations, i.e., the Congregation of the Holy Cross (CSC) and the Society of Jesus (SJ), to raise the questions anew in the context of reading the signs of the times in this century.

Drawing on our various fields (e.g., peace studies, philosophy, psychology, sociology, theology), we have begun a multiple institution, long-term initiative to examine identify what conditions and experiences enhance understanding of and commitment to CST principles, and how institutions can foster the practice of the Catholic social tradition.. We will build on existing longitudinal research efforts, both qualitative and quantitative. At the 2013 conference we will outline our progress to date and welcome collaborators in three ways. First, we want to learn what others are doing in this arena. Second, we want to share the details of our proposed research project as it is evolving. And third, we want to elicit interest in a larger collaborative that will dedicate time and resources to advancing research on the teaching and learning of the Catholic social tradition in our Holy Cross and Jesuit settings, as we all struggle to help make the world a more just, humane and sustainable one.