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Introduction to *Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education: Facing the Future*

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Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education

Facing the Future

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Introduction

Our theme for this year's annual meeting, "Reaffirming Our Roots While Facing the Future," seemed to resonate among our members. Discussions both during and after the sessions confirmed our impression that our Catholic colleges and universities are exploring the ways in which they can best contribute to the education of the women and men of the future society and church. Clearly, there is a wide spectrum among us of ways in which we see our mission and the means which we judge opportune for achieving it. Perhaps nowhere more than in higher education are the waves created by Vatican II most evident.

We have chosen, therefore, to collect and publish several papers in which presidents seek to explain to their constituencies the ways in which the institution continues to carry out its special mission. In addition, a thoughtful and critical address by the dean of American church historians, Msgr. John Tracy Ellis, at the centenary celebration of St. Ambrose College, reminds us all of some of the "roots" to be reaffirmed. The paper delivered by Bro. Luke Salm at the luncheon meeting of ACCU on February 2, 1983, adds an exceptionally valuable insight into the role of religion in Catholic higher education today. An ecumenical perspective on the role of church-related colleges in the formation of human—and humane—values is contributed by Robert Conn, assistant general secretary for campus ministry of the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

If it is true that several of these authors remind us of our tradition and the values associated with it, the talk given by William Rewak, S.J., to his faculty at Santa Clara University, demonstrates the "new" choices and challenges facing us. Ethical decisions are now being called for that impinge on the whole role of the university vis a vis society. Does the university have a responsibility to be countercultural in some sense? There are undoubtedly other positions regarding defense contracts contrary to Father Rewak's that can be justified. We would welcome a paper representing another point of view.

The same diversity can be found in the positions taken concerning draft registration and the link that was forged last summer between it and disbursement of federal student aid. ACCU associate director David Johnson reflects on this issue in our final article. Again, other viewpoints are possible and would be welcome.

Several other magazines and pamphlets from the campuses have carried presidential addresses on the subject of the "identity and mission" of the college or university. What is communicated by all of them is a confident, although cautious, expectation of a significant future for Catholic higher education in this country—an education deeply rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition and forthrightly facing the future.

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