At Boston College, June 23-24: National Summit on Sustaining America's Catholic Schools

CHESTNUT HILL, MA (June, 2006) -- How to stem the tide of closing Catholic schools is the focus of a national summit of educators being held at Boston College June 23-24. "Endangered Species: Urban and Rural Catholic Schools," co-sponsored by the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA), Boston College and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), will be highlighted by an address by Atlanta Archbishop Wilton Gregory, former president of the USCCB. The summit is part of SPICE (Selected Programs for Improving Catholic Education), an ongoing joint venture between the BC Lynch School of Education and NCEA to honor successful K-12 Catholic school programs and promote them as national models for other educators.

The conference will recognize programs that will educate superintendents, principals, teachers and other participants on the challenge of sustaining struggling urban schools and begin to chart a course to bring new stability and viability to Catholic schools that serve the poor, according to organizers. Among the topics to be discussed are: reorganization, including combining schools or having one governance body oversee several schools in a region; advocacy initiatives, such as voucher programs and tax-credits, and sustained fundraising and philanthropy.

"Endangered Species" will also feature an address by Worcester Bishop Robert McManus, chair of the USCCB's Committee on Education as well as panel discussions on "Research on Urban and Rural Schools" and "The Role of Private Philanthropy in Saving Catholic Schools."

"By bringing together the leaders of Catholic education in the United States, Boston College continues its commitment to the renewal of Catholic elementary and secondary schools, especially those that provide educational opportunities for children from underserved populations," said BC Lynch School of Education Dean Rev. Joseph O'Keefe, SJ.

"The 2006 SPICE program is ...a collaborative effort [in] response to the recent bishops letter, Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary & Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium, which calls on all of us to ensure that Catholic schools will continue, grow and prosper as a vital ministry of the Catholic Church," added Daniel Curtin, executive director of NCEA's Chief Administrators of Catholic Education.

The conference schedule can be found at www.bc.edu/bc_org/rvp/pubaf/06/spice06.pdf

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