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## **Catholic Ed. Leadership Initiative Is Launched Lynch School, IREPM to collaborate on graduate-level programs**

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Boston College is expanding its efforts to address critical issues facing the Catholic Church through the launch of three new graduate-level programs in Catholic educational leadership, jointly administered by the University's Lynch School of Education and Institute of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry (IREPM).

The new programs integrate studies in school or university administration at the Lynch School with coursework in Catholic theology, spirituality, scripture and pastoral ministry at IREPM.

The initiative is designed to train graduates to provide the effective, mission-based leadership needed to secure the future of Catholic educational institutions in light of the decreasing number of priests and nuns, the traditional administrators of such programs.

"We're responding where we can to the most urgent needs of the Church," said Prof. Thomas Groome (Theology), director of IREPM, which last year announced a partnership with the Carroll School of Management to offer the nation's first graduate degree program in church management, to address the growing demand for business-trained leaders in the Church.



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"As numbers of the clergy and other religious orders decline, we have to ask ourselves: Who is going to carry on a genuinely Catholic educational enterprise? Who is going to sustain the Catholic identity of our schools?," said Groome.

The mission of the new programs, he said, is to turn out a new generation of Catholic school principals, administrators, presidents and other leaders, who most likely will be lay, but must be equally trained in educational administrative leadership and Catholic spirituality.

"If Catholic schools are to remain truly Catholic, their leaders will have to be grounded in both," said Groome, who is author of a number of books on Catholic life and teaching, including *What Makes Us Catholic: Eight Gifts for Life* and *Educating for Life: A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent*.

"The key to this program is that it can provide that breadth of training needed by the future leaders of Catholic education," he said.

In preparing graduates to assume leadership roles in Catholic education from the kindergarten through higher education levels, the Boston College

program is believed to be the only one in the nation to offer integrated spiritual and administrative instruction across the educational spectrum.

In addition, said Lynch School Dean Joseph O'Keefe, SJ, "no other school in the country has a program to prepare higher education administrators that focuses on religiously affiliated colleges and universities. That really is a niche for us."

A particular advantage of the program is that it can be crafted to suit a student's individual needs and background. A priest who might be seeking enhanced skills in school administration could follow a curriculum more concentrated in the Lynch School, while a lay administrator could focus more on coursework based at IREPM.

At the K-12 level, the M.Ed. in Religious Education with a Catholic School Leadership Concentration is designed for those who have experience in educational administration, but little formal background in Catholic theology or ministry, while the M.Ed. in Educational Administration and Catholic School Leadership is more suited to those with less experience in administration, offering the coursework and supervised clinical experiences required for licensure in Massachusetts.

At the post-secondary level, the program offers an M.A. in Higher Education with a concentration in Catholic University Leadership.

The combined resources of the Lynch School, the top-ranked school of education at a Catholic university, its new Center for Catholic Education, and IREPM, world-renowned for its formation of lay and religious ministers to serve the changing needs of the Church and its people, make BC's program uniquely qualified to shape the next generation of Catholic education leaders, said Fr. O'Keefe.

The initiative also is strongly rooted in the University's commitment to social justice, he said, noting that Catholic schools have a long history of service to disadvantaged students.

A noted authority on Catholic schools, especially those that serve low-income children in urban centers, Fr. O'Keefe is currently conducting a national study of inner-city Catholic elementary schools, with a focus on student demographics, staffing and structure.

The exigencies facing the nation's parochial schools, many of which are struggling or have already closed due to declining enrollment, diminished financial support or other difficulties, tend to be particularly acute in the inner-cities or other low-income areas, he said.

"I would like to see this program produce an infusion of new leadership, a cadre of educators who will provide fresh ideas for our nation's Catholic schools, especially those that serve under-represented populations," Fr. O'Keefe said, "as well as vibrant administrators for our Catholic colleges and universities."