A SUMMARY REPORT OF THE 2013
BOSTON COLLEGE
SUMMIT ON VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD

The Encouragers
College Experience and Priesthood

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BOSTON COLLEGE

SUMMIT ON VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD

COMPILED BY

Tim Muldoon, Ph.D.
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Introduction

In January 2012, Boston College and the Jesuit Conference USA commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) to assess the impact of Catholic higher education on the vocational discernment of men entering the seminary and religious life in the United States, seeking to determine variables related to what led them to the seminary and/or eventual ordination. In June 2013, Boston College convened the Summit on Vocations to the Priesthood to share and discuss the results of their study, The Influence of College Experiences on Vocational Discernment to Priesthood and Religious Life, with members of the Church hierarchy, diocesan and religious order vocation directors, college and university leaders, and representatives from lay organizations whose missions are to support vocations. The goal of the Summit was to communicate new insights into what promotes and what hinders vocations to priesthood, and to facilitate dialogue toward developing a national strategy for fostering such vocations. The collective creativity and imagination brought to bear on the topic of vocations offers a unique opportunity for the Church.

In his opening remarks, Cardinal Seán O’Malley, archbishop of Boston, pointed to the significance of this gathering.

College students having regular interaction with clergy and religious, particularly as teachers, and having the opportunity to discuss matters concerning faith and religion in the classroom—clergy and religious being present to the young people, engaging them from the perspective of their own vocations, and our lives lived in service of the Church—makes a great difference.

—CARDINAL SEÁN O’MALLEY
What follows in these pages is a summary of the Summit proceedings, including:

✦ an overview of past CARA research on vocations to the priesthood, commissioned by the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
✦ a summary of the new report commissioned by Boston College and the Jesuit Conference USA
✦ comments and reflections from experts at the Summit

Our primary audience for this report includes bishops and religious superiors, diocesan and religious order vocation directors, college presidents, mission officers, leaders in student affairs, and directors of campus ministry. As will become clear, a strategy for encouraging vocations to the priesthood must be a collaborative endeavor among these leaders in the Church today.

Keynote Address

by William P. Leahy, S.J., President, Boston College

A STRATEGY FOR ENCOURAGING VOCATIONS TO PRIESTHOOD

I am convinced there are many young men who are ready to answer the call to priesthood, especially in the United States with its over two hundred Catholic colleges and universities. In the first book of Samuel, the Lord says, “I will choose a faithful priest who shall do what I have in heart and mind” (2:35). The text is a reminder that a priestly vocation comes from God, and so our question is a modest one: How do we assist God? To put it differently, how do we in colleges and universities encourage the inclinations and desires of young men who seriously consider answering God’s call to priesthood?

The challenge we have is multifold, but it really starts with us who are clergy and vowed religious. There is nothing as powerful as happy, fulfilled priests and religious. That is contagious. That attracts. If we are not happy, fulfilled, ready to recruit others, they will not follow us. We know that as a group, priests are happy in their ministry, as the book Same Call, Different Men shows.² We, as a group, need to live in hope and with faith.

We also need to have perspective. It is incumbent upon us to guard against pessimism. The history of the Church is long and varied. Consider the ravaging effects of the bubonic plague, which in the fourteenth century killed as much as 30 to 50 percent of the population of Europe. It left the Church in dire straits, because many of the people who tended to those who were ill were priests and religious. Consider too the effects of the French Revolution, which saw the exile or execution of thousands of priests. The Church has faced many difficult days, which remind us that our own situation is not so dire.

There are practical steps that we can take in fostering vocations. It is critical that every diocese, archdiocese, or religious community have a strategic plan for fostering and promoting vocations. I use that word “strategic” because that word is about
It is critical that every diocese, archdiocese, or religious community have a strategic plan for fostering and promoting vocations.

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we do many other things, I believe we would have
more and more vocations.

The vocations are there. God has not left us or-
phans. We’re not alone. In Jeremiah 29, we hear
the Lord saying,

For I know well the plans I have in mind for
you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare,
not for woe! plans to give you a future full of
hope. When you call me, when you go to pray
to me, I will listen to you. When you look
for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek
me with all your heart, you will find me with
you, says the LORD.... (Jer. 29:11-14)

What God says to the Israelites in this text is also
what God says to us about vocations. When we’re
serious about our strategy, when we give the ex-
ample, when we encourage and invite, we will reap
abundant vocations.

The Emerging Picture

The Summit began with a picture of those men who seriously consider vocations to the priesthood, drawn from work that CARA researchers Mark Gray and Mary Gautier have done for the Committee on Consecrated Life and Vocations of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Following are summaries of their presentations.

**How and When Do Young Men Show Interest in a Priestly Vocation?**

Gray began by underscoring the difficulty that the Catholic community faces in regard to encouraging vocations to priesthood: “There are too few Catholics who realize they play an important role in ensuring that priests can be there now and in the future.” Among never-married U.S. Catholics, for example, very few have themselves ever encouraged someone to become a priest (5 percent), brother (3 percent), or sister (3 percent). Many respondents to their survey (31 percent) indicated that it was an individual decision. And the great majority of never-married Catholics were never themselves encouraged to consider life as a priest, brother, or sister. Gray observed, likely to have the following profile:

- Active in a parish youth group.
- Attendance at a Catholic high school.
- Was encouraged to consider vocation by one or more people.
- Personally knows clergy and religious.
- And attended World Youth Day or National Catholic Youth Conference.

While not conclusive, these data are indicators that communities of faith must make particular efforts to reach out to young people to propose ideas for their vocational consideration, rather than assume that membership in a rich Catholic subculture—a feature of mid-twentieth-century Catholicism, but less common today—will suffice. Gray put it starkly: “We need about 200 more ordinations per year to return to stability.” We need, to take the point a step further, thousands of people willing to identify young men who will seriously consider priesthood. Who are these young men? According to the studies, they are, Gray noted, likely to have the following profile:

- Active in a parish youth group. Attendance at a Catholic high school. Was encouraged to consider vocation by one or more people personally knows clergy and religious. And attended World Youth Day or National Catholic Youth Conference.

Gray noted that one of the keys to creating more vocations is not just encouraging young men to consider becoming a priest. His “favorite finding of the whole study” is that what is essential is encouraging the encouragers. Of those who responded to the study, only 6 percent reported no encouragement from others, meaning that most men who enter the seminary have at some point been encouraged to do so by a family member, teacher, pastor, or someone else. The study makes this point clearly:

Respondents who have one person encouraging them are nearly twice as likely to consider a vocation as those who are not encouraged. Each additional person encouraging these respondents increases the likelihood of consideration. The effect is additive. Respondents who had three persons encourage them would be expected to be more than five times more likely to consider a vocation than someone who was not encouraged by anyone.
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Gray described the encouragement of three people as “the sweet spot.” He described the phenomenon of encouragement this way:

You can imagine: One person encourages you, and you think, “Where did that come from?” Two people encourage you, and you think, “That’s weird!” Three people encourage you, and you begin to say, “I’ve got to think about this....” And that appears to be exactly what happens. Now, it just seems to be that, in our culture today, there are not three or more people around many young Catholic men encouraging them to do this.

Much of the conversation during the Summit focused on this finding, and many people present observed that it emphasized the importance of one-to-one contact with those considering priesthood. Use of technology and social media may help cast a wide net, but more important is cultivating an understanding that all Catholics have the potential of either encouraging or discouraging a vocation.

Gray pointed to sources of potential growth in numbers of religious and ordained vocations within the Church. He observed that high school is the period when many young men report thinking seriously about priesthood, and that college seems to be an “amplifier” to these earlier experiences. More importantly, he pointed to some good news: among never-married Catholic men, 1.4 million consider a vocation to priesthood or religious life at least a little or more, and 350,000 have “very seriously” considered it.

At present, the ethnic profile of priests does not match the ethnic profile of all Catholics in the United States. Hispanics are particularly underrepresented, especially in view of the fact that they will in the near future comprise a near-majority of U.S. Catholics. Only 14 percent of students in Catholic schools today are Hispanic, meaning that the majority of Hispanics miss that potential source of vocational encouragement. Consider further that at present there is a gross disproportion in the ratio of Hispanic Catholics to Hispanic priests: only about 15 percent of priests ordained in 2014 are Hispanic. There are about 3,000 priests of Hispanic descent to some 34 million Hispanic Catholics in the United States (averaging one priest for every 11,333 people). The good news about young men who seriously consider priesthood, Gray reported, is that there is no variation by race and identity, meaning that over time we will likely see priests coming from every racial and ethnic group in the Church. In his opening remarks, Cardinal O’Malley stated it well:

The days of our clergy and religious coming particularly from Irish or Italian heritage are long behind us. The universal Church is very much in our midst here and now, and we must provide opportunities for these young people to consider a vocation.

350,000 never-married men have “very seriously” considered being a priest or religious brother.

A challenge facing vocation directors is to find ways to reach Hispanic youth in settings other than Catholic schools: parish youth groups, Newman Centers, and others. The same challenge exists in reaching out to young men from areas with significant Catholic migration to the United States: Mexico, Vietnam, the Philippines, Poland, Colombia, and Nigeria, among others.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MEN WHO ANSWER THE CALL TO PRIESTHOOD

Mary Gautier turned to address the characteristics of both the young men entering priestly life and those who are encouraging them to do so. Most significant, she said, is that the average age of entrance is older than it was a generation ago, evidenced by the fact that many college seminaries have closed over the past several decades. The average age for
Forty-four percent of ordinands attended a Catholic college.

diocesan ordinands in 2013 was 35.5, and for religious order ordinands it was 37. But these ordinands report that they first considered a vocation to the priesthood at 17.

Many men enter the seminary after college, and as a result, many enter with educational debt. Over the past 10 years, the men’s and women’s religious institutes in the United States have had more than 15,000 serious inquirers (averaging 38 per institute), and a third of those had educational debt that averaged some $30,000. On average, four applicants per institute were accepted with educational debt.11

The men who entered priestly formation were just as likely as the broader Catholic population to have attended Catholic elementary or high schools, but they are significantly more likely to have attended a Catholic college. Forty-four percent of ordinands attended a Catholic college, in contrast to only about 7 percent of the overall U.S. Catholic population. Who encouraged them to become priests? Two-thirds say it was a priest, and almost as many reported that friends were encouragers. On the other hand, half reported that friends or classmates discouraged them from becoming priests, and four in 10 reported that a family member discouraged them.

Gautier drew from her work in Same Call, Different Men to describe the priests who are encouragers. These men are predominantly of an earlier generation: averaging 63 years old, white, non-Hispanic. Over a fifth are already retired or semi-retired. Most are parish priests, meaning they were very possibly the first to invite a young man to consider priesthood, at least outside his family.

More than a quarter of priests have never encouraged someone to consider priesthood. But younger priests—those ordained since 1992—are much more likely to say they’ve encouraged someone to consider priesthood within the last six months. Gautier concluded her remarks by emphasizing the point that priestly vocation requires encouragement:

A vocation is formed through multiple contacts with different role models in parishes, the pastor, in schools, in the family, and in the community. This vocation, this nascent vocation, this idea about becoming a priest, is forged and solidified then through college experiences.

In the next section, we’ll examine more specifically what those college experiences look like.

5. Gray and Gautier, p. 4.
6. A related datum is the point raised by Msgr. John McLaughlin in a later panel at the Summit. Citing his work with the Military Archdiocese, he reported that even with a sophisticated website, the vast majority of serious inquiries came through recommendations by chaplains who had individual contact with inquirers.
7. Gray and Gautier also report on the “discouragers” in their study (Gray and Gautier, p. 70).
8. Compare to the 2011 CARA Catholic poll: “CARA’s surveys have found that Catholics attending a Catholic high school or Catholic college are much more likely to say they have ever considered a religious vocation. This effect is particularly strong for Catholic college attendance. About four in 10 men (40 percent) and women (41 percent) who have attended a Catholic college report having considered a vocation at some point. Online at http://cara.georgetown.edu/CCP.pdf.
12. It is worth observing in parenthesis that there are now examples of men and women “crowdfunding” their entrance into a religious institute, using social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. They ask friends to contribute to a fund to pay down their educational debt in order that a religious institute may welcome them without an accompanying debt burden. See http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/fundraising-bootcamp-helps-those-called-to-religious-life.
The CARA study: The Influence of College Experiences on Vocational Discernment to Priesthood and Religious Life

Between April 2012 and June 2012, CARA distributed a survey to a total of 5,246 men known and identified by church leaders to be in formation or recently ordained. A total of 1,575 men (or 30 percent of those who had been sent surveys) completed the questionnaire, making it one of the largest recent surveys of men in formation and the newly ordained.¹³

In his presentation at the Summit, Tom Gaunt, S.J., executive director of CARA, pointed to the significance of undertaking this study:

The participation in Catholic elementary and high schools was about the same for all adult Catholics as it was for men entering the seminary or recently ordained. But what we saw, clearly, was this huge difference for the number of men who had gone to Catholic colleges and universities.

Mark Gray had suggested earlier that college experiences “amplify” experiences in elementary and high school; and in light of his observation that the presence of three encouragers in a young man’s life seems to represent a vocational “tipping point,” Gaunt’s observation about the difference college makes is not surprising. Simply put, if a Catholic college provides more experiences of encouragement of vocation to priesthood, it is likely that such encouragement will bear fruit.

Gaunt invited lead researcher James Cavendish to explain the results of the study. Cavendish began by pointing to the population who responded to the initial survey, thanking the hundreds of contacts—bishops, superiors, and vocation directors of dioceses and religious orders—who made it possible. The sample is representative of all priests in the United States, though there is a slightly higher representation of religious order priests:

- Two out of five respondents (or 40 percent) are in some stage of formation for diocesan priesthood.
- 28 percent are in formation for religious order priesthood (i.e., they are affiliated with a religious institute).
23 percent are recently ordained diocesan priests, and 9 percent are recently ordained religious order priests.

He went on to describe the content of the 125-question survey:

They were asked about the nature of their contact with priests and religious men and women while they were in college. They were asked about their college coursework, the nature and frequency of their involvement in campus ministry, their involvement in different vocation discernment programs, whether they participated in Catholic parishes off campus. They were asked about the frequency of their prayer, their Mass attendance, their devotional practices, their experience with retreats, spiritual direction, service activities, and also a lot about their peer friendships, and just the overall religious atmosphere of the college they attended. So they were asked a wide variety of things about their college experience, and then asked to reflect on what influence they thought those had in their discernment to become priests.

What follows below, for the sake of brevity, is a list of the types of questions asked in the survey, with a summary of responses. Readers who wish to see the entire study can access it online at bc.edu/priesthoodsummit.

**WHERE ARE RESPONDENTS FROM, AND WHAT STAGES OF FORMATION ARE REPRESENTED?**

- Most (83 percent) were born in the United States, and nearly all (89 percent) were baptized as infants. Almost all come from families in which both parents were Catholic.
- The 1,575 men represent 46 of the 72 seminaries in the United States, 84 of the 237 religious institutes, and 109 of the 176 dioceses.
- 490 (or 31 percent) report being ordained within the last five years. The other 1,073 men (or 69 percent) are in formation either in the seminary or in one of the other stages of formation for a religious institute, such as novitiate.

**WHAT ARE THEIR AGES?**

On average, the men in religious formation are older than those in diocesan formation.

### Age Distribution of Respondents

*Percentage in each category:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Distribution of Respondents</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>DIOCESAN IN FORMATION</th>
<th>DIOCESAN ORDAINED</th>
<th>RELIGIOUS IN FORMATION</th>
<th>RELIGIOUS ORDAINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNDER AGE 19</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE 20–24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE 25–29</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE 30–34</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE 35–39</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE 40–44</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE 45–49</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE 50–54</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE 55–59</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE 60–64</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE 65–69</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVERAGE AGE</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHERE DID THEY GO TO COLLEGE? HOW DID THEY CHOOSE A COLLEGE?

- 53 percent had some experience in a Catholic college. Of these, most matriculated for most or all of their college experience.
- 10 percent attended a seminary college.
- 4 percent had some exposure to a Catholic college but spent most time at a different kind of college.
- Those who attended a non-Catholic college are the most likely to cite the location of the college (74 percent) and the affordability of the college (73 percent) as their reasons for college choice.

- Those who attended a Catholic non-seminary college are the most likely to cite the college’s religious affiliation (79 percent) and academic reputation (69 percent) as their reasons for college choice.

- Reasons for their choice of college varied. For many, location, academic reputation, and cost were important. The most striking difference in the table above is that most of those who attended a Catholic college did so precisely because of its religious affiliation.

### Reasons for Choosing College or University

*Percentage in each category reporting “some” or “very much” importance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of College Attended the Longest:</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>Non-Catholic</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>College Seminary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location of College</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Reputation of College</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability of College</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of College</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Encouragement</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Affiliation of College</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Encouragement</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT ACTIVITIES DID THEY ENGAGE IN AT COLLEGE?
- A majority of respondents were active in various clubs and student organizations on campus.

WHAT WAS THEIR EXPOSURE TO PRIESTS, BROTHERS, AND SISTERS?
- Those who attended Catholic colleges were much more likely to encounter priests, brothers, and sisters. Of particular note is the fact that 88 percent of them had a priest as a professor, in contrast to only 18 percent of those at non-Catholic colleges.
- Six in 10 of those who attended non-Catholic colleges encountered priests, brothers, or sisters in campus ministry, compared with nine in 10 of those who attended Catholic colleges.
- 15 percent of non-Catholic college attendees encountered them as administrators, compared with 93 percent of Catholic college attendees.

### Participated “Periodically” or “Regularly” in These Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage in each category:</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>Non-Catholic</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLUBS/STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATHLETICS OR INTRAMURAL SPORTS</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAMPUS MINISTRY</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRAMA/MUSIC</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUDENT GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARISH YOUNG ADULT GROUP</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESIDENTIAL LIFE (RESIDENT ASSISTANT, RESIDENTIAL MINISTER, ETC.)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACADEMIC FRATERNITY</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FELLOWSHIP OF CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY STUDENTS (FOCUS)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GREEK FRATERNITY</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.O.T.C.</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Exposure to Priests, Sisters, and Brothers during College as...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage in each category:</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>Non-Catholic</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TYPE OF COLLEGE ATTENDED THE LONGEST:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAMPUS MINISTERS</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADMINISTRATORS OR STAFF</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROFESSORS</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Findings presented in this and the following tables under the category heading “All” refer to findings based on all respondents except those who attended a seminary college.
WHAT PRACTICES NOURISHED THEIR FAITH WHILE AT COLLEGE?

- Those who attended Catholic colleges had much more access to the Mass on campus.
- Half of non-Catholic college attendees and just about all Catholic college attendees had a Catholic chapel on campus.
- Similarly, 49 percent of non-Catholic college attendees, compared with 91 percent of Catholic college attendees, had Mass available on campus daily.
- Many at non-Catholic campuses had to go off campus to attend Mass: 79 percent reported attending Mass at least once a week, even though only half of them had a Catholic chapel on campus.
- Access to spiritual direction—one of the key indicators of a future vocation—differed significantly between the two groups. Only 30 percent of non-Catholic college attendees had a regular spiritual director, compared with 62 percent of Catholic college attendees. Of the spiritual directors:
  - 50 percent were religious order priests;
  - 42 percent were diocesan priests;
  - the remainder were laypeople (3 percent), religious brothers (3 percent), religious sisters (2 percent), or deacons (1 percent).

- Two-thirds of all respondents participated in a religious retreat.
- 59 percent of non-Catholic college attendees, compared with 80 percent of Catholic college attendees.
- 70 percent of all respondents participated in service projects.
- 63 percent of non-Catholic college attendees, compared with 78 percent of Catholic college attendees.
- Participants engaged in a number of devotional practices during college. (See table below.)

"If we rank those reasons that respondents reported as having very much influence on their vocational discernment, what we see is that spiritual direction is at the top of the list, followed by their Mass attendance."

--James Cavendish

---

**Participation in Devotional and Spiritual Practices during College**

Percentage in each category:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANY DEVOTIONAL OR SPIRITUAL PRACTICES</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>NON-CATHOLIC</th>
<th>CATHOLIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosary</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eucharistic Adoration</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Individual Prayer</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liturgy of the Hours</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Study</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Hour</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectio Divina</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Group Prayer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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THE CARA STUDY 19
Note that Catholic college attendees participated more in all these types of devotions except Bible study, perhaps because those on non-Catholic campuses were more likely to avail themselves of devotions common among Protestants.

**DID THEIR COLLEGES PROMOTE A RESPECT FOR FAITH?**

There is a significant difference between Catholic and non-Catholic colleges in attendees’ perception of the respect accorded to faith, religion, and prayer.

Note in particular the academic dimension of the question: discussions of faith in class or with professors on non-Catholic campuses are rare. The campus ministry setting on non-Catholic campuses offers some opportunity for the discussion of faith.

The difference between Catholic and non-Catholic campuses is evident too in the tables below.

Taken together, these two tables show that Catholic campuses are much more likely to cultivate an environment in which discussions of faith are welcome.

“Of those devotional activities that respondents noted were especially influential, three out of four of the practices—that is, Holy Hour, Eucharistic adoration, and the Mass—were centered on the Eucharist, which speaks of the importance that respondents assigned to the Eucharist in their vocational discernment.”

—James Cavendish

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**“Frequently” Discussed Faith, Religion, and Prayer...**

*Percentage in each category:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Non-Catholic</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With other students outside of class</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With campus ministry staff</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In class</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With professors outside of class</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Level of Interest Expressed in Faith, Religion, and Prayer by...**

*Percentage in each category responding “some” or “very much” interest:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Non-Catholic</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus ministry</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow students</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The college as a whole</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHO ENCOURAGED THEM TO CONSIDER PRIESTHOOD?

A key college experience in terms of fostering vocational discernment is exposure to priests, sisters, or brothers in the roles of professor and campus minister. Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of respondents overall state that a priest/sister/brother \textit{professor} had a “significant positive influence” on their vocational discernment, and over half (56 percent) report that a priest/sister/brother \textit{campus minister} had a “significant positive influence” on their vocational discernment. Moreover, substantially more of the respondents who attended a Catholic college report that a priest/sister/brother \textit{professor} had a “significant positive influence” on their vocational discernment than respondents who attended a non-Catholic college (72 percent to 46 percent, respectively). The same cannot be said with respect to having a priest/sister/brother as a \textit{campus minister}; however, when asked about this, responses from those who attended a Catholic college are not substantially different than from those who attended a non-Catholic college (57 percent to 55 percent, respectively).

\textbf{Exposure to priests, sisters, or brothers in the roles of professor and campus minister is important.}

Compared to those who attended a non-Catholic college, those who attended a Catholic college are: over three times more likely to report being encouraged in their vocational discernment by college staff (50 percent to 14 percent); almost three times more likely to be encouraged by a college professor (72 percent to 25 percent); twice as likely to be encouraged by a religious sister or brother; and substantially more likely to be encouraged by parents, siblings, friends, and campus ministers.

Those who attended a Catholic college are over twice as likely as those who attended a non-Catholic college to be so influenced by a college course. While 58 percent of those who attended a Catholic college report having been especially influenced by a college course, only 27 percent of those who attended a non-Catholic college report likewise. While the course names are widely varied, the most frequently mentioned academic departments were theology, philosophy, and religious studies. A significant number of respondents also identified classes in history, the social sciences, the life sciences, the humanities (including art, music, literature, classics, and language), and business.

Friends and roommates are also reported to be influential in vocational discernment. Those who attended a Catholic college are substantially more likely than those who attended a non-Catholic college to report being influenced and supported by their roommates and friends in their vocation discernment and choice. In contrast to those who attended non-Catholic colleges, those who attended Catholic colleges are 10 percent more likely to report that their roommates had “very much” influence on their discernment, over 15 percent more likely to report that their close friends at college had “very much” influence on their discernment, and almost 25 percent more likely to report that their college friends were “very” supportive of their vocational choice.

Summarizing the findings, Cavendish pointed to a basic logic in the phenomenon of encouragement:

\textit{The importance of peers in fostering and sustaining priestly and religious vocations should not be underestimated. Sociologists in general, and sociologists of religion in particular, have long recognized the importance of friendship networks in sustaining belief and practice.} Noted sociologist of religion Peter Berger (1967), for instance, spoke of the importance of peer friendship networks in terms of providing what he called “plausibility structures.” “Plausibility structures,” according to Berger, are those networks of like-minded others who, through our participation with them, help to sustain our belief and commitment to things which might in other settings seem implausible to believe. 14

\textit{Experts have long recognized the importance of friendship networks in sustaining belief and practice.}
What this means is that in the context of cultural forces that sometimes are not supportive of religious vocational discernment, it is important to foster “plausibility structures,” which in this context means a “culture of vocations” in small communities like parishes, schools, and colleges.

Cavendish concluded his talk with recommendations: make priests available for spiritual direction; offer Mass, Eucharistic adoration, and Holy Hours; assign priests to teaching roles. Those who oversee campus ministries on non-Catholic campuses can offer these opportunities, or point to off-campus parishes where they might also be available.
**DISCUSSION**

In the discussion that followed the presentation, Gaunt highlighted the fact that there are a number of non-Catholic campuses with vibrant campus ministries, such as Texas A&M, the University of Kansas at Lawrence, and George Washington University. Such places show conscious effort to create a Catholic environment, such that conversations about faith can emerge easily.

Turning to Catholic colleges and universities, Cavendish pointed out there are many different types, with differences in size, population, selectivity, and even relationship to the Magisterium. The current study does not specify such differences, suggesting avenues for further research. Gaunt commented that respondents from Jesuit institutions were more likely (among other differences) to be drawn to an intellectual apostolate within the context of a religious order. But looking further, he observed that no Catholic institutions stood out as generating a disproportionate number of graduates who later entered the seminary.

One of the Summit participants raised a question about non-campus-related ministries, such as the Fellowship of Catholic University Students and the Newman Connection. His question focused on the sharing of information between parishes and campus ministries, so that Catholic students might inhabit a culture of vocation early in their college experiences—those “plausibility structures” that Cavendish had cited in his presentation. Gaunt pointed out that other CARA research showed how the key factor in declining religiosity among Catholic teens has to do not necessarily with the influence of college life *per se*, but rather the fact that Mass attendance declines when a young person leaves home. In an unrelated study of Jesuit volunteers, CARA found that they were going to Mass less often when they finished the program, but that former volunteers five, 10, 15, and 20 years later were going to Mass almost twice as much as their peers. The phenomenon of declining religiosity, in other words, is a function of adolescence, not college attendance. Cavendish went on to point out that some public colleges refer students to the various campus ministries, and that it would be interesting to study further the characteristics of colleges that seem to foster interest in priesthood and religious life.

Another question related to the proportion of religious and diocesan priests. Gaunt observed that the number of future religious order priests is still in decline, but the number of men in diocesan seminaries is on the rise. He went on to observe that the Catholic population has shifted geographically, while very many Catholic colleges are in the old Catholic strongholds of the Northeast. Many young men attracted to vocations are in places where there are no Catholic colleges, suggesting perhaps the need for establishing campuses in areas of large Catholic populations currently unserved by Catholic colleges.

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13. The numbers represent a more than sufficient completion rate to make a correlation to the general population.

14. Cavendish et al., *The Influence of College Experiences on Vocational Discernment to Priesthood and Religious Life*, p. 49. Cf. Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967). Berger writes, “Beliefs become plausible if they are supported by the people around us. We are all social beings, we were created as social beings and much of what we think about the world depends on support by important people with whom we live.” See also “Rethinking Secularization: A Conversation with Peter Berger,” at http://www.albertmohler.com/2010/10/11/rethinking-secularization-a-conversation-


The State of Vocations Today: Views from the Top and from the Ground

The Summit involved two panels of those whose roles give them a particular ability to be encouragers of priestly vocations. The first panel was a view “from the top”—that is, of leaders who make decisions about how to deploy people and resources for the sake of cultivating vocations in the Church. The second was a view “from the ground” of those involved in the recruitment and formation of future priests.

**VIEWS FROM THE TOP**

The first panel was comprised of Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services of the United States; Francesco Cesareo, president of Assumption College; and Rev. Thomas O’Hara, C.S.C., provincial of the U.S. Province of Priests and Brothers of the Congregation of the Holy Cross. Rev. Richard Lennan of Boston College’s School of Theology and Ministry moderated the discussion.

In response to Lennan’s question about how discernment of a vocation to priesthood takes place, Broglio observed that fully 10 percent of priests in the United States served in the military at some point in their lives. The single most important factor, he said, was a personal invitation and encouragement from one of the chaplains. Cesareo echoed that observation, but went on to say that in addition to a personal invitation, there must be an institutional invitation, by which he meant structures and programs that invite young people into reflection and discussion. He observed that many young people do not have a strong sense of what the priesthood really is, and so it is important for members of a religious community to share the joy of their vocations.

O’Hara amplified these points, speaking both as a provincial and as a former college president. He shared observations from having spent 23 years in the residence halls at King’s College, suggesting that the critical factor is having relationships with the “whole student,” not only as a professor or campus minister. He shared the example of simply watching ESPN with a student in the residence hall, and starting a conversation that later turns to larger questions about what the student wants out of life.

All the panelists agreed that contact with priests is critical. In response to Lennan’s question about how students today perceive priests, O’Hara noted that what they really desire is authenticity: a good and holy person worthy of admiration. Later in the conversation, he observed that college life is a particularly apt situation in which formative conversations can take place. Over four (or more) years of a developmentally critical period in a young person’s life, a college offers opportunities for many types of conversations with faculty and staff.

The panelists noted challenges facing those who wish to cultivate vocations to the priesthood. Broglio, for example, noted the norm of “trophy culture,” the phenomenon of rewarding kids for simply showing up to play. There may be a general fear of commitment to any kind of vocation. O’Hara went on to observe that there are candidates who approach priesthood or religious life with serious psychological issues that demand professional evaluation. Lennan raised a third issue in a question about the effects of the sexual abuse crisis, to which O’Hara responded that among other things, it demands transparency in the formative process.

Lennan pointed to the work of Christopher Jamison, O.S.B., director of the National Office for
Vocation in the United Kingdom, who emphasizes that a total culture of vocation involves all people, not only those called to priesthood or religious life. O’Hara agreed that such a vision of vocation means understanding the reality of people’s lives—a theme he saw, for example, in Pope Francis’s homily at the Chrism Mass in 2013. Cesareo agreed, indicating that at Assumption College there is an effort to promote this “total culture,” in an effort known as the Sophia Initiative. A critical component of this total culture is spiritual direction. O’Hara noted that it takes specific training, and Cesareo echoed the point, indicating that college leaders needed to provide opportunity for campus ministers and others to undertake that training. Broglio observed that the Society of Jesus was in a privileged place to be of service in this regard, with their history of spiritual direction and the gift of Saint Ignatius’s Spiritual Exercises.

A last point that Lennan asked the panelists to consider was the question of student debt that emerged from the CARA studies. O’Hara suggested that student educational debt was different from personal debt, and that it was important for religious institutes and dioceses to find ways to help with student debt. He indicated that in his institute, there were donors ready to help in this regard.

Several people responded thoughtfully to the panel. One bishop asked rhetorically whether the Church challenges and inspires young people with a vision of what God calls them to do. Another bishop shared the story of the large numbers of seminarians his relatively small diocese has generated in recent years, because of coordinated efforts by the bishop, the vocation directors, and the other priests in the diocese to create a culture of talking and praying about vocations to the priesthood. Broglio echoed this point, indicating it was critical to pray for vocations today. O’Hara concluded on a practical note, saying that leadership was important, and that having a strategy was necessary.

**VIEWS FROM THE GROUND**

The second panel included three men who work directly with those in early stages of priestly formation. Rev. Jason Jalbert is the director of vocations in the Diocese of Manchester, and Rev. James Prehn, S.J., is the vocations director in the Chicago-Detroit Province of Jesuits. They were joined by Monsignor John McLaughlin, Jr., the director of spiritual direction at Saint John’s Seminary in Boston. Rev. James Gartland, S.J., of the Faber Jesuit Community at Boston College, moderated the discussion.

In response to Gartland’s question about how the CARA studies impacted the ways panelists thought about their work, Jalbert began by pointing to the difference in his perception of promoting priestly vocations today compared with his own ordination in 2003. Flush with enthusiasm, he imagined a large response to the energy and passion he brought to his work. Over time, as the reality became clearer, he shared a sense of what it was like to work with real people. But he noted how important was the support of other priests, including those in religious orders at colleges like Saint Anselm in his diocese. The example of their lives, he said, was still inspiring.

McLaughlin pointed to the importance of spiritual direction, noting that in his previous work in the Military Archdiocese, spiritual direction was critical in part because it helped young people grow beyond the limited views of God they had developed as youths, especially in circumstances where their catechesis was poor. He also underscored the importance of encouraging the encouragers, something he himself did with military chaplains. His hope was that more priests would understand the need to encourage young people to think about vocations.

Prehn was struck by the finding that college experiences amplify (or perhaps drown out) earlier experiences. As a former high school principal, he understood the institutional commitment to send good people into formative roles where they will have abundant contact with young people. He commented further on the need to encourage the encouragers, indicating the importance of friends generally and female friends specifically. The lack of female friends, he offered, may be a clue to the kind of person a candidate is. Lastly, he was struck by the questions that emerged from considering the characteristics of the millennial generation. Archbishop Broglio’s comment about “trophy culture” struck him as insightful, and he wondered further what that observation might mean for the Church in the United States.

Gartland picked up on the baseball analogy that Father William Leahy had used in his keynote address, asking whether there were “scouts” and spiritual directors meeting the needs of vocation directors. Jalbert noted the discrepancy between the demonstrated efficacy of encouragement, on the one hand, and the actual numbers of priests doing the encouraging, on the other. He went on to indicate that raising the need for encouragers and asking for specific prayers for vocations to the priesthood is important. Manchester has seen a rise in the number of seminarians, which Jalbert attributes in part to a larger number of people praying for voca-
This young man saw the wisdom of just praying for his vocation, and the Lord revealed to him that he has an inclination towards the priesthood.

tions. But he also noted the need for spiritual directors. McLaughlin agreed, but also pointed to the fact that military chaplains are very good about forwarding names to the “head scout,” the vocation director. Prehn added that it was useful to recruit high school teachers as encouragers, asking them to identify young men whom they or their children would go to if he were a priest. He shared how welcome a task it was to tell students that their teachers thought of them in this way.

Responding to Gartland’s question about prayer and the perhaps distracting effects of social media use, Jalbert reaffirmed the need for one-to-one contact. McLaughlin amplified this point, telling of his attempts to persuade young people to avoid constant digital distraction in order to hear the whispers of God—citing the story of Elijah at the cave (1 Kings 19: 11-13). Prehn’s response illustrated the earlier point about understanding priestly vocation against the backdrop of a total theology of vocation. He told of the example of one young man with whom he had been in contact a few years earlier, but from whom he had not heard in some time. The young man indicated that he stopped praying about priesthood per se and instead started praying about his vocation; and after a time, he described how priesthood kept emerging in his mind and heart. Prehn described him this way: “This young man saw the wisdom of just praying for his vocation, and the Lord revealed to him that he has an inclination towards the priesthood.” What helps, Prehn added, is hearing the real stories of seminarians who have undergone similar discernment experiences.

Gartland asked the panelists to return to the question of a strategic plan for vocations to the priesthood, and they agreed that doing liturgy well was a necessity. McLaughlin shared his experience at Boston University, where he introduced the Liturgy of the Hours, with prayer throughout the day. He invited a spiritual director to be a regular part of Catholic Center life, so students could get to know him. And over time, over a dozen men showed interest in thinking about priesthood. Jalbert agreed that making liturgy beautiful—citing the writings of Pope Benedict XVI—was important, but that in some places this means overcoming a kind of parochial lethargy. Prehn added that the only way to make liturgy a priority is having the right people. They must be made available to serve.

In the question-and-answer session that followed, several speakers pointed to specific ways that it’s possible to build a more positive culture of priestly vocations: using ordinations to name priests who influenced men to enter the seminary; using college graduations to identify men and women entering religious life or diocesan priesthood; sending letters to thank people who served as encouragers to men entering the seminary. One person pointed to the summer conferences run by Franciscan University of Steubenville for teens,21 while another pointed to the Vianney Vocations Program22 for its consulting work with vocation directors.

On the question of how to leverage social media for helping young men to consider vocations, there was ambivalence: the panelists described it as time-consuming with modest return. Jalbert indicated it might help with first contact, but McLaughlin emphasized it was still critical to get back to inquirers within 24 hours, especially since some are sensitive in a naïve way to whether or not there is a “sign from God.” Prehn pointed to the fact that it’s possible to drive traffic to a website and use Google Analytics just to keep the vocation question on readers’ minds. In the end, though, all agreed that social media is a tool but the important thing is to foster individual contact with both encouragers and those they would encourage.

17. See http://www.ukvocation.org/.
19. This discernment program for sophomores involves classes and co-curricular elements in a shared residence hall. See http://www.assumption.edu/academics/programs/sophia-initiative.
20. See above, page 8.
New Directions and Emerging Strategies

The concluding segment of the Summit was a review of the proceedings and a look forward at what the research and findings suggest for the future of priestly vocations in the Church. Rev. James Burns, I.V.D., then interim dean of the Woods College of Advancing Studies at Boston College, and Rev. Shawn McKnight, executive director of the Secretariat for Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, organized the strategies into four main areas: for bishops, for vocation directors, for university leaders, and for cooperation and further study.

For Bishops

The primary recommendation that emerged from the Summit was that every diocese have a strategy for promoting vocations to the priesthood: a pastoral plan for developing a culture of vocations on college campuses including key leaders, such as religious superiors, vocations directors, and college administrators (especially presidents). This plan might mean, for example, releasing talented priests, brothers, and sisters to teach courses, mindful that the influence of a priest/brother/sister professor was important for many of the young men surveyed in the Influence of College Experiences study. Since many of the men in the College Experiences study also reported the influence of campus ministry—on both Catholic and non-Catholic campuses—another recommendation is to give attention to developing a vibrant and welcoming campus ministry program, attending to the people and resources necessary for its implementation.

A second recommendation is to foster collaboration among vocation directors, campus ministers, parishes, and the wider church. Perhaps one way to facilitate this kind of collaboration is to develop a pool of qualified ecclesial ministers for one-to-one conversations with those expressing interest in any kind of vocational discernment, mindful of the thrust of so much post-Vatican II theology that emphasizes the universal call to holiness. Other ideas include creating vocation committees involving religious and laity; assigning diocesan priests to college campuses; and encouraging catechesis on all vocations in the Church, mindful of the young man that James Prehn had met whose priestly vocation emerged more clearly after prayer about where God was calling him. The study on college debt pointed to the need for bishops to consider what strategies they will implement in order that debt not be an obstacle to priestly vocation. One bishop in the audience described how his diocese took on a seminarian’s debt with the understanding that the young man would pay it off if he chose not to continue to ordination. This and other strategies may assuage the concerns of those who delay ordination due to student debt.

A final strategy for bishops is to preach vocations everywhere, and, following the lead of the Manchester Diocese as described by Fr. Jason Jalbert, develop specific requests to faithful Catholics to pray for future priests.

For Diocesan and Religious Order Vocation Directors

Burns and McKnight turned next to their recommendations for vocation directors in dioceses and religious orders, emphasizing that their cooperation was critical. Both groups have interests in communicating with campus ministers and others on college campuses who are in positions to help young men discern calls to the priesthood. A key recommenda-
tion, then, is that vocation directors foster ongoing relationships with campus ministers, beyond single vocation talks. Monsignor John McLaughlin’s experience at Boston University provides a model: inviting a vocation director to be an ongoing presence on campus, as a celebrant at Mass, a spiritual director, and a presence on retreats. Similarly, relationships with a priest at a local parish can be helpful, especially at non-Catholic colleges and universities.

Of particular interest is the encouragement of vocations within the Hispanic community. Burns and McKnight suggested the importance of evaluating current communication and outreach efforts in Hispanic communities, and recruiting people from within these communities to be part of diocesan and parish pastoral work. Large events such as World Youth Day and the National Catholic Youth Conference are opportunities to make connections to young people who may show evidence of vocations.

FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY LEADERS
College presidents, campus ministers, and leaders within offices of student life or mission can help to create a culture of vocations on their campuses. Campus liturgies, the use of the arts, and the development of cultural programming can enhance student perception of support for all forms of life within the Church, including priesthood. These leaders are in positions to invite and collaborate with local vocation directors, to develop programs which integrate the various dimensions of young adult formation, including: devotional and liturgical practices, service programs, leadership opportunities, opportunities for quiet discernment, and development of community. One specific suggestion was the creation of a forum for faculty, staff, and administrators to cultivate vocations. This forum can ensure that the campus itself might have a strategic plan for promoting all types of vocations, including vocations to the priesthood. Such a forum might consider intellectual programming to explore vocations. It might also help increase awareness of local diocesan and religious communities, ensure Eucharistic devotion opportunities (Mass, adoration, etc.), and make recommendations for mission-centered hiring.

On a broader level, many colleges and universities are in positions to offer their resources for the continuing formation of local priests. Meeting space, the expertise of faculty, and perhaps even money can be put to the service of the local diocese or sponsoring religious order. Some universities are also in positions to create and publicize programs to train spiritual directors from the local diocese, offer programs for the formation of lay leaders (especially in the Hispanic community), or reach out to non-Catholic campuses with few resources.

FOR COOPERATION AND FURTHER STUDY
Burns and McKnight pointed to a general theme that emerged from the Summit: namely, the need for cooperation among different members of the Church community to encourage vocations to the priesthood. What is needed in this networked age are better networks dedicated to promoting vocational discernment. Youth ministers at parishes, for example, are in positions to let campus ministers know of new students on their campus. Diocesan directors might reach out to campus ministers to develop shared visions and even materials to encourage vocations. Regular communication is important, and perhaps even leveraging social media. Over time, it will be possible to develop best practices that foster vocations.

Burns and McKnight concluded their presentation with suggestions for further study. One example is the need for a better understanding of campuses (Catholic, public and private) that seem to be successful at generating vocations to the priesthood. More national surveys of Catholics will also be helpful; thankfully, CARA has developed many over the years that offer further data to mine. A greater understanding of strategies to recruit English-speaking Hispanics is also needed.

23. See above, page 18.
24. See above, page 27.
25. Gray and Gautier write, “Shepherding more of these individuals on the path to seeking a vocation would likely require a combination of greater outreach from the Church, encouragement from others, assistance in obtaining educational prerequisites, and dealing with other issues such as student loan debt and citizenship status.” On the issue of debt, see the CARA report Is Educational Debt Affecting Vocations? at http://cara.georgetown.edu/publications/religiouslife.html.
“Pastoral ministry is an indispensable means by which Catholic students can, in fulfilment of their baptism, be prepared for active participation in the life of the Church; it can assist in developing and nurturing the value of marriage and family life, fostering vocations to the priesthood and religious life, stimulating the Christian commitment of the laity and imbuing every activity with the spirit of the Gospel.”

—APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION ON CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES EX CORDE ECCLESIAE (1990)
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The CARA study makes clear that clergy and religious meeting with young people in a variety of settings and activities allows them to be more open to the possibility of a vocation, and to consider taking the next step to enter formation.

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