CHESTNUT HILL, Mass., April 17, 2017 – Dr. Patricia Weitzel-O’Neill was unanimously chosen by the NCEA board as this year’s recipient of the C. Albert Koob Merit Award. This award is given to an individual or organization that has made a significant contribution to Catholic education at any level or in any educational setting, in one or more of these areas: teaching, administration, parish religious education, research, publication or educational leadership. Such service or contribution should be recognized as having current significance at the national level.

Dr. Weitzel-O’Neill is a strong supporter of Catholic Education and has demonstrated her commitment in multiple roles. Currently serving as the Executive Director of the Roche Center for Catholic Education at Boston College, she has worked on behalf of Catholic School change by focusing on research, professional development, and advocacy both locally and nationally. During her tenure, the Center launched the Two-Way Immersion Network for Catholic Schools (TWIN-CS), a national initiative that supports the implementation and assessment of dual-language immersion models transforming Catholic school classrooms from monolingual to fully bilingual. Concurrently, the Roche Center’s Emmaus Series, a formative 20-month development program which strengthens the spiritual leadership and entrepreneurial skills of school leaders, was initiated, and is now in its fifth year as a recognized national program.

Dr. Weitzel-O’Neill is a co-author with Dr. Hosffman Ospino of the report Catholic Schools in an Increasingly Hispanic Church (2016), based on the first National Survey of Catholic Schools Serving Hispanic families. Additionally, she co-edited the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (2102) (NSBECs) and with co-editor Dr. Lorraine Ozar, Loyola University Chicago, continues to research and compile new resources on the topic. Most recently, Dr. Weitzel-O’Neill with her colleague Dr. Ospino hosted the first ever National Summit on Catholic Schools and Hispanic Families, inviting 200 recognized thought leaders to engage in two days of focused conversations examining the critical challenges. As an advocate, she serves on multiple boards, including the Governing Board for the Journal of Catholic Education and is frequently invited to present at national and local conferences.

Prior to Boston College, Dr. Weitzel-O’Neill served as Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of Washington, and served Trinity Washington University as Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

As the Superintendent for Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Washington, she contributed to the creation, adoption and implementation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship program, the first federally funded voucher program for non-public schools. With her archdiocesan colleagues she managed the
development of the Consortium of Catholic Academies, Archdiocesan Catholic School Policies, and was instrumental in introducing standards-based curriculum, as well as programs to strengthen school leadership, technology integration and the implementation of the Child Protection policies.

“I am honored to be recognized for my contributions to the collaborative work of the Archdiocese of Washington and the Barbara and Patrick Roche Center for Catholic Education. I look forward to continuing our work at the Center by providing exceptional programming, research and advocacy on behalf of all Catholic schools,” Dr. Weitzel-O’Neill said.

Dr. Weitzel-O’Neill received the award April 17, 2017 at the NCEA President's Award's Dinner, hosted during the NCEA's 2017 Convention, in St. Louis, Missouri, where she presented and led workshops. The Roche Center, the largest private education association gathering in the country, features professional development sessions, liturgies and an exhibition of educational products and services.

The National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) is a professional membership organization that provides leadership, direction, and service to fulfill the evangelizing, catechizing, and teaching mission of the Church.

**About The Roche Center**
The Barbara and Patrick Roche Center for Catholic Education (The Roche Center) strengthens Catholic education through the promotion of research-based educational innovations and the generation of research to lead the transformation of Catholic schools to serve with a preferential option for the poor and marginalized. The Roche Center accomplishes this mission through a strong commitment to research, professional development, advocacy, and outreach.

Housed within the top-ranked Lynch School of Education at Boston College, the Roche Center brings together a collaborative community of Catholic school leaders, teachers, researchers, scholars, and innovators to sustain and improve K-12 Catholic education. Signature programs include: the Two-Way Immersion Network for Catholic Schools (TWIN-CS), a national dual-language immersion initiative; the Emmaus Series, a leadership advancement program for Catholic school leaders; and Urban Catholic Teacher Corps of Boston College (UCTC), a two-year volunteer and graduate program where licensed teachers serve full-time at an urban Boston Catholic school. For more information, visit www.rochecenter.org.

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