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The Role of Catholic Schools in Reducing Educational and Economic Inequality

Laura Nichols¹

In this paper, I look specifically at Catholic colleges in the United States and compare their student enrollment and graduation rates to other types of colleges, and ask if Catholic colleges continue to play a role as levers of economic mobility for students, or if they are reproducing the social class status of their families. Combining institutional data from the College Scorecard and the Equality of Opportunity Project, my analysis shows that Catholic colleges in the U.S. have higher graduation rates than public and other private schools, but they enroll a lower proportion of students who are low income. Catholic colleges also enroll a smaller proportion of first-generation college students than public schools, but a higher percentage of students who identify as Hispanic than other private schools. Some Catholic colleges are primarily educating students whose families are from the highest income quintile, but the proportions vary greatly by school. The combined dataset provides an opportunity for Catholic colleges in the U.S. to examine the demographics of their students and to ask questions about how they want to live out their missions by the students they enroll and ultimately graduate.

¹ *Acknowledgments: thank you to Thomas Plante, Theresa Ladriagan-Whelpley, and the members of the Ignatian Center at Santa Clara University's Economic Justice for the Common Good faculty group for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. Thank you also to Boston College and the members of this Roundtable for the robust discussions and intellectual engagement.*

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Introduction

The earliest Catholic-affiliated colleges in the United States were founded to serve the educational and economic mobility needs of new Catholic immigrants to North America in the 1800s, many of whom were from Europe.² And the prevalence of Catholic schools in the 1900s, at all levels, has been attributed with contributing to one of the greatest rates of generational wealth mobility—one that was not experienced by those from other religions.³ Catholic schools of the past thus played a role in providing opportunities for social mobility, contributing to the U.S. being seen as a symbol of hope and meritocracy to people all over the world. Yet today, most K-12 Catholic schools are expensive and enroll mainly families from the upper class. During a time of concentrated wealth and income disparities between communities, and an economically stratified public and private K-12 system, Catholic colleges run the risk of following the national trends of educating mainly the wealthy, even while they espouse values of equality and inclusion.⁴ To have a different outcome, Catholic colleges would need to purposively disrupt current inequities in wealth distribution and address the structural factors that promote inequality. Given the history of our institutions, we have an opportunity to ask what role, if any, we wish to play in the global marketplace of higher education in the context of rising inequality.

Only 60% of students who attend college ultimately obtain a bachelor's degree within six years.

Nationwide low rates of college completion by students from families with few economic resources and by students who are first in their families to attend college are a concern. While most high school students aspire to go to college, and over 69% of 2015 high school graduates attended college right after graduation,⁵ only 60% of students who attend college ultimately obtain a bachelor's degree within six years.⁶ Low rates of graduation can primarily be attributed to social class. Low-income students graduate at vastly lower rates than students from high-income families and students who are

2 Gerald McKeivitt, *Brokers of Culture: Italian Jesuits in the American West 1848-1919* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

3 Lisa A. Keister, "Upward Wealth Mobility: Exploring the Roman Catholic Advantage," *Social Forces* 85,3 (2007), 1195-1225.

4 Annie Waldman, "The Irony of Catholic Colleges," *The Atlantic*, September 25, 2015.

5 Bureau of Labor Statistics. "College Enrollment and Work Activity of 2015 High School Graduates" (April 2016), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgec.nro.htm>.

6 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *The Condition of Education 2016* (NCES 2016-144), "Undergraduate Retention and Graduation Rates."

both low income and the first in their families to attend college have the lowest rates.⁷ Some of the differences are explained by the prevalence of high-achieving low-income students attending colleges with low graduation rates, as rates of graduation vary widely by type of institution.⁸ Private nonprofit colleges have the highest overall graduation rates, followed by public institutions. Only 27% of those who attend private for-profit institutions for a bachelor's degree acquire that degree within six years.⁹

In this paper, I will explore a number of questions related to these issues. I ask: How do the enrollments of first-generation and low-income students vary by college and type of college in the U.S.? Within the relatively high completion rates of students attending private nonprofit colleges, how do completion rates at Catholic colleges compare, and do completion rates vary by college generational status and other factors? Finally, I ask if, even given the complexities and cost of college administration today, Catholic colleges could use such data to more fully consider their role of contributing to the common good by educating more students who are seeking social mobility for themselves and their families.

Contemporary and Historical Contexts of Catholic Schooling in the U.S.

A number of contemporary changes and contexts have motivated this exploration. The first is the growing proportion of young adults (ages 18–34) who are immigrants to the United States, which the U.S. Census Bureau estimates accounts for 15% of all young adults. Yet immigrants as a whole have lower rates of educational attainment compared to second- and third-generation Americans.¹⁰ At the same time, new immigrants are much more likely to identify with a formal religion compared to those whose families have lived in the United States for multiple generations.¹¹ Although there has been some erosion of religious membership over time by new immigrants as in the larger society, the religious affiliations of new immigrants have revitalized and created new religious institutions in many parts of the U.S. with high immigrant populations. Religious organizations, including schools, have also assisted some immigrant groups in their acculturation to their new home.

However, the U.S. context for new immigrants today is vastly different from that of the late 1800s, when most immigrants came from throughout Europe. The economy that welcomed new immigrants from Europe was one of mass agriculture and increasingly

7 Margaret Calahan, Laura Perna, Mika Yamashita, Roman Ruiz, and Khadish Franklin, *Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States: 2016 Historical Trend Report* (Washington, DC: Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, Council for Opportunity in Education, and Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy of the University of Pennsylvania, 2016).

8 Caroline Hoxby and Christopher Avery, "The Missing 'One-Offs': The Hidden Supply of High-Achieving, Low-Income Students," *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity* (2013).

9 U.S. Department of Education (2016).

10 Eunyoung Kim and Jeannette Díaz, "Immigrant Students and Higher Education," *ASHE Higher Education Report* 38.6 (2013); U.S. Census Bureau 2012.

11 Charles Hirschman, "The Role of Religion in the Origins and Adaptation of Immigrant Groups in the United States," *International Migration Review* 38.3 (2004), 1206-1233.

well-paying jobs as the result of industrialization, employment that typically did not require the ability to speak English. This growing stable job context, combined with an increasing number of Catholic parishes, K-12 schools, and colleges, helped to provide educational options and countered the discrimination against Catholics that could have held them back from such opportunities. This growing network of quality schools, for low- and high-income students alike, allowed for the social mobility of new immigrants in one or two generations. It also allowed for a strong Catholic Church to develop and be sustained in the U.S.

According to the National Catholic Educational Association, in the 1950s there were over 13,000 Catholic elementary and secondary schools in the U.S. By 2015 there were less than half that many.¹² As a result, at the height of Catholic education in the U.S., 55% of Catholics attended Catholic schools at some point in their K-12 education. Many of these schools were free (thanks to the availability of low-paid teachers who were from Catholic religious orders). According to Keister, the prevalence of quality affordable Catholic schools in the U.S. is one factor that likely explains the otherwise puzzling wealth mobility of white Catholics during the 1980s and 1990s that was not experienced by low-income whites as a whole or among those from other religions.¹³

But things are different for new immigrant Catholics today. While the number of Catholics in the U.S. has grown from 48.5 million in 1965 to almost 68 million today,¹⁴ most Catholic schoolchildren attend urban public schools and not Catholic schools. And the demographics of Catholics in the U.S. have changed quite dramatically from the mid-twentieth century. Today 40% of Catholics identify as Latino and 60% of Catholics under age 18 are Latino, with 90% being born in the U.S.¹⁵ That is over eight million Catholic school-aged children who are Latino.¹⁶ However, the proportion of Catholics who attend a Catholic K-12 school is small, and only 2.3% of K-12 Catholic Latino students attend a Catholic school. As in the past, many new immigrant Catholics also live in poverty. Some argue that because discrimination against Catholics is no longer an issue, the need for educational institutions that identify as Catholic is no longer necessary. Indeed, research on the outcomes of children who attend Catholic K-12 schools compared to other private and public schools find that for the most part, Catholic schools do not generally differ in terms of the academic outcomes of their students except for those living in poor neighborhoods where the public schools tend to be low performing.¹⁷ In these contexts,

12 As cited in Hosffman Ospino and Patricia Weitzel-O'Neill, "Catholic Schools in an Increasingly Hispanic Church." (A summary report of findings from the National Survey of Catholic Schools Serving Hispanic Families, Roche Center for Catholic Education, Boston College, 2016.)

13 Keister 2007. Based on a longitudinal study of non-Hispanic white youth who were ages 14-22 in 1979 with the final data collection in 2000 when respondents were ages 35 to 43.

14 CARA. Retrieved from: <http://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/> (2016).

15 Current Population Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013).

16 Ospino and Weitzel-O'Neill.

17 Karen K. Huchting, Shane P. Martin, José M. Chávez, Karen Holyk-Casey, and Delmy Ruiz, "Los Angeles Catholic Schools: Academic Excellence and Character Formation for Students Living in

Catholic schools can provide opportunities for social mobility for students who might otherwise be tracked into schools with few resources.

The Nativity and Cristo Rey schools provide examples of networks of Catholic middle and high schools that have been created to address the specific needs of low-income students.¹⁸ These schools have been purposefully designed to disrupt the concentration of students from high-income families in traditional Catholic K-12 schools and to make sure that their structure, expectations, and resources are appropriate for students who are born into low-income families and usually living in under-resourced communities.

Despite the extreme wealth and income inequality that exists in the United States today, education is still a viable means of social mobility.¹⁹ Understanding the potential role and niche that Catholic colleges can play in the economic mobility of individuals and families provides one potential means of reducing income and wealth inequality, particularly for new immigrant groups and their children. Insights into the organizational structures and culture necessary to provide both social reproduction and mobility may also provide clues as to the conditions necessary to increase the wealth mobility of other groups, even beyond religious affiliation.

Despite the extreme wealth and income inequality that exists in the United States today, education is still a viable means of social mobility.

Catholic Colleges in the United States

As of June 2016, there were 210 Catholic colleges in the U.S. that awarded at least a bachelor's degree, with a combined enrollment of over 900,000 students.²⁰ There are few studies that examine the success of Catholic colleges in graduating low-income and/or first-generation college students. One study that examined the bachelor's degree graduation rates of Latino students attending Catholic doctoral-granting institutions found that graduation rates are higher for them than for Latinos at non-Catholic doctoral institutions, but enrollment of Latino students at such colleges is lower than at other

Poverty" (Center for Catholic Education Research Report, Loyola Marymount University, March 2014); D. Neal, "The Effects of Catholic Secondary Schooling on Educational Achievement," *Journal of Labor Economics* 15.1 (1997), 98-123.

18 Mickey L. Fenzel, *Improving Urban Middle Schools: Lessons from the Nativity Schools* (New York: SUNY Press, 2009); G.R. Kearney, *More Than a Dream: How One School's Vision is Changing the World* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008).

19 Anthony P. Carnevale and Stephen J. Rose, "The Undereducated American" (Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, June 26, 2011) <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/the-undereducated-american/>.

20 Retrieved from the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, <http://www.accunet.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3797#sthash.zxpRkC3.dpbs> on February 9, 2016.

types of schools.²¹ We know that students who attend private, nonprofit colleges are much more likely to graduate within six years than those who attend public colleges full time.²² But there is not a study that looks at all Catholic colleges in the U.S. that primarily offer a bachelor's degree to see if they do better, worse, or the same as colleges that are not Catholic.

Also, complicating the picture and raising even further the question of whether Catholic colleges are necessary today, there has been a decrease in students attending Catholic colleges who identify as Catholic, with a little over half of incoming first-year students at four-year Catholic colleges and universities self-identifying as Catholic.²³ This is down from 82% of first-time, first-year students at Catholic colleges in 1979.²⁴

Although there are not many studies focused on the outcomes of students at Catholic colleges compared to other types of institutions, there is a large body of research that demonstrates that colleges that have the characteristics that exist at many Catholic colleges are predictors of success for low-income and/or students who are first in their families to attend college. These characteristics include a level of selectivity in admissions that might set them apart as "elite" schools as well as small class- and student-body sizes, low faculty-to-student ratio, and opportunities for involvement in co-curricular activities.²⁵ Although such colleges may also be classified as more selective in terms of the average high school grade point, SAT or ACT scores, and other admissions criteria of its admitted students, research also shows that first-generation college as well as low-income students are often undermatched in terms of the quality of college they could attend compared to the college they actually attend.²⁶

Being a first-generation college student co-exists with an increased likelihood of being from a family with limited economic resources, being born outside the United States, and belonging to an ethnic minority group that is underrepresented in higher

21 Frances Contreras, "Latino Students in Catholic Postsecondary Institutions," *Journal of Catholic Education* 19.2 (2016), 81-111.

22 National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, "Snapshot Report: Yearly Success and Progress Rates," retrieved from: <https://nscresearchcenter.org/wpcontent/uploads/SnapshotReport25.pdf>, on March 13, 2017.

23 Retrieved from the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, <http://www.accunet.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3797#sthash.zxpRlkC3.dpbs> on February 9, 2016.

24 As presented by Richard A. Yanikoski, "Catholic Higher Education: The Untold Story," Address to the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, Washington, D.C., February 1, 2010.

25 Jennie Brand and Charles N. Halaby, "Regression and Matching Estimates of the Effects of Elite College Attendance on Educational and Career Advancement," *Social Science Research* 35 (2006), 749-770; Theodore P. Gerber and S.Y. Chen, "Horizontal Stratification in Postsecondary Education: Forms, Explanations, and Implications," *Annual Review of Sociology* 38 (2008), 299-318; E.T. Pascarella, C.T. Pierson, G.C. Wolniak, and P.T. Terenzini, "First Generation College Students: Additional Evidence on College Experiences and Outcomes," *The Journal of Higher Education* 75 (2004), 249-284.

26 Sandra E. Black, E. Kalena, Jane Arnold Lincove, "Academic Undermatching of High-Achieving Minority Students: Evidence from Race-Neutral and Holistic Admissions Policies," *American Economic Review* 105.5 (2015), 604-610; William G. Bowen and Matthew M. Chingos, *Crossing the Finish Line: Completing College at America's Public Universities* (New York, NY: McPherson, 2009).

There is reason to hypothesize that if more first-generation college students attended Catholic colleges, graduation and upward mobility rates in the U.S. would increase.

education.²⁷ Educating students with these experiences and backgrounds is historically familiar to many Catholic colleges in the United States. Thus, there is reason to hypothesize that if more first-generation college students attended Catholic colleges, graduation and upward mobility rates in the U.S. would increase, solving some of the social class inequality that is currently occurring in our stratified college system.

Catholic Colleges and the Common Good

So what, if any, is the role of Catholic colleges in addressing issues of economic inequality? Discussions about the role of education and educational institutions in contributing to the common good focus mainly on ensuring the right to a “basic” education as a means to help those living in the most extreme poverty in the world. For example, in a recent report from the Jesuit *Promotio Iustitiae* of the Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat in Rome, there is a call for Catholic universities to focus on their role of contributing to research that would promote a preferential option for those living in poverty and provide the basis for advocating for more just policy solutions. At the same time, the report notes that the extreme inequality in the world is driven by dramatic changes in work and knowledge production and specialization, noting that

The nature of work is rapidly changing, often in troubling ways. Deindustrialization, outsourcing, and technological change have produced a new class of long-term ‘working poor,’ who labor long hours in low-wage jobs with little likelihood for social mobility. Technological changes benefit those with advanced education while undermining employment opportunities for those with fewer skills.²⁸

On a global scale, inequality and poverty are extreme and result in basic needs for survival not being met, including clean water, food, and health care. In the U.S. context, the conditions of those living in poverty are not generally as dire; however, relative to other countries with the same level of development as the U.S., the extent of homelessness, hunger, and unsafe living conditions experienced by those living in poverty put millions

27 X. Chen, “First Generation Students in Postsecondary Education: A Look at Their College Transcripts,” (NCES 2005-171, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Government Printing Office, 2005); A.M. Nuñez, S. Cuccaro-Alamin, and C. Dennis Carroll, “First-Generation College Students: Undergraduates Whose Parents Never Enrolled in Postsecondary Education” (NCES 98-082, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1998); B. Vargas and J.E. Conlon, “Are We Ready for the Approaching Demographic Tsunami?” *College and University* 86.3 (2011), 63-65.

28 *Promotio Iustitiae*, “Justice in the Global Economy: Building Sustainable and Inclusive Communities,” *Promotio Iustitiae*, Task Force on Economy, 121.1, 2016, at 9.

of children at risk of underdevelopment and early death.²⁹ As stated later in the report, When economic activity is as heavily knowledge-based as it is today, those who have the education and know-how to navigate successfully the flow of technology and finance will reap benefits in disproportionate ways. Sizable numbers with less education will be left behind with much less, often in the long-term unemployment and poverty that frequently leads to diminishing hope and even despair. Solidarity and commitment to the common good, therefore, require efforts to reduce inequality and overcome such poverty simultaneously.³⁰

Kurt Schlichting notes the early missions of Catholic universities in the U.S. dedicated to helping new immigrants overcome poverty and rise socially and economically.³¹ His comments reflect the call of Jesuit Ignacio Ellacuria, who noted in 1982 the role of universities in not only providing access to education but also a larger role in the world:

A Christian university must take into account the gospel preference for the poor. This does not mean that only the poor will study at the university; it does not mean that the university should abdicate its mission of academic excellence—excellence which is needed in order to solve complex social issues of our time. What it does mean is that the university should be present intellectually where it is needed: to provide science for those without science; to provide skills for those without skills; to be a voice for those without voices; to give intellectual support for those who do not possess the academic qualifications to make their rights legitimate.³²

Catholic colleges do not appear to have a directive or mandate to function primarily as a lever for social equality and mobility. As Georgetown professor Anthony Carnevale says, “Christianity, let alone Catholicism, is supposed to be about taking care of each other and throwing the money changers out of the temple, but Jesus didn’t have to run a college.”³³ And as Leming notes, part of the work of Catholic colleges in the U.S. has been to expose students who come from the highest social classes to issues of the common good as they relate to those with fewer economic and social resources.³⁴ And so, we ask: what is it we are doing as Catholic colleges and with whom are we doing it with? Especially in a context such as the U.S., where college education is a tangible good that has been deemed necessary for most professional positions and economic well-being and stability.

29 David Wood, “Effect of Child and Family Poverty on Child Health in the United States,” *Pediatrics* 112.3 (2003), 707-711.

30 *Promotio Iustitiae*, 25.

31 Kurt Schlichting, “Immigration, Jesuit Higher Education, and the Undocumented,” in T.A. Jones and L. Nichols, eds., *Undocumented and in College: Students and Institutions in a Climate of National Hostility* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2017).

32 Ignacio Ellacuria, S.J., Commencement Address at Santa Clara University, 1982, <https://www.scu.edu/ic/programs/ignatian-tradition-offerings/stories/ignacio-ellacuria-sjs-june-1982-commencement-address-santa-clara-university.html>.

33 In Annie Waldman, “The Irony of Catholic Colleges.” *The Atlantic* (September 25, 2015).

34 Laura M. Leming, “Negotiating a Culture of Encounter and Disruptive Discourse in Catholic Higher Education,” *Integritas* 7.2 (2016).

In the study presented next I first look at the situation of Catholic colleges in the U.S. compared to other institutions as they relate to the enrollment of first-generation and low-income students. I also provide examples of the approaches that some of our schools have taken to contribute to the social mobility of students. The analysis will be used to further consider the question of the role of Catholic colleges in the U.S. in contributing to the common good specifically as it relates to economic justice, social class mobility, and well-being.

Methods

The data for this project is from two sources: The first is the College Scorecard, which is a warehouse for institutional and student data coordinated by the U.S. Department of Education. The second is new data from the Equality of Opportunity Project.³⁵

The College Scorecard data combines data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), which is made up of institutional data reported by any postsecondary education institution that receives federal aid or grants for any of its students, and the National Student Loan Data System. Most of the variables explored in this paper are from IPEDS data. In particular, the sample includes institutional information from the entering 2009–10 academic year cohort of first-year, full-time undergraduate students at institutions that predominantly grant bachelor's degrees. This cohort was chosen as it is the most recent data available of six-year graduation and completion rates for students who graduated in 2015 or earlier.

The Equality of Opportunity Project³⁶ is a project funded by foundations and developed by social scientists to examine issues of economic inequality in the United States. The data for most of their research is freely available for download. The data for this paper is from their project that looks at the role of colleges in contributing to social mobility in the U.S. and uses data culled from federal income tax returns³⁷ to chart family income while students are in college that is then linked to students' later earnings. The students included in the sample were born between 1980–1991 and were college students between 1999–2013 and, like the IPEDS data, are available by institution.

Sample

To look at Catholic colleges compared to other types of institutions, I combined data from the College Scorecard with data from the Equality of Opportunity Project, matching institutions based on their unique IPEDS identification number. The final dataset

35 Raj Chetty, John N. Friedman, Emmanuel Saez, Nicholas Turner, and Danny Yagan, "Mobility Report Cards: The Role of Colleges in Intergenerational Mobility," Retrieved from: http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/papers/coll_mrc_paper.pdf in January 2017.

36 <http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/>.

37 Students are first identified based on college 1098-T filings, and then matched to parent (and later their own) tax returns. International students and some students who pay no tuition or were not claimed as a dependent by a parent at some point when the student was age 12–18 are likely not in the dataset. The researchers believe the dataset includes about 98% of all students in college. For more specifics on the data and samples see Chetty et al. (2017).

included 568 public institutions; 1,027 private nonprofit, non-Catholic institutions; 225 private for-profit institutions; and 199 private nonprofit Catholic institutions (most of the analysis in this paper [except for Table A] is based on the 197 schools that primarily grant bachelor's degrees). For the analysis in the paper, and to compare Catholic colleges to other types of colleges in the U.S., I included only public and nonprofit institutions that were classified as granting predominantly bachelor's degrees. To identify colleges that identified as Catholic, I used an IPEDS institutional affiliation identifier included in the 2015–16 cohort data.

Variables

The following variables are from the College Scorecard data: First-generation students are defined as any student for whom neither parent has a college degree (BA degree). The institutional data reports the share of first-generation college students among the full-time undergraduate student population. Pell recipients reports the share of students during that academic year who were receiving a Pell Grant. Pell Grant recipient is a proxy for low income as only students whose families are low income qualify for a Pell Grant. In 2009–10, the maximum Pell Grant was \$5,350.³⁸

The data does not provide a means to accurately identify students who are first- or second-generation immigrants to the United States. The closest proxy is to identify students whose ethnicity ties them to the largest ethnic group of parents who are new immigrants. The proportion of students who identified as Hispanic is taken from self-report data collected for IPEDS and reported in the fall of the academic year for that cohort of students.

The overall completion rate is for all students based on an expectation of graduation at six years or sooner for full-time students. The additional completion data by first-generation status, all students, and students who identified as Hispanic is based on the six-year graduation rates of students who started as full-time undergraduate students at their primary four-year institution in 2009–2010 and finished within six years at that same institution. Note that these percentages might not reflect the official retention and graduation rates reported by institutions as institutions may include other factors such as those students who joined the cohort as transfers, etc.

The income percentile data is from the Equality of Opportunity dataset and draws on tax data for families with children born between 1980–1991 who ultimately attended college. Families are ranked relative to all other parents with children in the same birth cohort and assigned income percentiles based on Adjusted Gross Income as reported on both 1040 and W-2 forms averaged over five years (when the future college-goers are 15–19 years old). The top 20% percentile includes families with incomes of \$110,000 or higher. The institutional data is included in this paper and thus captures the percentage of students who are from the five income quintiles.

38 U.S. Department of Education, Federal Pell Grant End-of-Year Report 2009-2010, <https://www2.ed.gov/finaid/prof/resources/data/pell-2009-10/pell-eoy-09-10.pdf> (2011). Note: The maximum Pell Grant does not keep up with rates of tuition increase. For 2017–18, the maximum award is \$5,920.

The last section of the findings includes examples of what some Catholic colleges have been doing to increase the social mobility of their students. These examples are not exhaustive by any means, but were chosen to show a range of ways that Catholic colleges are addressing inequality within higher education.

Findings

To explore the potential for Catholic colleges to contribute to economic social mobility, I first examine descriptive information on predominantly bachelor's-degree-granting Catholic colleges. The table in Appendix A reports data for 199 Catholic colleges in the United States and Puerto Rico. This includes seminaries. Values can be interpreted as percentages. For example, for the entering college 2009–10 cohort at Santa Clara University, 18% of undergraduates were first-generation college, 14% received a Pell Grant, and 17% identified as Hispanic. Based on the College Equity data, 65% of students had families in the top 20% income quintile and 11% of families were in the top 1% of family income. Only 4% of students' families were in the bottom 20% of income. In terms of graduation in six years, of those students who started as full-time students six years previously at Santa Clara, 73% of the first-generation college and 84% of Hispanic students had graduated. In the table, periods indicate missing data on those variables.

Thirty-five of the 197 Catholic schools that primarily grant bachelor's degrees have student bodies where half or more of the students came from families in the top income quintile. Of those 35, 16 are Jesuit. That means that 57% of the 28 Jesuit schools in the U.S. are educating primarily the children of the highest income families in the United States. Understanding the economic backgrounds of students can help to anticipate the potential areas of resistance to parts of the curriculum as well as the types of campus climate dilemmas campuses may face.

Types of Schools and Geography

Because the cost of living in a geographical area may explain some of the income differences by school, I run a separate analysis that compares six primarily bachelor's-degree-granting institutions in the northern California Bay area (Table 1). Colleges using this data to better understand their role in educating underrepresented students may want to run a similar, geographically focused analysis. In the analysis presented here, Santa Clara and Stanford stand out as having the lowest proportion of first-generation and Pell Grant-recipient students. For Stanford, only 21% of their 2009–10 cohort of students were first-generation college and 16% received a Pell Grant. Stanford and UC Berkeley have the highest overall graduation rate at 96% and 91%, respectively; however, only 55% of first-generation college students at Berkeley graduate in six years or less. Santa Clara does much better, with 73% of first-generation college students graduating in six years. The University of San Francisco, also a Jesuit, Catholic school, has a higher proportion of first-generation and low-income students compared to SCU, but a much lower rate of graduation for all groups.

Table 1. Enrollments, Graduation Rates, and Family Incomes of Undergraduate Students at Universities in the Northern California Bay Area (*for 2009-10 cohort)

Variable	San Fran State U	San José State U	SCU	Stanford U	UC Berkeley	U of San Fran
*First Generation (FG)	.45	.45	.18	.21	.35	.28
*Receive Pell	.42	.40	.14	.16	.32	.26
*Students Identify as Hispanic	.24	.24	.17	.17	.13	.19
Parent in Highest Income	.36	.39	.65	.69	.51	.48
Parent in Lowest Income	.10	.12	.04	.04	.09	.06
*Graduate in 6 Years	.46	.48	.84	.96	.91	.69
*FG Graduate 6 Years (original institution)	.45	.38	.73	.91	.55	.53
*Hispanic Graduate 6 Years (original institution)	.44	.39	.84	.93	.84	.71

Comparison of Catholic Colleges to Public and Other Private Colleges Nationally

Table 2 presents the results of the analysis that compares the 197 Catholic colleges in the U.S. first to private nonprofit, non-Catholic colleges and then to public colleges in the U.S. Means tests were run to determine the items on which there were significant differences between Catholic schools and the other two types of schools as groups. Again, the values can be read as percentages. Taking the first row, 32% of students at private nonprofit colleges as well as 32% of students in Catholic colleges were first-generation college. In all the public colleges included in the analysis, 35% of students were first-generation college.

Catholic colleges compared to public colleges were different from each other on all variables included in the analysis except percent of enrolled students who identify as Hispanic. Public and Catholic schools enroll similar proportions of students with a Latino heritage. Catholic colleges outperformed public colleges in terms of graduation rates for all categories of students included in the analysis; however, as a whole, Catholic colleges had significantly lower proportions of first-generation and Pell Grant-recipient students.

Comparing Catholic colleges to other private nonprofit schools, colleges that were Catholic had significantly lower percentages of students with Pell Grants compared to other private nonprofit schools, although the proportion of first-generation college students was similar. However, Catholic colleges enroll a significantly higher proportion of students who identify as Hispanic compared to other private schools (13% compared to 10% for private). Catholic colleges outperform other private schools in terms of overall graduation rates and the graduation rates of first-generation college students, but all private schools have a similar rate of graduating Hispanic students in six years.

Table 2. Enrollment and Completion Outcomes of Catholic Colleges Compared to Other Private Nonprofit and Public Predominantly 4-Year Colleges (Independent samples t-test; standard deviation in parentheses)

Variable	Private Nonprofit (n=1,027)	Catholic (n=197)	Public (n=568)
First Generation (FG)	.32 (.12)	.32 (.11)	.35 (.09)***
Receive Pell	.41 (.20)***	.33 (.14)	.39 (.14)***
Students Identify as Hispanic	.10 (.17)*	.13 (.18)	.12 (.18)
Parent in Highest Income	.37 (.16)	.39 (.15)	.31 (.14)***
Parent in Lowest Income	.07 (.05)	.07 (.04)	.11 (.08)***
Graduate in 6 Years	.54 (.21)*	.58 (.16)	.48 (.17)***
FG Graduate 6 Years	.48 (.17)*	.51 (.16)	.45 (.15)***
Hispanic Graduate 6 Years	.50 (.28)	.52 (.22)	.43 (.20)***

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Students who attend Catholic colleges are more likely to graduate in six years than students who attend public colleges full time. This is true for students as a whole and across different subgroupings of students such as being first generation or identifying as Hispanic. Catholic colleges also enroll a higher percentage of students who identify as Hispanic compared to other private schools, signaling an opportunity to attract and graduate the largest group of underrepresented students in the U.S. Providing more opportunities for Latino students to attend Catholic colleges would allow Catholic colleges to serve a role similar to their past and provide a means for social mobility for this growing group of Catholic youth.

Examples of College Programs and Institutional Responses

There are a number of ways that Catholic colleges have tried to mitigate issues that first-generation college students may have in coming from high schools that underprepare them for college. For example, Boston College's Learning to Learn Office offers the course Applications of Learning, which has been implemented at at least 20 colleges in the U.S. The course teaches skills such as critical thinking, taking notes, and studying for exams, among other topics, for new students who might be underprepared for college. At Boston College, 95% of students who took the course graduated in four-years.³⁹

Santa Clara University has just expanded their LEAD program for first-generation college students. The program includes a summer bridge experience, writing classes, and other classes dedicated to LEAD Scholars and increasing their college-going readiness. It also has a special program for transfer students who are first in their family to attend college.

Some schools have taken an institutional approach. Loyola University in Chicago recently started Arrupe College, a two-year community college for students who are low

39 Danielle Douglas-Gabriel, "An Alternative to Remedial College Classes Gets Results," the *Washington Post*, February 14, 2017.

income with the goal of preparing students to transfer to a four-year university with no debt.⁴⁰ And Saint Peter's University in New Jersey has been recognized for moving low-income students into the middle and upper classes. Based on the Equality of Opportunity Project data analysis, Saint Peter's has been named eighth out of 578 selective private colleges in improving the economic status of its students.⁴¹

Many Catholic colleges will likely be given the opportunity to consider what they can do to partner with new initiatives starting in many states and cities to provide at least some free college tuition for residents attending public colleges. New York State is the latest to pass such an initiative. Many state- and city-level programs are focused on providing free tuition for community college attendance. This gives our mainly four-year Catholic colleges a chance to ponder how we might capitalize on and create programs and agreements that could help low- and middle-income students to ultimately complete a bachelor's degree.

Conclusion

This paper provides a preliminary look at questions related to the role of Catholic colleges in the United States in contributing to increasing the economic mobility of first-generation college and low-income students. In a time of retreat from globalization at the federal level, there is a leadership opportunity for religious and educational organizations to operate across borders and to recommit to their roles of educating new immigrants and those seeking social mobility. However, as shown in the data examined in this paper, at least 35 of the 197 Catholic institutions included in this study are primarily sites of social reproduction, with over 50% (some up to 70%) of their student bodies coming from families in the highest income class in the United States. The concentration of students from higher social classes is not unique to Catholic colleges; similar distributions exist within public college and other private nonprofit college groupings.

The concentration of students in our institutions by social class is not surprising given the cost of administering higher education institutions, increasing competitiveness of private colleges, the reduction in public commitments to funding higher education, and rising economic and wealth inequality in the U.S. These same institutions also tend to have the highest graduation rates across all social class and subgroups of their students. Yet students from the highest social classes would succeed in earning their degrees regardless of the type of institution they attended. And we know that there are thousands of students who are academically ready to succeed at even our most selective schools, but do not even apply because of cost or presumed incompatibility with the culture of the institution.⁴²

40 Rosa Flores, "A Debt-Free College for Those Who Struggle Most," CNN (September 2, 2016), <http://www.cnn.com/2016/09/01/health/chicago-community-college-arrupe/>.

41 Saint Peter's University, Press Release, February 15, 2017, Retrieved March 17, 2017, <http://www.saintpeters.edu/news/2017/02/15/saint-peters-university-ranked-as-a-national-leader-in-upward-mobility/>.

42 Hoxby and Avery.

The student demographics of some Catholic colleges in the U.S. today have dramatically changed their original mission of primarily educating students whose families were low income to becoming institutions that play a large role in reproducing the social class structure as it exists, exposing students from the most privileged backgrounds to a liberal arts education often with an emphasis on ethics and social justice. Catholic schools that enroll such students often talk about their mission as one of exposing those who will be in powerful positions in society to the needs and interests of those who were not born into such circumstances. Other Catholic schools enroll students from families with fewer economic resources, but often these institutions are struggling to keep their doors open and to provide enough resources and support to address the difficult realities of high-achieving students who may have few economic and social resources, come from underperforming high schools, and may not have the ability to prioritize school over other necessary obligations such as paid work and family.

There are certainly limitations with the data presented in this paper. The IPEDS data provides information and graduation rates by cohort, and for this paper I focused on only one cohort, which started fulltime in 2009–10. This cohort could differ in demographics and outcomes from cohorts before or after at the same institutions. Further, the graduation data is only for those students who stayed at their original institution. The Equality of Opportunity Project data is based on federal income data and treats all geographies as if they are similar in cost of living. In addition, the data lacks very important contextual information about each of our institutions. Despite the limitations, hopefully the snapshots and comparisons can at least provide the basis for a larger internal conversation within institutions about the point and purpose of our work and a clearer understanding about the issues associated with being at colleges that primarily reproduce existing class structures or promote social mobility. Perhaps then we can have more conscious conversations about the potential power of our institutions and networks in disrupting larger, global economic realities. We can also use such analyses to consider the types of support and exposure that will be most necessary to provide students depending on the demographics of our student bodies as a whole. This could also be a chance for Catholic colleges to better support one another as a group, realizing that colleges with concentrated student bodies of wealthy or low-income students may have different needs, and we may be able to work out of our differing strengths for mutual benefit.

The United States has been experiencing unprecedented wealth and income inequality and a shrinking of the middle class. Wealth in particular is concentrated in a small number of families and it is often out of this wealth that families pay for college. In the past, Catholic schools, at all levels, provided opportunities for wealth and income mobility for families with few economic resources. However, the current economic conditions in the U.S. challenge the ability of Catholic institutions to counter prevailing structures that focus on rankings and markers of prestige. As Pope Francis stated in a letter addressed to grassroots organizers working across social justice issues at a

meeting in Modesto, California, “For some time, the crisis of the prevailing paradigm has confronted us. I am speaking of a system that causes enormous suffering to the human family, simultaneously assaulting people’s dignity and our Common Home in order to sustain the invisible tyranny of money that only guarantees the privileges of a few. In our time humanity is experiencing a turning-point in its history.”⁴³

Catholic colleges stand out as having both an opportunity to continue our historical work as levers of economic mobility even while being examples of how economic reproduction and privilege are maintained by our wealthiest educational institutions. Addressing these contradictions forces those of us working at and supporting such institutions to ask difficult questions, to work to propose innovative ways of operating in our advanced capitalist economy, and to develop new structures that promote alternatives to typical patterns of economic reproduction.

43 Vatican Radio, “Pope Sends Message to Popular Movements Meeting in California” (February 17, 2017), Retrieved from: http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/02/17/pope_sends_message_to_popular_movements_meeting_california/1293143, on February 17, 2017.

Table A: Student Demographics and Graduation Rates at Catholic Colleges, U.S. and Puerto Rico (n=199)

Name of College	State	First Gen	Pell	Hispanic	*Student Families Top 20%	*Student Families Top 1%	*Student Families Bottom 20%	All Grad ¹ Original College	First Gen Grad	Hispanic Grad
Albertus Magnus College	CT	.49	.58	.14	.22	.00	.13	.63	.53	.68
Alvernia University	PA	.44	.35	.07	.26	.01	.07	.51	.58	.00
Alverno College	WI	.50	.61	.18	.16	.01	.15	.39	.44	.46
Anna Maria College	MA	.38	.37	.07	.34	.01	.05	.47	.36	.53
Aquinas College	MI	.23	.34	.05	.37	.02	.03	.60	.14	.35
Assumption College	MA	.23	.23	.07	.56	.02	.02	.73	.32	.66
Ave Maria University	FL	.24	.32	.15	.	.	.	.59	.41	.33
Avila University	MO	.37	.43	.08	.31	.02	.07	.49	.52	.44
Barry University	FL	.43	.52	.29	.28	.03	.16	.37	.57	.36
Bellarmino University	KY	.26	.23	.03	.41	.02	.03	.66	.64	.41
Belmont Abbey College	NC	.33	.46	.02	.41	.02	.05	.38	.49	.25
Benedictine College	KS	.17	.21	.06	.35	.01	.06	.59	.30	.87
Benedictine University	IL	.36	.36	.09	.45	.03	.03	.52	.23	.45
Bon Secours Memorial College of Nursing	VA	.37	.17	.03	.	.	.	.	.55	.
Boston College	MA	.14	.14	.11	.69	.14	.03	.91	.89	.87
Brescia University	KY	.46	.50	.06	.	.	.	.30	.38	.16
Briar Cliff University	IA	.36	.45	.09	.21	.01	.09	.45	.30	.42
Cabrini University	PA	.35	.31	.05	.42	.02	.06	.46	.43	.23
Caldwell University	NJ	.42	.43	.06	.32	.01	.07	.53	.41	.43

1 Note: Values in these tables are not the official graduation rates reported by most institutions; instead they capture the experience of one cohort of students who attended their original institution as full-time students.
 *Data are from the Equality of Opportunity Project; other data from IPEDS and the College Scorecard.

Name of College	State	First Gen	Pell	Hispanic	**Student Families Top 20%	**Student Families Top 1%	**Student Families Bottom 20%	All Grad ¹ Original College	First Gen Grad	Hispanic Grad
Calumet College of Saint Joseph	IN	.50	.41	.31	.	.	.	.34	.37	.33
Canisius College	NY	.21	.30	.03	.37	.01	.07	.67	.56	.45
Cardinal Stritch University	WI	.48	.44	.08	.29	.01	.06	.42	.42	.25
Carlow University	PA	.39	.36	.02	.14	.01	.12	.62	.56	.66
Carroll College	MT	.20	.22	.04	.34	.02	.05	.67	.64	.50
Catholic University of America	DC	.14	.12	.11	.63	.04	.02	.69	.65	.58
Chaminade University of Honolulu	HI	.40	.29	.06	.19	.00	.16	.38	.42	.35
Chestnut Hill College	PA	.44	.49	.07	.23	.00	.08	.42	.51	.29
Christian Brothers University	TN	.36	.42	.07	.39	.02	.07	.57	.41	.70
Clarke University	IA	.33	.40	.03	.24	.01	.07	.70	.66	.75
College of Mount Saint Vincent	NY	.33	.55	.34	.	.	.	.52	.39	.46
College of Our Lady of the Elms	MA	.41	.40	.11	.24	.01	.09	.68	.62	.52
College of Saint Benedict	MN	.20	.24	.05	.47	.03	.03	.82	.71	.50
College of Saint Elizabeth	NJ	.49	.38	.16	.32	.01	.09	.56	.55	.40
College of Saint Mary	NE	.35	.43	.11	.	.	.	.42	.52	.41
College of St Joseph	VT	.43	.53	.01	.	.	.	.21	.	.00
College of the Holy Cross	MA	.15	.16	.11	.70	.11	.02	.91	.85	.92
Conception Seminary College	MO	.	.30	.11	.	.	.	.61	.	.25
Creighton University	NE	.17	.19	.07	.54	.05	.03	.76	.69	.67
DePaul University	IL	.31	.34	.17	.44	.05	.07	.70	.59	.68
DeSales University	PA	.36	.27	.09	.42	.01	.04	.70	.13	.52
Divine Word College	IA	.	.34	.10	.	.	.	.44	.	.00
Dominican University	IL	.46	.44	.40	.34	.01	.06	.63	.62	.63

Name of College	State	First Gen	Pell	Hispanic	**Student Families Top 20%	**Student Families Top 1%	*Student Families Bottom 20%	All Grad ¹ Original College	First Gen Grad	Hispanic Grad
Duquesne University	PA	.18	.20	.03	.45	.03	.04	.77	.70	.60
Edgewood College	WI	.30	.34	.05	.37	.02	.06	.57	.54	.71
Emmanuel College	MA	.21	.23	.06	.39	.01	.06	.58	.55	.57
Fairfield University	CT	.17	.15	.08	.69	.08	.02	.82	.71	.72
Felician University	NJ	.48	.47	.24	.25	.01	.13	.46	.26	.38
Fontbonne University	MO	.36	.39	.02	.33	.03	.05	.41	.48	.00
Fordham University	NY	.19	.20	.14	.51	.05	.08	.81	.71	.80
Franciscan University of Steubenville	OH	.12	.26	.10	.44	.02	.04	.73	.59	.68
Gannon University	PA	.30	.32	.03	.27	.01	.07	.65	.41	.52
Georgetown University	DC	.15	.13	.08	.73	.18	.03	.92	.84	.89
Georgian Court University	NJ	.49	.43	.12	.31	.01	.09	.51	.52	.40
Gonzaga University	WA	.16	.19	.09	.55	.05	.03	.82	.73	.82
Gwynedd Mercy University	PA	.42	.34	.04	.36	.01	.06	.66	.63	1.00
Hilbert College	NY	.36	.47	.02	.16	.00	.12	.41	.50	.00
Holy Apostles College and Seminary	CT	.	.24	.08	.	.	.	.20	.	.
Holy Cross College	IN	.28	.33	.10	.	.	.	.49	.26	.71
Holy Family University	PA	.50	.36	.06	.25	.00	.06	.55	.59	.38
Holy Names University	CA	.44	.46	.28	.	.	.	.35	.30	.61
Immaculata University	PA	.38	.22	.05	.35	.01	.06	.48	.48	.45
Iona College	NY	.34	.24	.19	.41	.01	.08	.63	.57	.56
John Carroll University	OH	.21	.27	.04	.45	.05	.03	.75	.68	.96
John Paul the Great Catholic University	CA	.	.28	.19	.	.	.	.52	.	.35
Kenrick Glennon Seminary	MO	.	.08	.02	.	.	.	.	.	.

Name of College	State	First Gen	Pell	Hispanic	*Student Families Top 20%	*Student Families Top 1%	*Student Families Bottom 20%	All Grad ¹ Original College	First Gen Grad	Hispanic Grad
King's College	PA	.32	.29	.07	.35	.01	.04	.66	.58	.50
La Roche College	PA	.35	.38	.01	.26	.01	.09	.46	.54	.00
La Salle University	PA	.38	.36	.10	.42	.01	.04	.64	.62	.60
Le Moyne College	NY	.24	.32	.06	.34	.00	.06	.74	.61	.57
Lewis University	IL	.39	.31	.17	.38	.01	.06	.62	.45	.45
Loras College	IA	.21	.24	.06	.35	.02	.03	.61	.62	.53
Lourdes University	OH	.43	.57	.06	.24	.00	.05	.36	.37	.00
Loyola Marymount University	CA	.20	.19	.22	.58	.09	.05	.76	.73	.80
Loyola University Chicago	IL	.25	.30	.13	.43	.04	.08	.71	.62	.60
Loyola University Maryland	MD	.16	.14	.09	.68	.08	.02	.84	.80	.76
Loyola University New Orleans	LA	.21	.30	.16	.51	.05	.05	.55	.47	.45
Madonna University	MI	.41	.36	.04	.40	.01	.07	.43	.41	.14
Manhattan College	NY	.28	.29	.18	.	.	.	.74	.69	.72
Marian University	IN	.33	.31	.04	.	.	.	.52	.55	.75
Marquette University	WI	.43	.42	.04	.25	.01	.06	.49	.54	.42
Marygrove College	MI	.19	.17	.09	.58	.05	.03	.78	.65	.74
Marylhurst University	OR	.48	.70	.03	.	.	.	.29	.31	.33
Marymount California University	CA	.38	.41	.36	.47	.14	.11	.31	.	.30
Marymount University	VA	.28	.24	.15	.39	.03	.10	.58	.52	.51
Manywood University	PA	.33	.35	.05	.27	.01	.07	.65	.46	.40
Mercyhurst University	PA	.37	.32	.02	.30	.01	.06	.60	.26	.47
Merrimack College	MA	.26	.22	.06	.49	.02	.03	.60	.53	.46

Name of College	State	First Gen	Pell	Hispanic	*Student Families Top 20%	*Student Families Top 1%	*Student Families Bottom 20%	All Grad' Original College	First Gen Grad	Hispanic Grad
Misericordia University	PA	.34	.29	.03	.27	.02	.08	.69	.61	.77
Molloy College	NY	.36	.33	.14	.	.	.	.66	.67	.55
Mount Angel Seminary	OR	.	.26	.34	.	.	.	.58	.	.71
Mount Carmel College of Nursing	OH	.37	.26	.01	.	.	.	.56	.76	.
Mount Marty College	SD	.36	.31	.08	.13	.00	.08	.52	.49	.50
Mount Mary University	WI	.42	.47	.14	.28	.00	.08	.41	.48	.50
Mount Mercy University	IA	.30	.34	.02	.22	.01	.05	.73	.68	1.00
Mount Saint Joseph University	OH	.35	.32	.02	.31	.01	.05	.58	.10	.75
Mount Saint Mary College	NY	.33	.33	.12	.38	.01	.08	.52	.62	.55
Mount Saint Mary's University	CA	.50	.59	.58	.16	.00	.21	.64	.58	.64
Mount St. Mary's University	MD	.23	.23	.09	.51	.02	.03	.66	.59	.53
Neumann University	PA	.44	.39	.03	.32	.01	.08	.50	.26	.57
Newman University	KS	.38	.23	.13	.34	.01	.04	.52	.56	.60
Niagara University	NY	.24	.29	.04	.35	.01	.06	.65	.55	.60
Notre Dame College	OH	.40	.35	.02	.	.	.	.39	.28	.40
Notre Dame de Namur University	CA	.38	.42	.34	.	.	.	.48	.44	.70
Notre Dame of Maryland University	MD	.41	.30	.06	.31	.01	.09	.53	.67	.40
Ohio Dominican University	OH	.39	.35	.03	.20	.01	.09	.41	.42	.20
Our Lady of the Lake University	TX	.50	.57	.73	.10	.00	.22	.32	.45	.32
Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico-Arecibo	PR	.31	.81	.89	.	.	.	.19	.32	.19
Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico-Mayaguez	PR	.31	.81	.99	.	.	.	.39	.32	.38

Name of College	State	First Gen	Pell	Hispanic	*Student Families Top 20%	*Student Families Top 1%	*Student Families Bottom 20%	All Grad ¹ Original College	First Gen Grad	Hispanic Grad
Pontifical Catholic University of PR-Ponce	PR	.31	.82	.99	.	.	.	.18	.32	.17
Pontifical College Josephinum	OH	.	.08	.10	.	.	.	.77	.	.66
Presentation College	SD	.32	.49	.05	.	.	.	.34	.32	1.00
Providence College	RI	.15	.13	.07	.67	.05	.02	.85	.64	.82
Quincy University	IL	.35	.43	.04	.29	.01	.05	.50	.45	.20
Regis College	MA	.32	.36	.11	.31	.00	.09	.49	.49	.54
Regis University	CO	.38	.26	.17	.56	.09	.04	.58	.20	.57
Resurrection University	IL	.38	.18	.10	.	.	.	.	.	.
Rivier University	NH	.40	.28	.05	.	.	.	.63	.60	.66
Rockhurst University	MO	.21	.17	.05	.47	.02	.04	.69	.51	.71
Rosemont College	PA	.38	.54	.08	.	.	.	.46	.37	.20
Sacred Heart University	CT	.26	.15	.06	.52	.02	.05	.70	.62	.64
Saint Ambrose University	IA	.28	.26	.06	.39	.02	.03	.61	.41	.71
Saint Anselm College	NH	.14	.17	.03	.49	.03	.02	.74	.67	.64
Saint Anthony College of Nursing	IL	.	.33	.05	.	.	.	.	.	.
Saint Catharine College	KY	.45	.47	.03	.08	.00	.26	.22	.33	.50
Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary-Overbrook	PA	.	.12	.11	.	.	.	.43	.	.
Saint Edward's University	TX	.32	.34	.37	.45	.06	.11	.70	.62	.66
Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing	IL	.39	.34	.03	.	.	.	.	.	.
Saint Francis University	PA	.29	.22	.02	.25	.01	.06	.71	.30	.60
Saint John Fisher College	NY	.26	.32	.04	.32	.02	.06	.73	.61	.61
Saint John Vianney College Seminary	FL	.	.25	.36	.	.	.	.67	.	.50

Name of College	State	First Gen	Pell	Hispanic	*Student Families Top 20%	*Student Families Top 1%	*Student Families Bottom 20%	All Grad' Original College	First Gen Grad	Hispanic Grad
Saint John's Seminary	MA	.00	.09	.09	.09	.09	.09	.09	.09	.09
Saint John's University	MN	.14	.19	.04	.53	.05	.02	.79	.74	1.00
Saint Joseph Seminary College	LA	.23	.32	.32	.32	.32	.32	.75	.75	.50
Saint Joseph's College	IN	.34	.30	.05	.34	.01	.03	.44	.20	.16
Saint Joseph's College of Maine	ME	.31	.24	.02	.22	.00	.08	.55	.60	.50
Saint Joseph's University	PA	.18	.14	.05	.67	.06	.03	.79	.66	.69
Saint Leo University	FL	.49	.45	.10	.15	.00	.19	.46	.45	.44
Saint Louis University	MO	.22	.14	.03	.56	.05	.03	.70	.52	.68
Saint Martin's University	WA	.35	.37	.12	.30	.02	.10	.48	.46	.29
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College	IN	.42	.51	.01	.01	.01	.01	.60	.23	.50
Saint Mary's College	IN	.17	.20	.12	.59	.07	.02	.71	.66	.64
Saint Mary's College of California	CA	.26	.33	.25	.49	.06	.07	.68	.45	.67
Saint Mary's University of Minnesota	MN	.34	.31	.05	.46	.03	.04	.55	.43	.42
Saint Michael's College	VT	.16	.17	.04	.53	.04	.02	.75	.59	.57
Saint Norbert College	WI	.22	.21	.03	.46	.05	.02	.74	.14	.43
Saint Peter's University	NJ	.44	.52	.29	.24	.00	.20	.53	.52	.52
Saint Vincent College	PA	.21	.29	.04	.30	.01	.04	.70	.65	.57
Saint Xavier University	IL	.45	.49	.23	.28	.01	.09	.47	.49	.42
Salve Regina University	RI	.20	.23	.06	.54	.05	.04	.64	.59	.52
Santa Clara University	CA	.18	.14	.17	.65	.11	.04	.84	.73	.84
Seattle University	WA	.19	.21	.09	.47	.03	.05	.77	.65	.72
Seton Hall University	NJ	.30	.29	.17	.44	.02	.08	.64	.58	.59
Seton Hill University	PA	.30	.32	.03	.16	.01	.08	.61	.49	.28

Name of College	State	First Gen	Pell	Hispanic	*Student Families Top 20%	*Student Families Top 1%	*Student Families Bottom 20%	All Grad ¹ Original College	First Gen Grad	Hispanic Grad
Siena College	NY	.19	.22	.07	.54	.03	.04	.80	.70	.65
Siena Heights University	MI	.48	.43	.05	.31	.01	.06	.43	.56	.45
Silver Lake College of the Holy Family	WI	.41	.30	.04	.	.	.	.37	.53	.
Spalding University	KY	.41	.47	.04	.	.	.	.40	.35	.60
Spring Hill College	AL	.27	.33	.09	.46	.06	.07	.56	.34	.60
St Bonaventure University	NY	.19	.29	.07	.44	.01	.04	.67	.29	.55
St Catherine University	MN	.31	.41	.05	.31	.02	.07	.54	.56	.35
St. Gregory's University	OK	.39	.42	.15	.	.	.	.24	.18	.41
St. John's College-Department of Nursing	IL	.	.25	.01	.	.	.	.	.	.
St John's University-New York	NY	.31	.31	.16	.28	.01	.14	.56	.55	.50
St Mary's University	TX	.44	.51	.72	.28	.02	.13	.55	.51	.52
St Thomas University	FL	.42	.51	.43	.12	.01	.29	.38	.49	.41
Stonehill College	MA	.20	.14	.04	.57	.03	.02	.85	.77	.50
The College of Saint Scholastica	MN	.28	.31	.02	.30	.01	.05	.68	.51	.44
Thomas Aquinas College	CA	.	.36	.15	.	.	.	.80	.	1.00
Thomas More College	KY	.40	.26	.02	.31	.01	.06	.57	.48	.50
Thomas More College of Liberal Arts	NH	.	.45	.04	.	.	.	.46	.	.
Trinity Washington University	DC	.55	.65	.14	.	.	.	.34	.32	.51
Universidad Central de Bayamon	PR	.34	.71	.99	.	.	.	.28	.20	.27
Universidad del Sagrado Corazon	PR	.28	.66	1.00	.	.	.	.34	.28	.34
University of Dallas	TX	.14	.22	.19	.52	.03	.05	.66	.50	.59
University of Dayton	OH	.11	.12	.03	.59	.06	.02	.77	.67	.60
University of Detroit Mercy	MI	.37	.29	.03	.34	.00	.10	.57	.53	.63

Name of College	State	First Gen	Pell	Hispanic	*Student Families Top 20%	*Student Families Top 1%	*Student Families Bottom 20%	All Grad' Original College	First Gen Grad	Hispanic Grad
University of Great Falls	MT	.38	.42	.07	.	.	.	.30	.36	.25
University of Holy Cross	LA	.48	.46	.06	.32	.01	.09	.28	.28	.28
University of Mary	ND	.24	.24	.03	.23	.00	.06	.49	.44	.80
University of Notre Dame	IN	.09	.12	.10	.72	.11	.01	.95	.	.95
University of Portland	OR	.21	.22	.10	.53	.03	.03	.76	.75	.59
University of Saint Francis-Fort Wayne	IN	.39	.42	.06	.27	.01	.05	.54	.52	.28
University of Saint Joseph	CT	.42	.37	.13	.33	.01	.08	.52	.52	.40
University of Saint Mary	KS	.41	.32	.08	.	.	.	.53	.54	.50
University of San Diego	CA	.23	.18	.19	.59	.12	.05	.75	.77	.76
University of San Francisco	CA	.28	.26	.19	.48	.06	.06	.69	.53	.71
University of Scranton	PA	.21	.20	.07	.55	.03	.03	.82	.72	.81
University of St Francis	IL	.44	.37	.13	.35	.00	.05	.57	.58	.50
	TX	.38	.34	.38	.39	.04	.09	.51	.48	.52
University of St Thomas	MN	.15	.20	.04	.57	.07	.02	.75	.63	.69
University of the Incarnate Word	TX	.44	.42	.60	.23	.02	.15	.40	.42	.39
Ursuline College	OH	.40	.42	.02	.21	.00	.05	.50	.35	.00
Villanova University	PA	.14	.12	.07	.70	.10	.02	.90	.71	.91
Viterbo University	WI	.32	.38	.02	.23	.01	.06	.47	.52	.25
Walsh University	OH	.38	.33	.02	.23	.01	.05	.55	.52	.44
Wheeling Jesuit University	WV	.31	.25	.03	.27	.01	.07	.54	.38	.40
Xavier University	OH	.19	.18	.04	.56	.06	.03	.76	.58	.68
Xavier University of Louisiana	LA	.31	.57	.02	.25	.00	.17	.48	.43	.53

Response to Laura Nichols

Julian Bourg

Laura Nichols brings a comparative and data-rich intervention to the table. She contrasts two realities: on the one hand, the contemporary tendency of higher education to reinforce class stratification; on the other hand, the ways that American Catholic higher education in an earlier era facilitated economic opportunity and class mobility, especially among immigrant populations. She furthermore compares Catholic, private, and public colleges and universities today, as she zeroes in on Hispanic and first-generation students. Catholic schools have higher graduation rates (including among Hispanic students) than non-Catholic schools, but also smaller proportions of low-income and first-generation students. This map is ultimately submitted to a mission-related question: do Catholic colleges and universities have special responsibilities to facilitate class mobility as an expression of the pursuit of the common good? They ended up achieving this from the nineteenth century through the postwar era, but today we seem in danger of failing to do so.

To be sure, the nineteenth-century model may have reflected a combination of unrepeatable circumstances. Public higher education only developed gradually, and many Catholics were excluded from private universities (it would be interesting to know more about Catholics and public institutions). Likewise, immigration patterns and economic development were rooted in a now-passed industrial era. In spite of real challenges, between the 1850s and 1950s, Catholic ethnic communities from Europe ultimately benefited from more general economic and political progress. Education in general reduces income and wealth inequality, and Catholic schools participated in this larger historical process, certainly playing a unique role in the transition from minority ethnic enclaves to Americanized suburbia. Yet, alongside real continuities in American immigration between the nineteenth century and today, there may also be important

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differences to consider: cycles of economic contraction since the 1970s and forms of racialization that Irish and Italians never had to confront.

Similarly, in spite of real continuities in Catholic worldviews between the nineteenth century and today, there may be further differences to observe. Has economic mobility been a main driver of Catholic educational mission or one of its happy by-products? Undoubtedly since the 1890s, Catholic social thought has asserted economic equality and human flourishing not just as values but as institutional goals. There is probably a healthy discussion to be had about different aspects of Catholic mission that, although envisioned holistically, may pull against each other: for instance, (1) preferential treatment of the needy (*caritas*), (2) human flourishing (does this mean opportunity or equality or mobility, or all or none of the above?), and (3) the salvation of souls (for which materialism may be irrelevant). It matters which aspect of the whole picture one emphasizes: are Catholic colleges places where we give rich kids a conscience or where poor kids get the chance to join the middle class? A holistic worldview has to answer: both. In addition to serving as on-ramps for economically disadvantaged children, Catholic education also has long trained economic and political elites. The gospel does not call for a radical redistribution of wealth, except for all the places where it does. One advantage of the Catholic intellectual tradition is its capacity to engage and integrate new ways of understanding the world; it is thus important to continue to supplement the gospel message with the perspectives of contemporary social scientific and humanistic knowledge. We can distinguish, for example, social mobility from equality; we can question the limits of meritocracy that give comparative advantage to students who begin with a head start in terms of financial and cultural wealth; and we can distinguish different types of “front row” and “back row” kids who have different needs and challenges while each remains a deserving human being.

Nichols delivers powerful evidence that our schools are in danger of losing track of a crucial aspect of Catholic mission when we reinforce and replicate twenty-first-century American class stratification. It is an appeal to values and principles, and one that is hard to disagree with. Class stratification diminishes human flourishing. Much of the present dilemma in the United States, however, stems from institutional patterns and constraints of the higher education landscape that surpass Catholic schools. American Catholic colleges and universities are, after all, also *American* colleges and universities; they are not exempt from competition for students, fundraising and alumni pressures, the pull on students between education and professionalization, the giant footprint of athletics, and so forth. Over the past 40 years, the United States has experienced some of the greatest stratification and concentration of wealth in its history—a political-economic reality that uniquely affects poor and immigrant families. High tuition costs place college education outside the reach of many, yet they also help subsidize lower-income students (the “discount rate”). Such mild forms of economic redistribution do not do much to address the overall historical situation of wealth stratification and concentration. Something in this unsustainable model is going to give sooner or later,

although in the short term lowering tuition costs risks creating the appearance of lower “value” as schools compete for the best students.

Between a holistic mission that loves rich kids as much as poor ones, on the one hand, and the inescapable patterns and constraints of American higher education on the other hand, Nichols is right to imagine nudging our institutions toward a distinctive “niche.” In the end, doing so will depend on the capacity of university presidents and trustees to make courageous decisions to lead in the face of considerable pressures. Leadership is hard, and real limitations cannot be underestimated. But Catholic colleges and universities have a card others cannot play: the social gospel. Students, faculty, staff, and administrators can remind our institutions of our distinctive calling, that its aspiration to holism is always incomplete and that, when push comes to shove, priority *should* be given to those most in need. Institutions that explicitly embrace moral commitments are accountable to those commitments. Catholic institutions experience in particular ways the call to integrate the *ought* to which we aspire with the world that *is* (a world that includes constraints and limitations but also possibilities for action). A holistic worldview demands integration.

The fact that 60% of American Catholics under 18 years old are Latino and only 2.3% of them attend K-12 Catholic schools—this is a stunning statistic. Latino students who make it to Catholic colleges and universities have better graduation rates. We need more Latino students in Catholic primary schools and better recruitment of public school Latino students to Catholic colleges. What will this cost and who will pay for it? The answer is in the kind of concrete, intentional, and innovative programs Nichols mentions: LEAD at Santa Clara, Arrupe College at Loyola Chicago, etc. Even though, as she says, “Catholic colleges do not appear to have a directive or mandate to function primarily as a lever for social equality and mobility,” at the same time, Catholic colleges have the “potential ... to contribute to economic social mobility.” It is a “leadership opportunity.” There are always good reasons not to lead. But the tension between the broken world and the healing power of the Kingdom motivates a Church that seeks God in all things.

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Summary of Roundtable Conversation

Members of the Roundtable responded to Laura Nichols's and Julian Bourg's essays with unanimous concern about how Catholic colleges and universities actively seek out and welcome students whose families struggle financially. One respondent pointed to the efforts of the Yes We Must Coalition,¹ which gives attention to the challenges of students eligible for Pell Grants—those who meet a financial need determined by the U.S. Department of Education. Another respondent later pointed to the fact that most of the top Pell Grant-receiving institutions were public, meaning that many low-income students do not attend private institutions. Are Catholic institutions sufficiently attentive to poor students? The Roundtable considered this question at length.

In the background of the conversation, often identified specifically, was the realization that Catholic colleges and universities must confront significant financial challenges simply to keep afloat. The neuralgic mission question that several participants named had to do with the balance of wealthy and poor students, and how that balance reflected the overall social dimension of the college mission. One participant, for example, raised the question of what graduates of our institutions do after they leave campus: do they engage in social change? Two participants pointed to a new instrument offered by the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, namely the Catholic Identity Mission Assessment tool (CIMA),² which will allow campuses to track students' formation from first year through graduation, and then to follow up with alumni to learn how they regard the formative experience of their university years. At present the data is limited, but within a few years we will know more.

The attention to upward economic mobility for poor students is certainly a good, but some participants suggested that alone it may not be an adequate measure of university mission. Social mobility, argued one participant, is often conflated with equality; but to do so is to accept an underlying premise of meritocracy. If a person is smart enough, goes the argument, then there ought to be no barrier to his or her social advancement. Such an argument, she pointed out, presumes that smart people should advance, and leaves out those who do not have academic skill or whose gifts may be in nonacademic pursuits. She shared the story of her diverse parish where the parish council was comprised of doctors, gardeners, and house painters. Using this example, she questioned

1 <http://www.yeswemustcoalition.org/>.

2 <http://accunet.org/CIMA>.

the prejudice that education constitutes a person's social worth. Perhaps, she argued, colleges ought to draw poor students; but they ought not reinforce the prejudice that social worth is possible only through education. Others agreed, and noted that the larger social challenge may be less about educating everyone equally and more about changing social attitudes that looked down on those without education.

Returning to some of the statistics that Laura Nichols provided, another participant shared his dismay about the completion rates for low-income students. Several shared concern about the overall cost of education, and the increasing gap they see on their campuses between very rich students and low-income students. A number wondered whether Catholic colleges could compete with public institutions, especially in light of debates about free college education in places like New York state. One participant expressed particular concern about the disparity at his institution, where almost three-quarters of the students come from the upper 20% of the income ladder, with a mere 2% from the bottom 20%. It affects the culture, he observed—and many agreed that there are significant problems for poorer students who feel lost amidst the assumption of wealth. One participant wondered what a comparison with Canadian universities might yield, since their education system is based on a different tax structure. Others pointed to the challenges of poor students overcoming cultural challenges: having money for the bus to go home at holidays; affording books; being able to go out to a restaurant; having enough clothes to last a week or doing laundry on a regular basis. Meanwhile, rich students talk about vacations. Poor students, according to one participant, often feel “invisible.” All our conversations about diversity, argued another, do not touch the issue of economic diversity, and our institutions are at a loss because of this lacuna. Among other things, one person pointed out, campuses that assume wealth may have a dearth of gratitude as a formative practice.

Part of the structural issue that participants named was the discounting system, which sends false messages to prospective students. Those who are first generation, for example, may see an untouchable price tag and consider private education entirely out of reach. One participant called it “an inflated system”—one which advertises, for example, a price of \$30,000 but later offers \$25,000 worth of financial aid. It has lost sight of its original function, which was to help talented poor students to attend a college. One participant raised the question of whether there was an alternative: what if, he asked, students educated in Catholic colleges pledged to work for a certain time in Catholic schools, health care, or other institutions which subsidized their student loans, not unlike government subsidizing of volunteers in programs like Teach for America?

Graduation rates among students from disadvantaged backgrounds are related to questions about promoting student retention, noted one participant. She pointed to several predictors of student success as particular priorities for poor students: student research with a professor; excellent advising; and others. These priorities call professors to personal engagement with students, particularly those who might otherwise feel invisible. In a related vein, other participants pointed to the way that the Church retains

its membership (or not), and how Catholic schooling at any level is one predictor of success. The challenge is particularly acute for Hispanics, noted another, because the vast majority do not have opportunities to attend Catholic schools. Even if they did, noted another, they would not encounter faculty and staff who looked like them or spoke Spanish. At all levels, there is a challenge to have a faculty that represents the population we seek to invite. If students perceive too great a distance between their professors and themselves, is it likely that a personal connection will happen?

