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## Making the Mission: Center for Catholic Education Celebrates 20 Years

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# School of Education and Health Sciences

## MAKING THE MISSION

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## Making the Mission: Center for Catholic Education Celebrates 20 Years

The Center for Catholic Education (CCE) was founded in 1996 upon the idea of collaboration—that Catholic universities, including the University of Dayton, could help Catholic elementary and secondary schools through outreach and support. This year, UD will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Center of Catholic Education and 20 years of successful collaboration.

The CCE has upheld its mission, that “through collaboration, research and creative action, the Center for Catholic Education, in close connection with the University of Dayton and with the Marianists, serves and leads the local, national and global Catholic school community.”

To accomplish this goal, collaboration has been essential within the Center, the School of Education and Health Sciences, the University, and the Catholic schools they serve since the very beginning. Its history is rich with flourishing ideas and partnerships, and the CCE’s community outreach has been established little by little over the past 20 years.

“I think UD has been at the forefront of growing and solidifying these partnerships with both our local schools and other Catholic universities,” said Susan Ferguson, director of the Center for Catholic Education. “We want to gather people together to discuss best practice, find out what teachers need, and build faith and academic excellence to help students reach their full potential.”



### **A history in the making**

In the ‘90s, Theodore (TJ) Wallace, then-president of Chaminade Julianne High School, and local business leader Clay Mathile sought out ways to improve aspects of the school’s operation. They experienced great success, and began sharing their ideas with other Catholic schools. This eventually led to an organized effort to establish a Center for Catholic Education at the University of Dayton. The initiative was widely supported by Bro. Ray Fitz, S.M., president of UD at the time, and many other University and community members.

A knowledgeable consultant team established the mission and identity, and the CCE was positioned as an advocate for Catholic schools that would provide strategic planning and research. In 1998, the CCE started focusing on curriculum development in addition to the strategic planning.

The three largest initiatives established by the CCE thus far are the Lalanne program, Urban Childhood Development Resource Center (UCDRC), and St. Remy Initiative, among many others.



The Lalanne program, directed by Jacinta Mergler and aligned with the ACE program at the University of Notre Dame, allows teachers to work in underserved Catholic schools while living in community. They are paid a stipend, and work towards a master’s degree at UD during the summer. Bro. Ed Brink, S.M., was the first director of Lalanne and the first cohort of teachers was placed throughout Dayton schools in 1999. Lalanne teachers are now placed throughout the Midwest region, and continue to help teachers get the experience they need for a career in Catholic education, while providing Catholic schools with necessary educational resources and support in the classroom.

During Sister Angela Ann Lydon’s tenure as director of the CCE, the UCDRC was established in 2002 to support healthy learning environments and address learning barriers facing students in urban Catholic schools. The program offers

counseling and intervention, violence prevention programs, personal safety programs and assessments, and other family services.

Finally, the St. Remy Initiative was piloted in 2006 and implemented in 2007 to focus on professional development for Catholic principals and educators. Led by Toni Moore, it is a partnership between the Catholic Leadership Institute Project (CLIP), the CCE, and the Catholic School Office of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Over the course of three years, educators learn and strengthen their skills in spiritual, educational and organizational leadership. Participating schools can send educators to take part in retreats, development days, and other projects.

### **A mission upheld**

These are just a few of the ways the CCE has impacted the community over the years. When Susan Ferguson, the current director, took her role in 2007, the programming only continued to grow. Recently, the CCE staff has focused much of its time and effort on professional development for Catholic educators. This includes hosting the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) conference on STREAM initiatives (Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Art and Math), as well as establishing the Excellence Initiative, which helps schools align with the Archdiocese of Cincinnati standards. In addition, the Literacy Leaders Initiative, focuses on improving literacy for Catholic school students.

One of the most recent and groundbreaking initiatives is the annual Catholic Education Summit. This event invites all individuals with an interest in Catholic education for an informational and inspirational event to discuss and share the commitment to furthering the Catholic mission in schools nationwide. On campus partners for the Summit include the Center for Early Learning, the Institute for Pastoral Initiatives, CLIP, and the Departments of Teacher Education and Educational Administration.



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This year, the Center for Catholic Education will bring all of their initiatives together for the 2016 Lead, Contemplate, Innovate Colloquium to celebrate its 20th anniversary. This series of events will be held Thursday, June 23 through Saturday, June 25. On Thursday, the Saint Remy Symposium will enable educators from across the region to network and discuss how to start their own St. Remy programs. On Friday, the Catholic Education Summit will take place with a number of guest speakers to explore the theme of Contemplation and Technology in Schools and how to integrate the two in a way that remains true to the Catholic mission. A celebratory dinner will be held Friday evening. A Christian Meditation with Children will be held on Saturday.

While many of the partnerships formed and strengthened over the years have been based in the Dayton area, the outreach is now extending far beyond it. One of Ferguson's goals and insights for the future is to get Catholic higher education working even more with Catholic elementary and secondary schools to speak a common language and explore how problems can be solved collaboratively.

### **Rewarding success**

There have been leaps and bounds of successful impact demonstrated throughout the CCE's 20-year history, and the individuals who have helped make it happen are being recognized for that success.

Ferguson has been awarded a 2016 Learn. Lead. Proclaim Award by the National Catholic Educational Association to "recognize outstanding Catholic school educators."



While Ferguson said she was humbled to receive an award that acknowledges such efforts in the field of Catholic education, she emphasized it was a combined effort of everyone in the Center for Catholic Education—past and present—that have helped make it what it is today.

“The staff members in the center are among the most hardworking people I have ever met, and I think it’s because they have such passion for Catholic schools,” she said. “They are all faith-filled,

committed, dedicated people and it’s an honor to be recognized for the work we’ve all contributed to.”

*Erin Callahan '15*

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