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# Catholic Identity in Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools in the United States

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Catholic Identity in Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools in the United States

Thomas R. Leto, CFC

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of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education

Seton Hall University

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**SETON HALL UNIVERSITY**  
**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
**OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE**

**Brother Thomas R. Leto**, has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ed.D.** during this **Spring Semester 2018**.

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### **Abstract**

Over the past 25 years, if not longer, the number of vowed religious priests, brothers, and sisters actively teaching and administering in Catholic elementary and secondary schools has decreased dramatically. One might say that they are a vanishing breed, and the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers are no exception. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how the Church's Catholic identity is strengthened, communicated, and remains vibrant in schools and ministries currently under the care and sponsorship of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers. It is important to assess the Catholic identity of the schools under the Brothers' care while determining the programs and measures needed to ensure that same Catholic identity. An additional purpose is to develop those practices and programs that will insure that the traditions and charism of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers continues in their ministries in the United States.

In the document *To Teach As Jesus Did* (1972), the bishops of the United States proclaimed that schools, to be authentically Catholic, must have at their foundation three pieces that are interwoven. Catholic schools must proclaim the message of the Gospels of Jesus Christ, continue building the Kingdom of God on earth (form community), and provide service to the People of God. Since that document, the Sacred Congregation for Education (the Vatican) along with many others have added greatly to what it means to be an authentically Catholic school.

This study utilized a quantitative approach through the use of a Likert scale survey entitled the Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index. The survey was distributed to staff, faculty, administrators, and board members of nine Edmund Rice secondary schools

across the country. Three hundred forty completed surveys were analyzed and the results reported in this study.

Those engaged in the educational ministry of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers who participated in the survey reported that each of the schools displayed a strong sense of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism through school environment, spiritual life, school programs, ceremony, and traditions, and admissions. The results of the survey indicated a number of ways to continue strengthening Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism through utilization of school mission statements, in-service opportunities for faculty and staff, intentional hiring, and developing programs for student spiritual leadership.

The study provides both school and Province leadership insights and ideas to continuing Jesus' command "to teach all nations."

## Acknowledgments

Any number of years ago I began an educational journey that culminated with this dissertation. In any worthwhile endeavor in life, one cannot go it alone. I am most grateful to those people who walked part of the journey along with me. My Catholic School Leadership Cohort showed me that our Church is indeed blessed with many young, talented men and women ready to take on the challenges of leadership in our Catholic elementary and secondary schools. Their friendship and advice were most welcome and helped support my endeavors.

The faculty members at Seton Hall continually inspire their students to do better. To each one of those visionary educators I owe a great debt of gratitude. Most recently, my dissertation committee had a tremendous impact on my ability to complete the process from start to finish. Dr. Anthony Colella, as mentor, chair, and friend, offered advice and support throughout. I would not have dreamed of beginning this dissertation in its present form if not for Dr. Barbara Strobert—her advice, her insistence on certain issues, her kindness—all enabled me to complete the project. Dr. Connie McCue and Dr. Luke Stedrak were always there for encouragement and assistance. Their help, assistance, and friendship were invaluable.

My colleagues in Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools across the United States provided valuable assistance and insights throughout the process. I could not have collected and collated the data without their help. I also need to thank Mr. Joe Fresco, currently a graduate assistant at Seton Hall, for his assistance piecing together the Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index and then helping me sort through the data.

Last, I need to thank both my Mom and Dad. They instilled in me the desire to learn and urged me to continue being a life-long learner. To all, thank you!

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Introduction

In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at the Plenary Council of Baltimore, the American Catholic bishops directed every pastor of a Catholic Church to build a school to enable the large Catholic immigrant population to receive a decidedly Catholic education. Doris Gottemoeller, RSM, (2005), in her article “Catholic Institutional Ministries: Their History and Legacy,” explains that the attendees, bishops and priests from across the country, gathered in Baltimore to discuss the growing Catholic Church in the United States and how to respond to the demands of an ever-increasing immigrant population. Those in attendance felt that the establishment of Catholic schools next to each parish church would help maintain the faith of those Catholic families coming to America in search of a new way of life. Sr. Doris further states that the Second Provincial Council of Cincinnati finalized the decision to build and maintain a decidedly Catholic school system (Gottemoeller, p. 57).

The bishops’ decree at these two Councils, more than any other force in our country, led to the construction of a vast network of Catholic schools across the nation. This decision, as well as the efforts of many Catholic religious orders, led to the building of the largest religiously affiliated school system in the country. Many groups of religious sisters, priests, and brothers did much to foster the Catholic faith through education.

The Catholic school system in the United States was largely built by the efforts of men and women religious. However, it was religious women who pioneered the building of what has come to be known as the American Catholic school system. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967) explains that “the genius of the American Catholic elementary school is the dedicated

force of religious women who staff these schools.” (Volume 5, p. 133). Further, the article mentions that there were approximately 200 Catholic parochial schools operating by the year 1840 (p. 134).

The present-day configuration of Catholic schools across the United States does not represent one system. In his work *The Catholic School: Its Roots, Identity and Future*, Fr. Harold Buetow (1988) explains that although Catholic schools are similar in many respects, that fact does not take away from their breadth and diversity, marking them as distinct one from the other (p. 16). Catholic schools nationally, by their very nature, are linked to one another by their “Catholicity,” but not by any legalistic measure. The Ordinary (bishop) of each diocese is the head of the system in his particular diocese. The reason for the existence of any Catholic school is the delivery of the faith to the People of God. It is why they are “Catholic.”

In their seminal document *To Teach As Jesus Did*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1972 stated unequivocally what is at the foundation of a Catholic school. The bishops explain that as part of the educational mission of the Church, each school ministry must have at its core three distinct pieces that are intertwined one with the other. In order to be authentically Catholic, educational ministries and institutions must demonstrate their mission in three different ways: proclaim the message that was revealed to mankind through both the Old and New Testaments, build the Kingdom of God on earth (forming community), and last, provide service to the People of God (pp. 4, 5). For many years, proclaiming the Word of God, building community, and providing service was the essence of being a Catholic school.

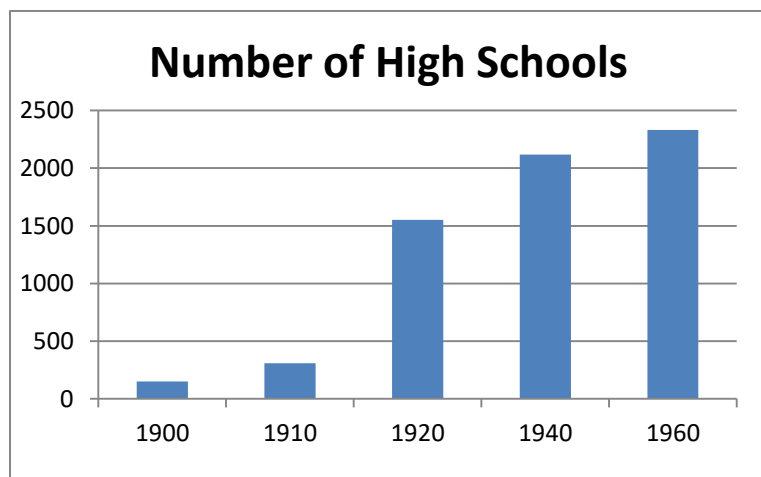
As the Catholic school “system” was being built, many men’s religious orders, along with women religious, saw the need to provide a distinctly Catholic education to the burgeoning immigrant populations. The Jesuits, Dominicans, Franciscans, and many other religious orders

of priests and brothers began building their own network of schools that today stretches from coast to coast. The Congregation of Christian Brothers arrived in the United States in 1908 and began its own foray into Catholic education in this country.

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a great expansion of Catholic schools across the country

Table 1

*Number of High Schools*



with the opening of secondary schools nearly matching the growth on the elementary level.

Table 1 (*The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 142) above depicts the number of Catholic high schools and academies that were opened between 1900 and 1960 across the United States. For most of the early years of Catholic education, high schools throughout the country were operated by religious orders—religious sisters opening schools for girls and religious priests and brothers managing schools for boys. In 1964, there were 13,205 secondary and elementary schools in the United States staffed by 112,599 professed religious men and women and 53,957 lay men and women educating 2,760,411 students. (*The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 146).

Blessed Edmund Rice's Congregation of Christian Brothers, founded in 1802 in Waterford, Ireland, arrived in North America at St. John's, Newfoundland, in January of 1876.

The influence of the Congregation quickly spread across this Canadian Province. Then, in 1908, the Congregation accepted an invitation from Msgr. James W. Power to teach at All Saints Elementary School in New York City. The following year, 1909, All Hallows Institute was the first United States ministry founded by the Congregation of Christian Brothers on 124<sup>th</sup> Street in New York City. From these humble beginnings, the Congregation spread across both the United States and Canada, opening numerous schools and accepting invitations of a number of bishops to staff others.

During the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, there were close to 1,000 Edmund Rice Christian Brothers teaching and ministering in approximately 30 sites across the continent. The article “U.S. Catholic Schools and the Religious Who Served Them” by Richard M. Jacobs (1998) provides some insight into the numbers of schools and religious staffing them through the years. Fr. Jacobs details the decline in the number of schools and religious teaching in them.

If the first six decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were the “boom years” for U.S. Catholic schooling, a more sanguine picture emerged during the three decades following the Second Vatican Council. Between 1965 and 1995, Catholic elementary schools decreased by more than one-third (35.4%). Almost one half of Catholic secondary schools closed as well, decreasing by 49.1%. Not only did the number of Catholic schools decline 37.9%, enrollment plummeted (52.7%) . . . In 1995, there were 118,761 teachers in the nation’s Catholic elementary schools. The religious numbered 10,002—an 86.8% decrease from 1965. Teachers in Catholic secondary schools in 1965 numbered 57,013, while in 1995 there were 48,006—a 15.7% decrease . . . The number of religious in Catholic secondary schools decreased 85% between 1965 and 1995 (pp. 159-160).

Over the decades, hundreds, if not thousands, of committed religious men and women educated countless thousands of Catholic boys and girls in elementary and secondary schools across the nation. From coast to coast, the Catholic school system grew to be the largest private school system in the country, where only the enrollment in the nation's public schools was larger.

In the first few decades of the 1800s, a strong nativist movement began to appear across the country. Sr. Doris Gottemoeller (2005) explains the many Catholic immigrant groups, in response to this growing threat, wanted to ensure the preservation of their faith and culture in this new world. It was evident to many of the newcomers that their Church was a vehicle through which this could happen. During the 1850s, anti-Catholic sentiment and anti-clerical feelings reached a high point. It was at this time that the Catholic Church pushed their pastors to establish parochial schools (Gottemoeller, 2005, p. 57).

It is important to understand that as more Catholic immigrants arrived on the shores of the United States, more and more distinctly Catholic social services were required—education being of primary concern. Immigrants needed to be assured of their own culture and by having their children attend a Catholic parochial school instead of the local public school, they could be reasonably certain their children would continue learning math, English, science, social studies and other subjects through the lens of the Catholic faith. This clearly was an attempt on the part of the Church and the immigrant group to reinforce their Catholic Identity (Gottemoeller, 2005, pp. 58, 59).

The enormous task of building a decidedly Catholic educational system was accomplished by the insistence of the American bishops and American clergy through the enduring efforts of many, many religious orders. The human capital alone in completing this



venture was something that cannot be overstated. Over the years, religious men and women in large numbers helped build up one of the most academically rigorous systems of schools outside the public sector in our country. In his work “*Catholic High Schools: Facing the New Realities*,” Fr. James Heft (2011) explains, “Whether German or English speakers, the Catholics of the United States, the bishops argued, needed their own primary schools. The bishops did not mince words; they stated clearly and forcefully that the preservation of the faith was most important, and that Catholic schools were the best means to do so” (Heft, 2011, p. 21).

As Catholic schools continued to be built in the United States, the Catholic bishops took more notice. Fr. Buetow (1988) suggests that the local Ordinary (bishop of the diocese) is responsible for the education of his people, especially as it relates to faith and morals. The bishop has the authority (and responsibility) to establish schools within his diocese that are decidedly Catholic, and each of those schools is under his auspices. Certainly, the local pastor has much to say about the workings of the school in his parish, but it is the bishop of the diocese who has final control (Buetow, p. 169, 170). Buetow goes on to point out that Canon Law hands to the bishop absolute control and responsibility for any school in his diocese whether or not it is led by a religious order. It is understood, however, that any school owned by a religious order exhibits autonomous management of the internal workings of the institution (Buetow, p. 227, 228).

Regardless of the administrative background of any particular Catholic secondary school within the United States, the common thread, the one thing that connects one Catholic high school to another, is the term *Catholic*. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1972 reaffirmed that education, practiced through the Catholic faith, was the most successful way to ensure that young people would grow and mature in a Christ-like manner. Schools that adhered

to the three measures of Catholic identity—proclaiming the message, building community, and providing service—were by far the most authentic in educating the whole child in matters of faith, life, and morals (National Conference, 1972, p. 33).

Although there were many and varied religious orders involved in building up the Catholic school system in the United States, there was only one distinguishing trait that kept them together. Reverend David O’Connell, former president of Catholic University, in an address entitled “Maintaining Catholic Identity in Our Catholic Schools” in March of 2004, stated it this way:

Our Catholic identity is rooted in the “turning point” that humanity encountered in Jesus Christ. What we are as Catholics is based upon that encounter and what developed from it, the Church. The “continuity and sameness” that has endured for over two thousand years—our Catholic identity—enables us in every age and circumstance to act in accordance with our identity and our identification with Jesus Christ.

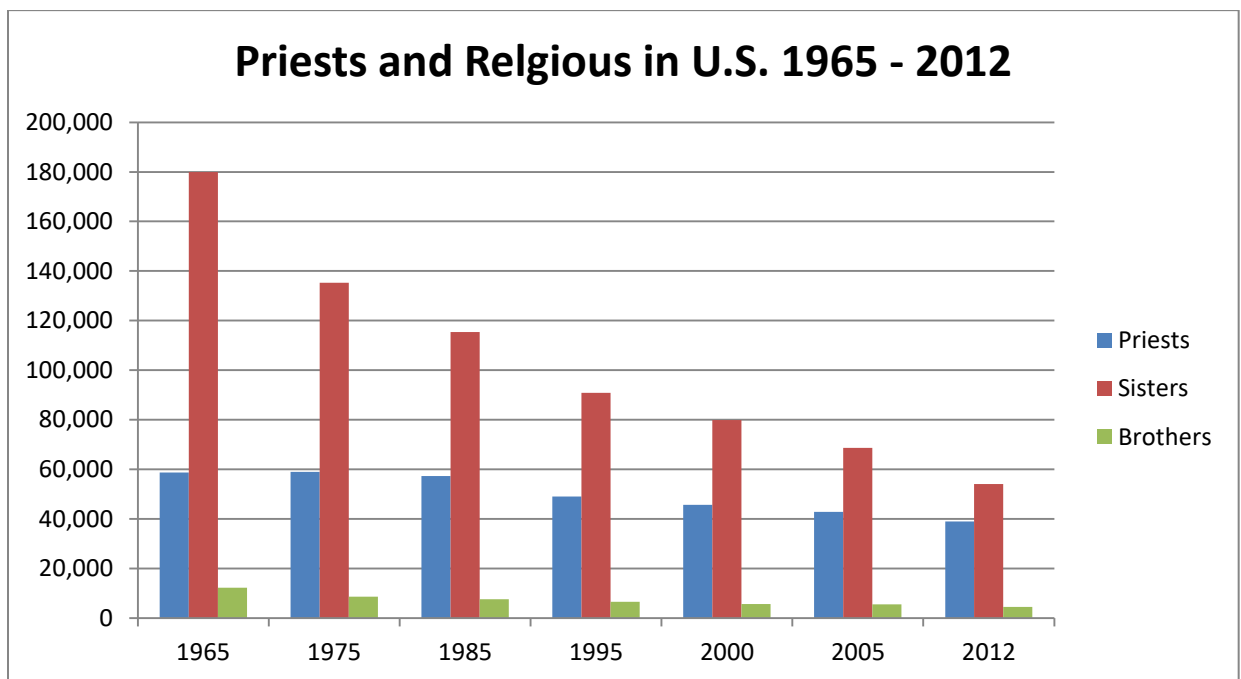
Every Catholic school, by its nature, has a unique “continuity and sameness” one to the other across our nation. It is the school’s Catholic identity that brings them together and yet separates them from the public sector as well as other private schools, religiously affiliated or not. It is the one unique quality that, from school to school, is the same: the belief in God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Regardless of the particular “brand”—be it Jesuit, Dominican, Franciscan, Christian Brother, Marist Brother, Sisters of Mercy, Sisters of Charity—regardless, each school proclaims the message of Jesus, builds up community, provides service and comes together in worship—all central to Catholic identity. The “brand” or charism, makes Catholic identity unique to the institution.

### Statement of the Problem

Over the past 50 years, the number of diocesan priests and vowed religious (sisters, brothers, and priests) teaching and ministering in Catholic secondary schools across the United States has declined rapidly. This decline has been experienced in all ministries of the Church but especially in the Church's educational ministry. The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University has kept vital Roman Catholic statistics since 1964.

Table 2

*Priests and Religious in the U. S. 1965-2012*



The data shown in Table 2 (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2016) indicates there was a 28% decrease of diocesan priests from 1965 to 2015, a 49% decrease of religious order priests, a 73% decrease of religious sisters, and a 66% decrease of religious brothers for the same time period. The Congregation of Christian Brothers experienced a similar loss of numbers. In

nine of the Christian Brother communities active in the United States in 1965, there were 234 brothers in ministry. Today, in those same nine school communities, there are only 34 brothers, representing an almost 86% decrease.

As we witness a sharp decline in the number of consecrated religious men and women, there is also a dramatic increase in the number of Catholics in the United States. Since 1965, the number of Catholics increased by nearly 65% from approximately 48.5 million to 78.2 million. The declining number of priests and religious combined with the sharp increase in the number of Catholics has placed an added burden on those priests and religious still actively engaged in ministry in the Church. Jacobs (1988), in his study, speaks about the decline in the number of teaching religious as well as the increase in the number of lay men and women in the nation's Catholic schools.

In 1995, there were 118,761 teachers in the nation's Catholic elementary schools.

The religious numbered 10,002—an 86.8% decrease from 1965. Teachers in Catholic secondary schools in 1965 numbered 57,013, while in 1995 there were 48,006—a 15.7% decrease. Although the number of religious in Catholic secondary schools decreased 85% between 1965 and 1995, the actual percentage decrease was slightly more than one half—54.1% . . . . Incontestably, the number of religious teaching in the nation's Catholic schools was substantially lower (Jacobs, p. 160).

As mentioned previously, the primary function of a Catholic school is to pass on the Catholic faith. This does not happen in theology (religion) classes alone. Each member of the faculty, staff, administration, and board of directors is responsible in part to educate Catholic (and non-Catholic for that matter) young people in matters of faith and morals. As the number of

vowed religious (sisters, priests, brothers) teaching and working in Catholic schools across the nation, especially in Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools, continues to decline, programs and mechanisms must be in place to educate and inform lay faculty in matters of Catholic faith and spirituality so as to adequately prepare our young people for life after secondary school.

What was once taken for granted by having a large number of religious brothers staffing Christian Brother schools can no longer be counted upon. It is important to the continuation of schools in the tradition of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers to determine the extent to which Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism is prevalent and known to the faculty, staff, administrators, and members of the board of directors. Also, it is vital to provide insights as to what is needed to ensure that strong sense of Catholic identity and Edmund Rice Christian Brother charism to continue long after there are no Christian Brothers available to carry on the work.

During the 2010-2011 academic year, in Catholic high schools across the nation, there were 1,052 religious sisters, 633 religious brothers, and 812 clergy (priests and deacons). The very next academic year, 2011-2012, the number of sisters rose to 1,057, while the number of brothers declined to 574 and the number of clergy dropped by 26% to 598 (McDonald & Schultz, 2011, 2012). Each year there has been a sharp decline in the number of available religious and clergy to work in Catholic high schools. This decline has been mirrored in Christian Brother schools. The loss of Christian Brothers in the schools impacts the ability to continue imparting the faith to their students. Christian Brother schools are finding creative ways to ensure that Catholic identity and Edmund Rice charism is sound and continues to flourish. There are several schools today where there is a complete absence of Christian Brothers on staff.

Timothy Cook, in his work *Charism and Culture: Cultivating Catholic Identity in Catholic Schools* (2015), defines charism this way: Charisms (the word *charism* comes from the Greek, meaning *gift*) are typically defined as gifts of the Holy Spirit used to build up the Church and world in glory to God (Cook, 2015, p. 5). Cook begins his monograph by stating emphatically that “Catholic identity stands at the heart of Catholic education” (Cook, 2015, p. 1). A congregation’s charism and Catholic identity are intricately entwined in the overall culture of the Catholic school.

As Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools continue to fulfill their mission to educate the hearts, minds, souls, and bodies of young people across the United States, the need for constant reminders of who and what Christian Brother educators are, is absolutely necessary. It is the mission of each educator in a Christian Brother school to call all students to holiness and sainthood. Hopefully, as a result of this study, Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools will find that they enjoy a strong sense of being a truly Catholic institution in the tradition of Blessed Edmund Rice. Even so, the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers are keenly aware that there is a need to constantly strengthen and identify those things that make their schools decidedly Catholic, both the tangible and the intangible.

Those Christian Brothers in leadership positions sense there are a number of issues tied in with the preservation of Catholic identity, including culture, finance, and program. Fr. James Heft suggests that administrators, presidents, and principals, the leadership of many Catholic secondary schools across the country, have spent inordinate amounts of time over the past numbers of decades on three important factors:

1. Ensuring the financial security of their respective institutions
2. Establishing and maintaining the academic integrity of the schools

3. Maintaining and growing the Catholic nature of the school when the number of priests and religious sisters and brothers continues to diminish (Heft, 2011, p. 142).

At one point in the history of the Congregation of Christian Brothers in North America, the large numbers of religious Brothers and the increasing number of schools and other ministries called for a change in the governance structure. In 1966, the Congregation split the North American/Canadian Vice Province into three separate Provinces: Canadian, Eastern American, and Western American Provinces, each with its own separate governing system. During the next two and a half decades, the Congregation continued to thrive in both Canada and the United States. However, the late 1980s and the following two decades witnessed a radical decline in membership and the closing of a number of ministry sites. In 2000, due to decreasing numbers of professed brothers and the rapid aging of those remaining, the three Provinces began deliberations to merge. In July of 2005, the three Provinces once again joined together under one governance structure.

### **Purpose of the Study**

There is a lack of literature on the topic of Catholic identity in Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools in the United States. The purpose of the study was to explore how the Church's Catholic identity is strengthened, communicated, and remains vibrant in the schools and ministries currently under the care and sponsorship of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers while the number of active Christian Brothers continues to decline. Further, the purpose of the analysis was to assess the Catholic identity of the following educational institutions:

All Hallows High School, Bronx, NY

Bergen Catholic High School, Oradell, NJ

Brother Rice High School, Bloomfield Hills, MI

Brother Rice High School, Chicago, IL

Catholic Memorial High School, West Roxbury, MA

Damien Memorial High School, Honolulu, HA

Iona Preparatory School, New Rochelle, NY

Palma School, Salinas, CA

St. Laurence High School, Burbank, IL

While the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers minister in other schools and other types of organizations, this study was limited to the institutions cited above because these schools were founded, constructed, and opened under the aegis of the Congregation and not by the particular diocese in which they are located. The research was intended to find those factors that enable the vibrant and energized teaching of the faith to future generations of students. It is hoped that through this evaluation of programs and offerings, best practices of perpetuating and instilling Catholic identity into the very fabric of the educational communities involved will be recognized, codified, and acclaimed. These practices can then be shared throughout the Edmund Rice Christian Brother network to ensure, as much as possible, the continuation of Jesus' command, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (*Matthew* 28: 19-20). The study may help determine the programs and measures needed to insure a strong, vibrant, and categorically Catholic identity in each of these learning communities. Also, the study may help codify and develop those practices and programs that will ensure that the traditions and charism of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers continue as their legacy to Catholic education in the United States.



### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were posed for this study:

1. What factors affect the Catholic identity of Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools in the United States?
2. In the face of declining numbers of professed religious Brothers on staff in Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools, what programs and policies may help to protect the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice and the Catholic identity of the schools?
3. What steps may help foster the Catholic identity and the sustainability of Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools?
4. Are there differences in the perceptions of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism from one school to another?

### **Significance of the Study**

Today, there are 187 Edmund Rice Christian Brothers throughout North America, whose median age is 75 years old, serving in various capacities in schools and other ministries. How then, with so few religious Brothers in the schools and other ministry sites, does the Congregation continue passing on the faith, culture, traditions, and spirituality of the Roman Catholic Church? How does a Congregation guarantee that the Gospel message of Jesus Christ remains the major reason and impetus for any of their schools' existence?

As the numbers of professed religious brothers continues to decline, how can school, Provincial, and Congregational leadership continue the mission of evangelization and education in the schools currently operating successfully in the Edmund Rice network? What programs and policies may be put in place to foster and continue the charism and spirit of Blessed Edmund Rice and his followers? How might the leadership of each school continue to imbue its faculty,

staff, and students with the faith of the Roman Catholic Church and remain true to the teachings of Jesus Christ as evidenced in the Gospels?

The reality of today's world requires Christian Brother school administrators to rethink many of their assumptions formed over the past number of years. With all of the difficulties challenging Catholic secondary schools, Christian Brother schools among them, there is still an air of optimism throughout the system. The number of highly qualified lay men and women in the schools has grown and they continue to shoulder the burdens of leadership, presenting their school communities with appropriate programs that encourage, support, and strengthen Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism.

As Christian Brother high schools continue to fulfill their mission, collectively and independently, the need for constant reminders of who and what we are is absolutely necessary. Hopefully, all schools will continually find ways that show they enjoy a strong sense of being a truly Catholic institution and that their work in our world continues. Even so, we are keenly aware that we need to constantly strengthen and identify those things that make us decidedly Catholic, both the tangible and the intangible.

### **Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**

Any study of Catholic identity in Christian Brother schools must include the document *To Teach as Jesus Did*, published by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in November of 1972. This document has been cited previously and is mentioned in many articles, studies and other works dealing with Catholic identity, especially in the educational setting. It provides the foundation from which everything else is measured. The American Catholic bishops put to rest the questions regarding the essential elements of a Catholic education. This document frames Catholic education and Catholic identity around three areas: proclaiming the mission, forming

community, and reaching out to others in service to the community. These three interlocking values are the bedrock upon which all Catholic education is measured: message, community, and service.

In recent years, a fourth value has been added: worship. Timothy Cook, in his work *Architects of a Catholic Culture* (2001), points out that “in a Catholic school, the inspiration and rationale for a morning assembly, as well as its content and procedure, can take on a religious dimension. The goal should not only be to build community but, more so, to build a “faith community” (p. 47). James Heft and James Davidson in their study “The Mission of Catholic High Schools and Today’s Millennials: Three Suggestions” (2003), offer the following advice to Catholic school administrators:

We recommend that schools ensure that communal rituals be an integral part of students’ experiences . . . . Liturgical celebrations should be done frequently and well. Students should be invited to help plan the liturgies, but need guidance so that the liturgies do not become performances or exercises in self-expression.

The time taken to teach students how to read in public, how to perform liturgical dance (special encouragement is needed in this practice for male students), and how to sing well together, and even in harmony, is time well spent. Celebrants must, of course, have a sense of the community and the particulars of the celebration; otherwise, their presence may seem accidental or even foreign. In our experience, not enough time is devoted to students to celebrate the liturgy.

(p. 419)

Providing meaningful worship experiences for students in secondary schools helps them to build on their relationship with God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It also reinforces the basic

teachings and traditions of the Church while adding to and strengthening the Catholic identity of the entire school community.

With regard to Catholic educational ministry, *To Teach as Jesus Did* is the basis for all measurement and analysis. The bishops recognize that all Catholics, especially those directly involved in Catholic educational ministry, are responsible for proclaiming the message, creating community, and inspiring service. “Of the educational programs available to the Catholic community, Catholic schools afford the fullest and best opportunity to realize the threefold purpose of Christian education among children and young people” (National Conference, 1972, p. 28). It goes without saying that a Catholic school embodies those elements in the very fiber of its being. In *Validating the Vision* (1999), Sr. Mary Frances Taymans discusses the importance of Catholic identity to the school and the community. “A Catholic school’s uniqueness is its core of Catholic identity. This identity is rooted in beliefs and values and is expressed through: teaching all subjects well in light of Gospel values, forming community in the midst of a faith-filled people, and creating a distinctive climate that includes a commitment to service and global concerns” (p. 2).

Secondary schools, in order to be authentically Catholic, must be imbued with the faith that is professed. Each individual in the school is responsible in some way to foster the growth of faith in each student. Buetow explains as follows:

The roles and functions of lay faculty are many: to animate the world with the spirit of Christianity, to be witnesses to Christ in all circumstances, and uniquely to bring about the all-important synthesis between faith and culture and faith and life. By serving as a role model and helping students to bring about this synthesis,

the lay teacher becomes an important element in the effective operation of Catholic schools. (Buetow, 1988, p. 267)

### **Design and Methodology**

The numbers of vocations in the Catholic Church are on the decline. It stands to reason that the culture of any religious secondary school will change when the founding religious order leaves that ministry site. It is reasonable to assume that the founding charism and Catholic identity of the institution may change in the absence of the religious order, who for many years, by their presence, literally embodied both Catholic identity and charism.

This study used a quantitative design method, utilizing a Likert scale survey composed of six different sections as follows:

Section 1 – Biographical data

Section 2 – School Environment – 9 questions

Section 3 – Spiritual Life – 11 questions

Section 4 – Programs – 8 questions

Section 5 – Ceremony and Traditions – 4 questions

Section 6 – Admissions – 3 questions

The survey was based on material from Sr. Mary Frances Taymans' work, *Validating the Vision* (1999), published by the National Catholic Education Association, and was reviewed by a jury of experts. Two members of the jury stated that the survey as constituted would provide the necessary information to answer the research questions. Two other members of the jury of experts stated that with some minor revisions, the resultant information would be more than sufficient to answer the research questions. Those suggestions were taken and the survey was revised to its current format. The material from *Validating the Vision* was used with the

permission of the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) publisher and copyright holder. Each of the questions relate to Catholic identity and charism. The study endeavored to connect lived reality with the ideals of maintaining a strong and vibrant Catholic identity as well as the charism of the Congregation of Edmund Rice Christian Brothers.

Permission was secured from the presidents and chair of the board of trustees for each of the schools listed. The survey was offered to faculty, staff, administrators, and board members of the nine Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools cited previously. Conservatively, it is estimated that over 350 people were invited to submit a completed survey for consideration. The survey instrument utilized Qualtrics, an online survey platform from which the data were collected. Once collected, the data were analyzed and a frequency distribution utilized to determine the results.

The results were reported out in the aggregate as well as by individual schools.

### **Limitations of the Study**

1. The study was limited to nine Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools in the United States.
2. The study gathered information only from teachers, staff, administrators, and board members of the nine Christian Brother schools previously named.
3. The study relied on the good graces of the presidents of each of the schools cited. It was hoped that each president would disseminate the survey to all administrators, faculty, staff, and board members. It was also expected that each person involved would answer truthfully and to the best of his/her knowledge.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

1. The study included responses to a Likert scale survey instrument provided to faculty, staff, administrators, and board members of nine Christian Brother schools in the United States. The Likert scale survey instrument consisted of 37 items for ease of completion.
2. The study focused on Catholic identity and Edmund Rice Christian Brother charism in the nine schools previously identified.
3. The study did not imply that the schools did not have lay men and women on staff that do not know or practice their Catholic faith.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Bishop** – As Christ's vicar, each bishop has the pastoral care of the particular Church entrusted to him, but at the same time he bears collegially with all his brothers in the episcopacy the solicitude for all the Churches. Though each bishop is the lawful pastor only of the portion of the flock entrusted to his care, as a legitimate successor of the apostles he is, by divine institution and precept, responsible with the other bishops for the apostolic mission of the Church (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1992, No. 1560).

**Canon Law** – A code of ecclesiastical laws governing the Catholic Church

**Catholic Identity** – Most of the literature defines this as the ability of a school to provide instruction that finds its foundation in the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

**Charism** – is a gift of the Holy Spirit which benefits the Church and is given to a person or group in order to help promote the common good.

**Diocese** – A district under the control of a bishop in the Catholic Church

**Edmund Rice Christian Brothers** – Congregation of religious men founded in 1802 in Waterford, Ireland, whose primary ministry is education.

### **Organization of the Study**

Chapter I details the problem to be studied: how to ensure the continuance of Catholic identity and Edmund Rice Christian Brother charism in nine of the Congregation's secondary schools. It provides a brief description of the beginnings of the Catholic school system in the United States and the subsequent decline of vowed religious ability to staff those same schools.

Chapter II provides a review of the literature indicative of Catholic identity and charism. The literature provides insights into the difficulties faced by Catholic secondary schools and their ability to remain true to their primary mission of passing on the Catholic faith.

Chapter III details the methodology used to conduct the research regarding Catholic identity and charism among the nine Christian Brother schools named in Chapter I.

Chapter IV reports the results of the Likert Scale survey used to gather information from the nine schools involved in the study.

Chapter V provides a summary of the analyses as well as connecting it to the literature mentioned in various chapters and offers recommendations for the promotion of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism in Edmund Rice Christian Brother educational ministry sites across the United States, especially those participating in the study.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Over the past 25 years the issue of Catholic identity in the Catholic schools of the United States has been a topic of concern, discussion, and research. By no means is this literature review exhaustive, but it contains those works that are relevant to the study being undertaken. All of the material included in this review points to the importance of Catholic identity to the successful completion of the mission of Catholic educational ministries. While the prevailing literature does not speak directly to Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools by name, the relevance of the literature to those same schools applies as it does to all Catholic educational ministries. As stated previously, the ultimate reason for the existence of Catholic schools is to foster the teaching and understanding of the Catholic faith. All Catholic schools have at the heart of their mission the formation of the person and his/her belief in Jesus Christ as Savior. In his address, *The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools*, given at the Solidarity Association at Catholic University on September 14, 2005, Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB offers the following: "Catholic schools have a straightforward goal: to foster the growth of good Catholic human beings who love God and neighbor and thus fulfill their destiny" (p. 3). Archbishop Miller concluded his remarks by saying, "The Holy See . . . sees in Catholic schools an enormous heritage and an indispensable instrument in carrying out the Church's mission . . . Ensuring their genuinely Catholic identity is the Church's greatest challenge (p. 10).

The literature review is organized in the following manner:

1. Defining Catholic Identity
2. Realizing Catholic Identity
3. Strengthening Catholic Identity

### **Defining Catholic Identity**

As early as the Second Vatican Council, the Church Fathers were intent on defining the role of the Catholic Church in education. On October 28, 1965, Pope Paul VI issued the document *Gravissimum Educationis* (Declaration on Christian Education), detailing the importance of education in the life of man and particularly the Church's role in that process. The document goes on to proclaim the "principles of Christian education, especially in schools" (Paul VI, p. 1). Although brief in nature, the document does outline the importance of Christian education, the role of the parent as the primary educator, and that the Church has a responsibility to educate children along with parents. This collaboration brings about the full formation of the child in the life of Christ. This Vatican document states clearly that the Church's "proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow . . . and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation . . ." (p. 5). The words, thoughts, and concepts used by Pope Paul VI foreshadow the document issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops entitled *To Teach as Jesus Did*.

This seminal document, written by the American bishops in 1972, puts to rest the questions regarding the essential elements of a Catholic education. They stated emphatically, "The educational mission of the Church is an integrated ministry embracing three interlocking dimensions: the message revealed by God (didache), which the Church proclaims; fellowship in the life of the Holy Spirit (koinonia); service to the Christian community and the entire human community (diakonia)" (p. 4). *To Teach as Jesus Did* outlines the mission of the Church in education: to proclaim the message of salvation, to instill a sense of community, and to provide service. These three values are the bedrock upon which all American Catholic education is

measured: message, community, and service. With regard to Catholic educational ministry, this document forms the foundation upon which all Catholic schools might be measured and assessed. The bishops recognize that all Catholics, especially those directly involved in Catholic educational ministry, are responsible for proclaiming the message, creating community, and inspiring service. “Of the educational programs available to the Catholic community, Catholic schools afford the fullest and best opportunity to realize the threefold purpose of Christian education among children and young people” (National Conference, p. 28).

In 1977, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education issued a statement simply entitled *The Catholic School*. Through the statement, the Vatican wanted to make clear that the mission of the Catholic school is tied directly with the salvific and evangelizing mission of the Church itself. “It is precisely in the Gospel of Christ, taking root in the minds and lives of the faithful, that the Catholic school finds its definition as it comes to terms with the cultural conditions of the times” (p. 2). The document outlines some of the difficulties facing the Catholic school in today’s world while explaining that the school is a center where formation of the person takes place. In light of Catholic identity in the school, this Church document is quite clear. Paragraph 49 of the document states, “The specific mission of the school, then, is a critical, systematic transmission of culture in the light of faith and the bringing forth of the power of Christian virtue by the integration of culture with faith and faith with culture” (p. 9).

In 1988, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education issued *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* in response to the needs of the world in which we live. In many parts of the world, the Church realized that Catholic schools were educating students who were not members of the Catholic faith. In order to protect the Catholic identity of all Catholic schools, certain guidelines were established specifically with regard to the religious formation of

its students. “A Catholic school cannot relinquish its own freedom to proclaim the Gospel,” explains the Vatican document, “and to offer a formation based on the values to be found in a Christian education; it is its right and duty” (Sacred Congregation, 1988, p. 2, paragraph 6). Again, the Vatican, through this statement, validated the American bishops’ statements found in *To Teach as Jesus Did*. The Vatican, through this 1988 document, spoke to proclaiming the message, forming community, and providing service. The document states the following: “From the first moment a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illuminated by the light of faith and having its own unique characteristics” (Sacred Congregation, 1988, p. 6, paragraph 25).

*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* was published by the Congregation for Catholic Education in 1998 with the purpose of further endorsing the earlier work, *The Catholic School*, and expounding on the values inherent in Catholic education. The document goes on to state that “it is from its Catholic identity that the school derives its original characteristics and its “structure . . . .” (Sacred Congregation, 1998, p. 4). This particular Church document also incorporates the values expressed in *To Teach as Jesus Did*, mentioned previously. It reiterates the need for a Catholic school to proclaim the Word of God through evangelization (Paragraph 3), instill a sense of Christian community (Paragraphs 12 and 18), and to provide service (Paragraph 16). Once again, the Church emphasizes that a Catholic school must, by its nature, bring about a “synthesis between culture and faith” (Sacred Congregation, 1988, p. 5).

In September of 2007, the Congregation for Catholic Education issued *Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful*. The Vatican saw a need to respond to the changing face of Catholic education across

the globe. Across entire countries religious influence is declining bit by bit, and the Church sees this as a challenge to the teaching force that will be necessary for the future of the Catholic schools as well as the Church itself. The document suggests support and programs for the education and formation of the future teachers in Catholic schools. Over the past number of decades the number of professed religious priests, brothers, and sisters has continually decreased, leaving a void in both the administrative and teaching ranks. The document speaks to the professional, spiritual, and theological development of teachers. It develops themes consistent with previous Vatican documents, detailing the expectations of Catholic schools and the characteristics that make a school Catholic.

### **Realizing Catholic Identity**

One of the first full studies of education in Catholic schools was undertaken by Fr. Harold Buetow entitled *The Catholic School: Its Roots, Identity, and Future* published in 1988. Fr. Buetow points out those things that make up the identity of a Catholic school while also showing the contributions made to the common good of the nation. He sheds light on the role and responsibility of the family in the Church as well as parental concerns regarding the schooling of their children. As part of the study, Fr. Buetow explains the role of the universal Catholic Church as well as the responsibilities that fall to the (arch)diocesan Bishop and the local pastor. He discusses the importance of curriculum, the relationship with national, state, and local governments, and the impact of school climate and pressures of society. Father Buetow gives a detailed explanation of the value of the teacher and the impact brought about by the student population. He completes the study by providing conclusions and applications. “The two major problems in Catholic schooling are identity and viability. They are closely related . . . Today, the Spirit seems to be calling some religious to apostolates other than teaching . . . This shift in

ministerial preference, together with other serious problems like funding, leaves the future viability of Catholic schools in question” (Buetow, p. 310, 311).

However, as much as Fr. Buetow’s work covers the essentials of the Catholic school, it was just a bit early to include the vocation “crisis.” Until the early 1980s, vocations were still considered strong, and the number of priests and religious teaching in Catholic schools was still significant. It was about this time when religious priests,’ brothers,’ and sisters’ religious congregations began to experience a sharp decline in men and women joining their ranks.

Thomas H. Groome, in his work, *What Makes Us Catholic* (2003), outlines those aspects of the Catholic faith that truly enliven the life of the faithful. Although Groome’s book is not based on any educational agenda, it does provide valuable insight into what makes up Catholic identity. As such, this particular volume adds to the conversation, and the knowledge Groome shares can be transferred to the educational setting. Each chapter of Groome’s book details another aspect of what it means to be Catholic. It is not too difficult to draw similarities between Groome’s statements and what is popularly considered Catholic identity. For example, one of Groome’s basic themes in his second chapter is that “people are relational to the core; we are literally made for each other. This is why we naturally create networks of relationships . . . .” (Groome, p. 46). This concept ties in directly to the bishop’s statement in *To Teach as Jesus Did* that one characteristic of a school’s Catholic identity is to create community. Further, in the fifth chapter, Groome speaks to the need for Catholics to be caring toward one another; in fact, toward everyone. He states “. . . the Catholic understanding avoids rugged individualism, instead making each person responsible for the good of neighbor and community” (Groome, 2003, p. 119). This notion again ties in with the bishop’s statement to not only form community, but to provide service. Groome develops this further in Chapter 8 by noting that being Catholic means

that we need to widen our definition of “neighbor” to be inclusive of everyone. In Groome’s sixth chapter, he speaks to the necessity of going out into the world and to “share the good news” (2003, p. 194). This theme is oft repeated throughout the chapter. In essence then, Groome’s work mirrors *To Teach as Jesus Did* by utilizing the same themes of message, community, and service in *What Makes Us Catholic*.

Prior to publishing *What Makes Us Catholic*, Groome contributed an article entitled “What Makes a School Catholic” to the publication *The Contemporary Catholic School: Context, Identity and Diversity* published by Falmar Press in 1996. Once again, Groome draws on his knowledge of the Catholic faith and applies it to the educational setting. In his distinct style, he suggests that Catholic education has eight distinct characteristics: positive anthropology, sacramentality, communal emphasis, commitment to tradition, appreciation for rationality, and commitments to ontological, sociological, and universal concerns (Groome, 1996, pp. 108-109). With regard to anthropology, our human condition, Groome asserts that a school’s curriculum must promote the dignity of the person, uphold the idea of a fullness of life for self and others, and each person advance the well-being of all.

By sacramentality, Groome suggests that the entire curriculum, each subject of the Catholic school program, should be grounded in divine truth and that God is present in all things. Students should be encouraged to use their gifts to sort through the material and see the divine present. Simply put, the communal aspect of school life is not only taught, but lived. As Groome puts it, “The love commitment of the school should be realized as a profound care and ‘right relationship’ among and between teachers, administrators, students, and toward the school’s extended community of parents, and former students” (1996, p. 115). Figure 1,

compiled from Groome’s 1996 article, “What Makes a School Catholic,” indicates those ideas central to Catholic identity in the school setting.



Figure 1. *Groome’s message, community, and service.*

The school’s commitment to tradition involves the teaching of the Christian story that centers around the Paschal Mystery—Jesus’ passion, death, and resurrection. This commitment demands the teaching of the Gospel message through the medium of the Church. When Groome speaks of rationality, he stresses that the Church and her Catholic schools continually seek faith and reason. “The Catholic Church is at its best and when faithful to its own long tradition, champions the right of people to think critically for themselves and encourages the dynamic interplay of faith and reason” (1996, p. 120). Last, Groome speaks to the ontological aspect of Catholic education. He insists that Catholic schools must go beyond just the sharing of knowledge but to strongly influence the kind of people their students will grow into. Groome argues that one cannot separate the knowing from the being in Catholic education.

Fr. James Heft, in his article “Catholic Identity and the Future of Catholic Schools” (1991), which appeared in the National Catholic Education Association publication, *Catholic Identity and the Catholic Schools*, speaks to Catholic identity and how it is established. He



explains there are certain truths that are uniquely Catholic, traditions that are identified with the Catholic Church, and evident characteristics of institutions that are decidedly Catholic (p. 5). As such, there is a unique Catholic identity.

Heft begins to clarify those things that make a school Catholic. To be called Catholic, a school must first teach Catholic dogma. There are those traditions and practices that are uniquely Catholic; these too must be present in the school setting. Responsibly, he draws ideas and statements from *To Teach as Jesus Did*. Heft states that this pastoral letter “emphasizes three distinctive dimensions of Catholic educational institutions: teaching, community, and service” (Heft, 1991, p. 9).

Realizing there is a distinctly Catholic identity intricately wrapped into the system of Catholic education in the United States, Fr. Heft (1991) suggests a course of action which will bolster Catholic education throughout the nation. He calls on all Catholics to support educational endeavors with the resources necessary to make this education available to all who wish it. “Catholics today,” asserts Heft, “will be reacting to those negative elements of modern culture that threaten Catholic, and for that matter, Protestant, identity at the foundations: materialism, consumerism, individualism, and the fragmentation of knowledge” (Heft, 1991, p. 19).

Fr. Heft simply states those things that contribute to Catholic identity. He quickly moves from the basics of Catholic belief and makes the connection to practices in general. He then convincingly forges the argument that Catholic institutions are imbued with a culture that is distinctive by its very nature.

Sr. Carleen Reck, in her article “Catholic Identity” (1991), makes a marked distinction between identifying Catholics and identifying Catholic schools. Her work takes a careful look at

Church documents as well as studies produced by notable educators, sociologists, and other experts in the field of education and Catholic studies. Sr. Carleen’s approach deals with those attributes that make schools authentically Catholic: mission of the Church, religious formation, Gospel values, community, climate, service, and global concern. Using these seven themes as the bedrock of Catholic school identity, Sr. Carleen neatly shows how they reflect the three necessary dimensions of school ministry found in the bishop’s statement, “*To Teach as Jesus Did.*” As Figure 2 shows, Sister Carleen goes on to explain that her “seven elements of Catholic school identity basically mirror the three dimensions: message—mission of the Church, religious formation, and Gospel values; Community—community and climate; and Service—service and global concern” (Reck, p. 28).

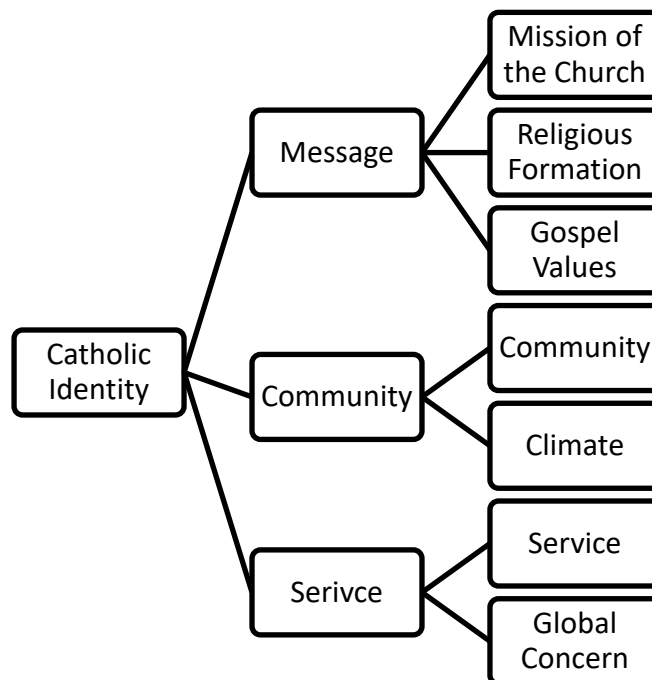


Figure 2. Sr. Carleen Reck—Catholic identity.

Prior to the Catholic Church's vocation crisis, many Catholic educators, administrators among them, considered Catholic identity to be the domain of the Religion or Theology Department of the school or centered in the religious who were on staff. This concept has diminished much since the early 1990s and well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Sr. Patricia Earl, writing for *Momentum* magazine, declares in her article "Catholic Identity: It's Not Just for the Religion Teacher" (2016), that Catholic identity is the domain of the entire school; and each teacher, regardless of subject matter, is responsible for maintaining a distinctive Catholic view throughout the school's curriculum. "All of us who share in the ministry of Catholic education are called to understand, promise, and guide our young people to grow in their awareness of the meaning and value of Catholic identity" (Earl, p. 32).

In the article, Sr. Patricia Earl explains that Catholic identity cannot simply be explained by one definition. Catholic identity, she asserts, is a constant happening, likening it to a journey of faith where individuals are continually building their relationship with Jesus Christ. Sister Patricia recalls that there are both outside images and symbols which, when combined with interior growth of the spirit, result in a rather larger description or definition of Catholic identity. Sister Patricia provides many practical ideas and concepts that "demonstrate, recognize, and witness Catholic identity in our schools" (Earl, p. 32).

Throughout the article, Sr. Patricia Earl details various ways in which the school promotes Catholic identity. Sr. Patricia simply takes the letters of CATHOLIC IDENTITY and begins formulating ways in which Catholic identity are noticeable in and around the school community. Some of the examples that Sr. Patricia utilizes are physical objects, while others are intangible. For example, when expounding on the letter "C," Sr. Patricia employs the Crucifix

that is found in every classroom of a Catholic school and shows that it represents the Paschal Mystery, the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This is at the core of the Catholic faith. Moving from letter to letter, Sr. Patricia builds on the definition of Catholic identity until she completes the series. For the letter “I” in identity, the explanation is simple: Schools need to “integrate” faith creatively into every aspect of school life. “While those who teach religion have the responsibility to teach the basics of our faith, all are called to integrate the faith as a way of life” (Earl, p. 36). The article is a good reminder of all that Catholic schools do (and should do) to maintain their Catholic identity. Sister Patricia begins her article by pointing out that during the boom years of Catholic school building and education (1950-1970) there was not the same emphasis on Catholic identity because there were large numbers of religious sisters, brothers, and priests in the schools; and they themselves embodied Catholic identity. Sister Patricia states that in those years approximately 97% of the administration and teaching staff were professed religious priests, brothers, and sisters, whereas today 97% of the administration and staff are lay people.

During the past ten years, Catholic secondary schools in the United States have benefited from an influx of foreign students enrolling, especially high-school-age youngsters from China. The increase in Chinese students studying in Catholic secondary schools has challenged some of the notions of what this does to the school’s Catholic identity. Richard O’Hara, president of The John Carroll School in Bel Aire, Maryland, writes in the February/March 2015 issue of *Momentum* magazine about the phenomenon. President O’Hara and his administrative staff took a hard look at what they were doing with their increasingly large number of non-Catholic students. They likened the situation to many urban Catholic elementary and secondary schools where the non-Catholic enrollment is often larger than the Catholic enrollment. It seems that

none of those schools has experienced a negative impact on their decidedly Catholic programs. The administrators came to the conclusion that the Chinese students, during their four years, were required to complete the regular course of the religion department offerings and attend all of the school's liturgical celebrations. Thus, the Catholic identity was not in danger since the school was indeed proclaiming the message. The foreign students were housed in either the school's new dormitory or with home-stay families in the area. Efforts were made on a regular basis to make these new students and their adopted families feel very much part of the John Carroll School community. A good number of international students were enrolled in a rigorous college prep program with many taking AP classes—all pointing to academic excellence. Last, a quick review of the John Carroll website indicates that all students are encouraged to provide service to the community. The three indicators—message, community, and service—as well as academic excellence are all present at The John Carroll School. In the closing paragraph of the article, President O'Hara states, "In light of these factors . . . we believe that far from being threatened, our Catholic identity at JCS is genuinely being reinforced by the ISP (International Student Program)" (O'Hara, p. 17).

### **Strengthening Catholic Identity**

In his article "Authentically Catholic, Authentically Excellent" (2001), Leonard Fiore, former president of the National Catholic Educational Association, sets out to show that Catholic schools have a distinct identity and it is intimately tied into educational excellence. He states, "The success of Catholic education is beyond dispute. We can say with confidence that Catholics and others who attend Catholic schools derive significant advantages – academic, religious, and social – not available to Catholics who attend public schools" (p. 11). Fiore shows

through a number of citations that students from similar socioeconomic backgrounds experience a better rate of success in a Catholic school environment than in the public sector.

Fiore (2000) brings focus to the Catholic school and the people who minister there. Building on his theme of Catholic education equals excellence, he explains that organizations do not usually succeed unless the core mission is at the center of all they do. He explains that Catholic educators do everything possible to bring all their students into a positive learning environment, even to the point of varying their teaching strategies and methods to ensure student success.

*Architects of Catholic Culture: Designing & Building Catholic Culture in Catholic Schools* (2004) was published by the National Catholic Educational Association as part of an educational leadership series. The monograph's author, Timothy Cook, asserts that the dearth of religious sisters and brothers as the chief educational leaders of Catholic schools is not the largest problem faced by the Church. Cook goes on to explain that the education of lay leadership is of paramount importance if the Church wants to maintain a distinctive Catholic identity and distinctive Catholic culture in the schools. The main purpose of this particular work is to provide Catholic school leaders with the tools necessary to build up and maintain a vibrant and energized Catholic identity in the schools. In the Editor's Preface on page xv, it states: ". . . that absent the Lord—who is the Builder—their efforts (sic school leaders) to build effective Catholic schools are for naught." Clearly, if Catholic schools are to survive and thrive, their identity must be clearly visible.

With the decline in numbers of priests and religious in the schools, the lay administrators and faculty members must take on the responsibility for the institution's Catholic identity. As Cook states, "The purpose of *Architects of Catholic Culture*, then, is to stimulate further

reflections about the concept of Catholic identity and the building of a Catholic culture so that the laity who serve as Catholic educational leaders will better understand the cultural dimension of their leadership responsibility (Cook, 2004, p. 4).

In February of 2010, a group of educators from across the spectrum of Catholic education came together to begin work on what would become the *National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools*. This gathering was a result of an October, 2009 conference hosted by Loyola University Chicago School of Education and the Center for Catholic School Effectiveness. The driving force behind the conference was to discover how Catholic higher education could encourage, support, and assist Pre-K through 12 Catholic schools. Educators from across the nation representing diocesan personnel, individual school leaders, and Catholic educational networks, as well as the National Catholic Education Association and other leaders of higher Catholic education, attended the conference (National Standards, February/March, 2012). From that beginning, eight volunteers, representing all phases of Catholic education pieced together the *National Standards and Benchmarks*. Lorraine Ozar, Director of the Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, Loyola University, Chicago, chaired the task force charged with bringing together ideas and concepts that would form the *National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools*. For the next two years, this group labored to bring into existence a document that would enable each Catholic elementary and secondary school to evaluate its programs, curricula, and culture against national norms. Further, the group was able to put into words nine Defining Characteristics of Catholic Schools:

- Centered in the person of Jesus Christ
- Contributing to the Evangelizing Mission of the Church

- Distinguished by Excellence
- Committed to Educate the Whole Child
- Steeped in a Catholic Worldview
- Shaped by Communion and Community
- Accessible to All Students
- Established by the Express Authority of the Bishop (National Standards, p. 12)

The *National Standards and Benchmarks* give Catholic educators across the United States a complete set of criteria upon which they might judge their school's Catholic identity. The committee took a hard look at Catholic education across the nation and unearthed those features that were found to be common across the spectrum of Catholic schools and compiled a noteworthy listing of solid indicators of Catholic identity. From these Defining Characteristics, the Standards and Benchmarks were developed. There are thirteen Standards listed, each with its own set of benchmarks. The Standards are grouped into four categories:

1. Mission and Catholic Identity – Standards 1, 2, 3, 4
2. Governance and Leadership – Standards 5, 6,
3. Academic Excellence – Standards 7, 8, 9
4. Operational Vitality – Standards 11, 12, 13

The thirteen Standards are designed to “describe policies, programs, structures, and processes that should be present in mission-driven, program-effective, well-managed and responsibly governed Catholic schools . . . .” (National Standards, p. 17). Each of the Standards is then followed by a group of Benchmarks which “provide observable, measurable, descriptors for each standard” (National Standards, p. 18).



The *National Standards and Benchmarks* are intended to be used by schools across the United States to enable leaders to support and improve programs, curricula, and culture within their individual school environments. The *National Standards and Benchmarks* also provide guidelines for school improvement to educational leaders working at the diocesan or religious congregation level.

In the Fall 2016 issue of *Momentum* magazine, Ronald D. Fussell, in his article “Sowing Seeds of Leadership,” speaks to the importance of developing leaders who fully understand the dynamics involved in operating a truly Catholic school. Although the main thrust of the article is leadership development, one of the major reasons for developing leaders is to maintain the uniquely Catholic character of the school. In the article, Fussell states, “It is no secret that in any organization, the leader sets the tone . . . . And imbued in it all is the essential ministry of faith leadership—that our Catholic school identity is woven and proclaimed in all dimensions of the school community” (Fussell, p. 28). He goes on to explain the importance of developing leaders within individual schools who will be able to take on the responsibilities of Catholic school leadership. The basis of the professional development program is to have it structured on theory and practice and by developing a strong partnership with Creighton University. Fussell (2016) ends the article by saying, “For our schools to remain viable, we must present a compelling reason for families to choose Catholic education over other alternatives. The compelling reason lies in our authentic and distinctive Catholic education tradition. Our leaders must be prepared to proclaim our Catholic identity . . . ” (Fussell, p. 31). Strong leadership, Fussell contends, is also a contributor to maintaining a distinctly Catholic identity in Catholic schools.

Timothy Cook’s article “Charism: A Catholic School’s Mark of Distinction” (2004) speaks to the common themes found in educational institutions. He asserts that schools,

according to research, have a culture that is expressed in certain core values. “These core values cut to the bare essence of a school’s identity, encapsulating what is important to the school and what it stands for” (Cook, 2004, p.18). He takes this a step further by stating that this identity is a school’s charism. A charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit which benefits the Church and is given to a person or group in order to help promote the common good.

Catholic schools have a distinct identity, a distinct culture. Certainly, there are many common factors that exist in every Catholic school throughout the country. As stated in *To Teach as Jesus Did*, common to every Catholic school is the proclamation of the message, the building of community, and the inclusion of service. Cook takes that foundation a bit further by suggesting that each Catholic school does this in a unique way, by forming a unique school culture. This he terms the school’s charism.

As a follow-up to his article, Cook published *Charism and Culture: Cultivating Catholic Identity in Catholic Schools* in 2015. The overarching theme of Cook’s work is that each school has its own distinct culture and charism, both of which center on the school’s Catholic identity. In today’s educational milieu, Catholic schools must work harder to develop their own distinctive brand; Catholic identity stands at the core of everything that makes up a student’s educational experience. Cook asserts that “an authentic Catholic school seeks to transform persons and society by bringing the Gospel message to every situation and by facilitating an ever-deepening relationship with God through Jesus Christ” (Cook, 2015, p. 1).

The format of Cook’s work (2004) is meant to engage Catholic school leaders in dialogue about their school’s Catholic identity and how that school takes part in the Church’s New Evangelization. This New Evangelization is a call on the part of the universal Church for each Catholic to deepen his or her relationship with God and to fully appreciate the Gospel message of

Jesus Christ. In turn, each Catholic is compelled to evangelize those around him or her. Cook designs each chapter to encourage reflection on the part of school leaders with their respective staffs and to engage in conversations and actions that will strengthen Catholic identity and make it a vibrant force within each school's learning community.

Daniel Curtin (2001) speaks to the necessity of having qualified teachers of religion in Catholic schools and religious education programs in order to preserve a distinctively Catholic identity. In his brief study, "Catholic Identity Depends on Religious Education" (2001), he takes a careful look at Catholic schools today. Curtin affirms that there is a need to aggressively address the issue of Catholic identity. In his opening paragraph, he states that the number of religious teachers (priests, brothers, and sisters) is declining rapidly (Curtin, p. 26). In years past, Catholic identity was not considered an issue because every Catholic school had a full complement of religious on staff. This in and of itself was a measure of how Catholic a school was. Curtin plainly states that a main reason parents send their children to Catholic schools is so they can learn the tenets and beliefs of the faith. This calls for an educated and church literate teaching staff. The bishop's document *To Teach as Jesus Did* is used as the foundation for his article.

In *Catholic Schools Make a Difference* (1992), John Convey gathers all of the productive studies done on Catholic education between 1965 and 1991 and reviews their significance. He goes to great lengths to identify those things that mark Catholic schools as distinctive and effective. Convey states, "Research has identified the importance of the environment, or climate, of Catholic schools to their effectiveness" (p. 89). This strongly suggests that Catholic identity is a unique feature and impacts the overall success of the Catholic school. Basically, Convey lists four categories that positively affect the school environment: culture of the school, academic

emphasis, insistence on discipline and order, and the development of the faith community. Convey mentions the large impact that Catholic identity plays in the overall success of the school. Basically, he says that the school is effective because of the common value system in place which has its foundation in the Catholic faith. This in and of itself brings everything together. Certainly, the four major areas he speaks to in Chapter 5 reflect the same mission of Catholic education as proclaimed by the American bishops in *To Teach as Jesus Did*. The statement clearly expresses that a Catholic school must proclaim the message, instill a sense of community, and offer service to the community.

Thomas W. Burnford, current President and CEO of the National Catholic Education Association, asserts that “there are four primary markers of a school’s Catholic identity . . .” (Burnford, p. 74). In his article “Catholic Schools: Growing Together” (2016), Burnford points out that communion with the Church, teaching the faith, celebrating the sacraments through liturgy and prayer, and permeating the school with the Gospels of Jesus Christ are the indicators of a school’s Catholic identity (Burnford, pp. 74, 75). The article speaks to the need for Catholic schools to grow together in faith, excellence, enrollment, and with parents in order to continue to move forward and stem the tide of school closings. He emphasizes that Catholic identity lies at the center of a school’s success. Speaking to the school’s academic excellence, he states, “Academic excellence is intimately tied, and indeed stems from, Catholic identity” (Burnford, p. 75). Although the article’s major purpose is to espouse reasons for working together to increase enrollment, the fact is Catholic identity plays an extremely significant role in the makeup of the school’s educational community.

In 2003, the National Catholic Educational Association published *A Straight Talking Guide to Running a School for Presidents, Heads of Schools, and Boards of Catholic Elementary*

*and High Schools*. The publication, authored by Fr. Donald F. Rowe, outlines, in a very concise way, all the duties and responsibilities necessary for the successful running of an elementary or secondary school. Fr. Rowe's account takes in every facet of school governance from facility management to academic programs from advancement/development work to hiring personnel, from extracurricular programs to athletics.

With school leadership becoming more and more complex, there was a need to clearly define the roles of leadership within the school community. Many secondary schools have successfully separated out the tasks of leadership and now have worked under the president/principal model of school governance. The president mainly takes on the responsibilities of governance, finance, fund raising, public relations, and facilities while the principal works with the academic side, dealing with faculty, students, and parents.

Fr. Rowe's work provides a ready-to-use description for fulfilling both of the positions. However, the book is not in the category of a "cookie cutter, one-size-fits-all" mold. In clear concise language, the book outlines tasks that can be developed for use in any school setting.

Since 1970, the National Catholic Educational Association has been collecting and publishing an annual report including statistics involving schools, enrollment, and staffing. Sr. Dale McDonald, PBVM (2011) serves as NCEA Director of Public Policy and as such is instrumental in the gathering of annual statistics outlining the composition of Catholic elementary and secondary schools across the United States. Sr. Dale, along with Margaret Schultz, has circulated these data for over 20 years in publication form. One of the more recent issues is entitled *United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools 2015-2016: The Annual Statistical Report on Schools, Enrollment and Staffing*. Each year's publication is a compendium of statistics regarding the breakdown of enrollment, staffing, expenses, and revenue

for Catholic schools throughout the United States. The authors provide an overview of Catholic education and the context in which it is found with regard to private education in the United States. It provides demographic data regarding enrollment and staffing. This report is based on information collected from the 172 arch/diocesan offices in the United States (McDonald, p. vii).

### **Summary**

The review of the available literature is based on materials considered pivotal to the Catholic identity and charism of educational institutions, primarily as they relate to secondary schools. The vast majority of the literature does not specifically cite Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools but details those elements of school culture that make a school decidedly Catholic in nature. Similarly, the material available regarding charism does not apply only to Edmund Rice schools but to all Catholic schools, primarily in the United States.

These very same Catholic elements are seen as vital to the continuation of Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools as Catholic schools in the foreseeable future. As suggested by the prevalent literature, educational communities must be aware of and dedicated to the continuing and strengthening of Catholic identity in a very proactive manner in order to remain authentically Catholic.

Chapter III details the methodology utilized in the research of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism in the nine schools first listed in Chapter 1. Information is provided on the quantitative study undertaken and the survey instrument utilized. The chapter also outlines the ways in which the instrument was developed and its relevance to the Catholic identity and charism inherent in the Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools in the United States.

### CHAPTER III

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter III outlines the methods and procedures that were employed in the gathering of information from the research participants. For purposes of this study, a quantitative designed methodology was utilized to gather information consistent with our concepts of Catholic identity and charism stated previously and expanded upon in the following paragraphs. Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod (2010) in their work *Practical Research: Planning and Design* (2010) state, “Quantitative researchers seek explanations and predictions that will generalize to other persons and places. The intent is to establish, confirm, or validate relationships and to develop generalizations that contribute to existing theories” (p. 95). By utilizing the Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index, a survey modified specifically for this research project, it is expected that responses would help align practices already in progress and identify ways in which Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism might be strengthened and prolonged. Also, a quantitative approach allows for a timely processing of data and is less prone to bias. In the work *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods* (2009), John W. Creswell points out that the rationale for a quantitative designed survey permits an “economy of the design and the rapid turnaround in data collection” (p. 146). The survey is designed for ease of use as well soliciting anonymous responses.

Common definitions for Catholic identity and charism began to surface in the prevailing literature at the time when the decline of religious vocations became very noticeable. Timothy Cook (2015), speaking about charism, identity, and culture, points out the following:

Terms like Catholic identity, mission, vision, core values are used regularly in school communities. Catholic identity is who we are. Mission is what we do

and who we serve. Vision is what we aspire to become. Core values are our fundamental beliefs. Culture is our way of life . . . . Charism can refer to a school's spiritually-inspired core values or any set of distinguishing characteristics, principles, or beliefs that further define its Catholic identity.

(p. 10)

Ensuring the viability and existence of Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools is dependent on maintaining and promoting the Catholic identity and charism in each of the institutions involved in the study while the number of Christian Brothers declines or become nonexistent.

Table 3

*Edmund Rice Christian Brothers 1965 - 2017*

School	1965	1975	1985	1995	2005	2015	2017
<b>All Hallows High School</b>	27	23	21	8	4	3	3
<b>Bergen Catholic High School</b>	20	25	24	18	7	4	3
<b>Brother Rice Chicago High School</b>	46	33	25	19	13	3	2
<b>Brother Rice Detroit High School</b>	28	14	16	8	4	4	2
<b>Catholic Memorial High School</b>	21	28	22	9	5	2	3
<b>Damien Memorial High School</b>	23	13	13	10	16	3	2
<b>Iona Lower School</b>	12	11	8	4	1	2	2
<b>Iona Upper School</b>	14	24	23	7	5	6	6
<b>Palma School</b>	12	8	8	8	3	1	1
<b>St. Laurence High School</b>	44	29	18	12	7	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>26</b>

Table 3 (K. M. Griffith, personal correspondence, Nov. 11, 2014) provides information from Christian Brother Province archives and indicates the number of Edmund Rice Christian Brothers in ministry from 1965 until 2017 at each of the sites involved in this research project.



The overall number of active brothers has declined from 247 to 29, which is a drop-off of a little more than 95%. It is expected that the information garnered from the research may allow for the creation or expansion of programs and policies that will enable school and provincial leadership to maintain, strengthen, and grow both Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism in each of the schools listed. Further, the findings may be applicable to other Christian Brother ministries not directly mentioned in this study.

The major research questions for this study are four:

1. What factors affect the Catholic identity of Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools in the United States?
2. In the face of declining numbers of professed religious Brothers on staff in Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools, what programs and policies may help to protect the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice and the Catholic identity of the schools?
3. What steps will help foster the Catholic identity and the sustainability of Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools?
4. Are there differences in the perceptions of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism from one school to another?

All four questions are significant for the continuation of the Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools going forward. The declining number of Edmund Rice Brothers ministering in the nine schools included in this research impact the Catholic identity and Edmund Rice Christian Brother charism of each school. In the Vatican document, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (1982), The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, speaking of the importance of Catholic laity in the life of secondary schools and the decline of Religious, stated the following:

The efficacious work that so many different Religious Congregations have traditionally accomplished through teaching activities is greatly esteemed by the Church; and so she can do no less than regret the decline in Religious personnel which has had such a profound effect on Catholic schools, especially in some countries. The Church believes that, for an integral education of children and young people, both Religious and lay Catholics are needed in schools. (para. 3)

Programs and policies may be present that help in educating and training the many lay colleagues in the Edmund Rice schools in the Catholic faith and the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice.

### **Measuring Catholic Identity**

Every school, whether Catholic, private, independent, or public, has a unique mission, an identifiable vision, a set of core values, a specific identity, and special charism. Catholic schools in particular derive their very existence from the Roman Catholic Church and their belief in Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Savior. Each Catholic school has a uniqueness that emanates from their mission and their core values. In that same document cited above, The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education explains it this way:

Certain elements will be characteristic of all Catholic schools. But these can be expressed in a variety of ways; often enough, the concrete expression will correspond to the specific charism of the Religious Institute that founded the school and continues to direct it. Whatever be its origin—diocesan, Religious, or lay—each Catholic school can preserve its own specific character, spelled out in an educational philosophy, rationale, or in its own pedagogy. (para. 39)

For the decades when Catholic schools were being built and during those years when they were thriving, attention to Catholic identity, charism, values, and mission was not of paramount importance, nor was it readily recognizable. The number of vowed religious (sisters, brothers, and priests) on staff in most secondary schools provided tangible evidence as to who and what the school was about. It was not until the rapid decline of sisters, brothers and priests in the schools, that Catholic school diocesan offices, congregational leadership teams, and the Catholic hierarchy began to seriously consider investigating how to ensure that Catholic identity, charism, values, and mission permeated each and every Catholic school.

As the Catholic school community became more and more aware of the vulnerability of their very Catholic identity, the National Catholic Education Association continued offering professional development opportunities and publications designed to grow, foster, and strengthen Catholic ethos, identity, and philosophy in the schools. In 1999, Sr. Mary Frances Taymans authored *Validating the Vision*, which outlined a process for Catholic schools to assess their mission effectiveness, specifically targeting a school's Catholic identity.

As Sr. Mary Frances Taymans (1999) explains, "Every effort was made to tap into the dynamic nature of the Catholic school and provide the rationale, tools, and processes needed to understand, assess and shape the Catholic identity as embedded and coherently expressed through the climate, culture, academic life, community, and services of the school" (Taymans, p. 5). *Validating the Vision* allows the staff and administration of a Catholic school to effectively measure how it is doing relative to where the school's mission dictates it should be. Further, the author provides the tools necessary to critique and review the school's vision, belief statements, and core philosophy. It is a step-by-step assessment of all the school says and does. The value found in this work is that it provides assessment criteria and questions for the school's

demographics, faculty, staff, and administration; climate and culture; curriculum and instruction; student services; student activities and athletics; professional development; governance and accountability; finance, development and facilities; and community relations.

### **Validity and Reliability**

For purposes of this study, only certain sections of the assessment features were incorporated and utilized. Further, the information was adapted for use in this study as it pertains to the Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools in the United States.

The survey, entitled Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index has been reviewed by a jury of experts. Two members of the jury stated that the survey, as constituted, would provide the necessary information to answer the research questions. Two other members of the jury of experts stated that with some minor revisions, the resultant information would be more than sufficient to answer the research questions. Those suggestions were taken and the survey was revised to its current format.

It should be noted that on the copyright page of *Validating the Vision* (1999), the following statement appears: “Permission is granted to duplicate pages or sections for use only within the individual school that has purchased *Validating the Vision*. Any other reproduction in whole or part or in any form requires the written permission of the publisher.” As indicated in Chapter 1, information from *Validating the Vision* is used with the permission of the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA), publisher and copyright holder.

The Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index, a Likert Scale questionnaire, was distributed to faculty, staff, administrators, and members of the board of directors and responses returned to the researcher anonymously. The study concentrated on these four groups since they are the ones most responsible for the education of the young people in the Edmund

Rice Christian Brother schools. The study does not imply that the schools do not have lay men and women on staff that do not know or practice their Catholic faith. On the contrary, the study should surface areas where programs, policies, and practices are already in place that may very well validate a strong sense of Catholic identity and also help strengthen said programs.

The Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index has been adapted from Sr. Mary Frances Taymans' (1999) work cited previously, which is utilized by many Catholic schools in place of, or along with, regional accreditation processes. The scope of the questionnaire covers the following areas: school environment, spiritual life, programs, ceremonies, and traditions, and admissions.

The Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index relates to the research questions under consideration. Table 4 below indicates the research question and the corresponding items found in the survey.

Table 4

*Research Questions and Related Survey Questions*

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Related Survey Question</b>
1. What factors affect the Catholic identity of Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools in the United States?	School Environment: 1, 2, 3, 4 Spiritual Life: 2, 11 Programs: 1, 8 Ceremony & Tradition: Admissions: 1, 3
2. In the face of declining numbers of professed religious Brothers on staff in Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools, what programs and policies may help to protect the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice and the Catholic identity of the schools?	School Environment: 5, 7 Spiritual Life: 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 Programs: 1, 2, 4, 7 Ceremony & Tradition: 1 Admissions:

3. What steps will help foster the Catholic identity and the sustainability of Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools?	School Environment: 6, 8, 9 Spiritual Life: 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10 Programs: 3, 5, 6, 7 Ceremony & Tradition: 1, 2, 3, 4 Admissions: 2
4. Are there differences in the perceptions of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism from one school to another?	There are no specific items on the survey that apply to this research question.

For anonymity purposes, only two items of demographic information were requested: school and designation of faculty, staff, administration, or board member. It is important to distinguish between the various groups surveyed to allow for comparisons between the groups involved in the study as well as delineating school from school. This enables the researcher to determine whether or not there are differences in the perception of what affects Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism from one school to another and from one group to another. Further, the demographic information allows for a deeper look into the individual schools and individual groups and their perceptions regarding Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. The research into these perceptions will allow Province and school leadership to address any perceived shortcomings regarding Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism.

Once all of the questionnaires were completed and submitted, an analysis of the data was conducted. The section with the Likert scale was tabulated with percentages given for each question and the responses therein. Comparisons among the different groups were then examined and some initial findings determined. After the analysis of the data was completed, it was compared to Vatican, Church, and other research, which established what is needed for a school to be authentically Catholic. The hope that there was a strong correlation between the

perceptions of those surveyed and what is commonly held to be Catholic identity in a high school was corroborated. Also, as part of the survey, there was a section for respondents to reply to the following prompt: “How would you describe the Catholic identity of the school in relation to climate, culture and integration of programs and services?” Responses to this prompt were analyzed, and some representative answers were included in the Research Findings, Chapter IV.

For purposes of this study, permission to survey the administrators, faculty, staff, and board of directors was secured from the chairman of the board of trustees for the schools listed previously. Each of the schools listed is under the aegis of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers. Currently, there is a two-tiered governance structure composed of a three-member board of trustees and a board of directors for each of the institutions. The three-member board of trustees is comprised of the same three individuals for each of the nine schools listed. The board of directors for each school consists of various individuals and each board is independent of any other board of directors. The board of trustees retains certain powers that are not given to the board of directors. The boards of directors for each of the schools are policy-making bodies with responsibility for finances and governance. They may not dispose of any real estate of the corporation nor enter into binding financial arrangements without the consent of the board of trustees.

It is believed that Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools have a strong Catholic identity and follow the charisms of Blessed Edmund Rice and his followers. There are processes and programs already in place that indicate such is the case. The Theology Departments across the spectrum of Christian Brother schools are strong, and all members of the faculty and staff work hard to ensure the Gospel message of Jesus Christ is taught across the curriculum. The schools all have a Christian community service requirement in all four years. Recently, in the last year

or two, the schools included an advocacy program accompanying the service component of their campus ministry efforts. The advocacy initiative teaches students to advocate for those who cannot advocate for themselves, explaining to the students the reasons for service based on Gospel values. Time and effort goes into building God's Kingdom, and there is great pride in the sense of community already established in the schools. Each of the schools continues to develop a vibrant liturgical life built on the premise that God is thanked and praised at every available opportunity.

The Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index was an anonymous instrument utilized to determine the measure of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism as perceived by faculty, staff, administrators, and board members in the nine aforementioned Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools. The survey was sent electronically to the president of each institution with an explanation of the intent of the survey, directions as to how to disseminate the survey and instructions to all members of faculty, staff, and administration, as well as to the members of the board of directors. Each president was asked to send the survey to an administrative assistant to disseminate to faculty, staff, administrators, and board members. This step was taken as a precaution so that respondents would voluntarily submit the survey and not feel compelled by their superior to do so. The distribution of the Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index included the IRB Informed Consent Form, explaining and detailing the research project to each possible participant. Invited participants had approximately four weeks in which to complete the survey. Presidents were asked to send reminders to complete the survey to those invited to participate through their secretaries or administrative assistants. Once the surveys were completed and submitted electronically, the results were tabulated for each individual school; and the responses were evaluated against the prevailing



literature. Each school's results was reported out individually and then followed by an aggregate of the data. The survey instrument can be found in Appendix 1.

### **Summary**

Chapter III outlines the reasons for the methods utilized in this research. The secondary school institutions selected for inclusion in the research project provided a population large enough that the results could be applied to each of the schools and reliable information gathered to allow for generalizations made against the prevailing literature that speaks to Catholic identity and charism.

The manner of the collection of the survey data was completed to ensure validity and reliability while maintaining the voluntary submission of the Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index and the anonymity of the respondent. The data reinforced the notion that both Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism are strong in those institutions surveyed. Further, the data may very well have a positive impact on the manner in which future generations of faculty, staff, administrators, and board members of Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools are oriented and formed for their respective roles within the individual school community and the larger Edmund Rice Christian Brother educational network.

The primary purpose of Chapter IV is to report the findings on the responses to the Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index, which was designed to capture information regarding the efficacy of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism in nine Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools in the United States. The survey, along with the Informed Consent Form, was first promulgated on November 20, 2017, and sent to presidents of the following Edmund Rice Christian Brother secondary schools (with the exception of Iona Preparatory School, where the researcher is the president):

All Hallows High School, Bronx, NY

Bergen Catholic High School, Oradell, NJ

Brother Rice High School, Bloomfield Hills, MI

Brother Rice High School, Chicago, IL

Catholic Memorial High School, West Roxbury, MA

Damien Memorial High School, Honolulu, HA

Iona Preparatory School, New Rochelle, NY

Palma School, Salinas, CA

St. Laurence High School, Burbank, IL

Each president was asked to forward the Informed Consent Form, along with a link to the survey imbedded in the message, to a secretary or an administrative assistant for distribution to the school's faculty, staff, administration, and board of directors. It was deemed appropriate to request a secretary or administrative assistant to disseminate the survey to avoid any semblance of undue pressure to participate in the survey, thus having participation remain voluntary and anonymous. The survey remained open for responses until December 22, 2017, giving possible participants four weeks in which to respond to the Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index. Each week an email was sent to every president, requesting him/her to send out a gentle reminder via their secretaries or administrative assistants to their respective faculty, staff, administrators, and board members to consider completing the survey.

In order to gain some measure of the magnitude of anticipated responses to the survey, each president was asked in July of 2017 to supply data regarding the numbers of individuals in each one of the categories. The following information (see Table 5) was supplied:

Table 5

*Anticipated Survey Respondents by School*

<b>School</b>	<b>Board</b>	<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Administrators</b>	<b>Total</b>
All Hallows	17	36	7	3	63
Bergen Catholic	13	49	16	13	91
Bro. Rice - Detroit	17	47	39	11	114
Bro. Rice - Chicago	18	48	16	12	94
Catholic Memorial	22	48	34	16	120
Damien Memorial	15	55	21	8	99
Iona Preparatory	12	60	24	10	106
Palma School	16	25	13	12	66
St. Laurence	15	44	16	13	88
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>841</b>

The information suggests there were just over 840 possible participants for the survey. Also, each president was asked to supply estimated enrollment figures for their respective school. The enrollment figures (Table 6) were used to help describe each of the institutions participating in the survey.

Table 6

*Enrollment Figures – Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools*

<b>School</b>	<b>Grade 9</b>	<b>Grade 10</b>	<b>Grade 11</b>	<b>Grade 12</b>	<b>Total</b>
All Hallows	150	130	130	150	560
Bergen Catholic	166	164	173	165	668
Bro. Rice - Detroit	132	139	157	152	580
Bro. Rice - Chicago	191	153	190	164	698
Catholic Memorial	116	126	137	134	513
Damien Memorial	154	100	99	143	496
Iona Preparatory	211	207	170	197	785
Palma School	98	107	78	79	362
St. Laurence	128	197	138	177	640

In reality, the breakdown of participants who completed the online survey based on school and grouping (Table 7) follows:

Table 7

*Actual Survey Responses by School*

<b>School</b>	<b>Board</b>	<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Administrators</b>	<b>Total Participation</b>
All Hallows	13	15	2	3	33
Bergen Catholic	6	37	12	9	64
Bro. Rice - Detroit	6	13	7	4	30
Bro. Rice - Chicago	5	13	4	4	26
Catholic Memorial	6	6	1	4	17
Damien Memorial	6	11	1	2	20
Iona Preparatory	9	34	15	10	68
Palma School	8	17	7	7	39
St. Laurence	11	14	8	10	43
<b>TOTALS</b>	70	160	55	55	340

From the nine schools selected for the study, 387 faculty, staff, administrators, and board members began the survey with 340 fully completing the survey. Overall, there was a 40% response rate with 39% of the faculty, 30% of the staff, 56% of the administrators, and 48% of board members electing to participate and submit a completed survey. The individual school participation rates by category (Table 8) follow:

Table 8

*Percentage of Survey Responses by School*

<b>School</b>	<b>Board</b>	<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Administrators</b>	<b>Total Percentage Participation</b>
All Hallows	76%	42%	29%	100%	52%
Bergen Catholic	46%	76%	75%	69%	70%
Bro. Rice - Detroit	35%	28%	18%	36%	26%
Bro. Rice - Chicago	28%	27%	25%	33%	28%
Catholic Memorial	27%	13%	3%	25%	14%
Damien Memorial	40%	20%	5%	25%	20%
Iona Preparatory	75%	57%	63%	100%	64%
Palma School	50%	68%	54%	58%	59%
St. Laurence	73%	32%	50%	77%	49%

Only the 340 completed surveys have been tabulated and are included in the analysis that follows.

The results of the survey are reported in the following order:

1. Aggregate – all schools, all categories
2. By section and category: faculty, staff, administrators, board members
3. By school

The results are then be correlated with the four research questions, which are listed below:

1. What factors affect the Catholic identity of Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools in the United States?
2. In the face of declining numbers of professed religious Brothers on staff in Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools, what programs and policies may help to protect the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice and the Catholic identity of the schools?
3. What steps will help foster the Catholic identity and the sustainability of Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools?
4. Are there differences in the perceptions of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism from one school to another?

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **Introduction**

Over the past number of decades, Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools have experienced a sharp decline in the number of professed Brothers available to teach and minister to countless young people across the United States. Due to an aging population of professed religious Brothers, many former teachers and administrators have retired. This, combined with a serious lack of young men joining the North American Province of Edmund Rice Christian Brothers, has led to a diminishment of visible signs of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism in the schools. In order to remain true to the mission of Catholic education, school and Province leadership must find ways to maintain the Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism of the schools under their purview, especially in light of the many challenges.

To begin, analysis presented in this chapter has been broken down into the five areas of concern: School Environment, Spiritual Life, Programs, Ceremony, and Admissions. The aggregate analysis of the data is reviewed first, followed by an analysis of each of the four professional groupings: faculty, staff, administrators, and board members. This is followed by an analysis of responses from each of the nine schools.

#### **Aggregate Analysis**

The overall responses from each of the nine Christian Brother schools are designated in Table 9 below.

Table 9

*Aggregate Analysis*

SECTION	No Way to Judge	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
School Environment	2%	1%	8%	25%	65%
Spiritual Life	20%	5%	9%	21%	55%
Programs	22%	4%	6%	22%	55%
Ceremony	13%	2%	8%	26%	57%
Admissions	18%	3%	6%	23%	50%

**School Environment**

Ninety percent of all respondents agreed that school environment supported Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism in the schools.

**Overall Responses**

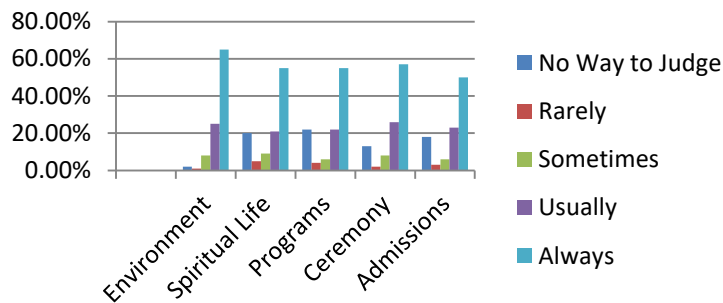


Figure 3. *Overall survey responses.*

Specifically, 98% of respondents felt that the school’s Catholic identity was clearly visible through the use of symbols and space by indicating “usually” or “always.” Coincidentally,

97% of the participants selected “usually” or “always” when asked if images reflecting Catholic identity were prominently displayed. Similarly, 91% responded that symbols reflecting Christian Brother charism were in evidence. The percentage slips just slightly to 84% when speaking of the universality of Catholicism reflected in the school’s cultural awareness programs, while 90% of the respondents agreed that the schools displayed a respect for diversity in their articulation and practice. Ninety percent of the respondents reflected that the schools’ programs of study, activities, etc., reflect the Gospel values expressed in mission and philosophy statements, while 89% state that the mission statements are prominently displayed. Eighty-five percent of those who participated in the survey marked “usually” or “always” when asked whether the mission statement is used as guide and resource for prayer, reflection and planning. In all, the report on School Environment was overwhelmingly positive with only one item receiving less than 85% agreement of the participants marking either “usually” or “always.”

### **Spiritual Life**

In a review of the responses to the Spiritual Life component of the survey, 75% of the participants agreed that the overall spiritual life of the schools supported the schools’ Catholic identity. It is interesting to note that in this section 20% of the responses were “no way to judge.” This indicates that there might be an opportunity for educating members of the individual school community as to the happenings surrounding the school’s spiritual life. Of those responding, 95% indicated that “usually” or “always” there is appropriate attention given to rituals and traditions that demonstrate the school’s Catholic identity. However, Item 2 under the Spiritual Life component shows 9% of those surveyed stated that there was “no way to judge” whether faculty had opportunities to advance its understanding of Catholicism and what makes a school Catholic, while 4% indicated “rarely.” In this instance, “no way to judge” might



be considered a more positive response than “rarely” or “sometimes” (13%). Also, the prompt only asks about faculty and not staff. Perhaps, if the question included staff and administrators, the response may have been different. Fully 14% stated that there was “no way to judge” if there was an appropriate orientation program for new members of the faculty or staff, while 71% agreed there was by indicating “usually” or “always.” Attention is given to building a Christian community received 77% as “usually” and “always.” Of the respondents, 72% indicated that in-service programs allow for the development of faculty and staff as spiritual leaders in the Catholic tradition. However, 20% stated that this “rarely” or only “sometimes” occurred, indicating that there may be an opportunity for more staff development in the future. With regard to the annual faculty retreat, 82% stated that it occurs “usually” or “always,” while 13% stated there was “no way to judge.” This suggests that the faculty/staff retreat may need to be better publicized and all members of the school community made aware of the opportunity. The statement regarding the board of directors and their ability to participate in a retreat dealing with the school’s mission and Catholic identity received a 47% “no way to judge.” This would indicate that the president of the school or the board chair might not regularly update faculty, staff, or administration of their proceedings. Similarly, the item dealing with student retreats received a 10% “no way to judge” rating. This may provide an opportunity to educate board members and staff of the school’s overall retreat program. Fully 95% of the respondents indicated that they agreed there are regular opportunities for prayer, reflection, and liturgy and that they are integral parts of school life by selecting “usually” (19%) or “always” (76%). Similarly, 83% of those surveyed indicated that the schools provide an appropriate level of pastoral care for students and faculty, indicating “usually” (34%) and “always” (49%). Only 80% of the respondents selected “always” or “usually” with regard to spiritual life being a

priority in planning. This might indicate that there is room for improvement by administration in planning for the school's overall spiritual life.

### **Programs**

Seventy-seven percent of the respondents, by indicating "usually" or "always," felt the schools' programs supported Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. This percentage, compared to the overall percentages for the previous two sections might be considered low. One of the reasons for the low percentage is that 22% of the responses were in the "no way to judge" column.

The impression, reviewing the responses item by item, is that there are members of the school community who are less informed regarding some of the program components in each of the schools. This was further supported by the data as each of the four groups was reviewed.

Eighty-nine percent of the respondents felt that the programs offered in the schools respect the presence of students of other faith beliefs. With regard to the schools' campus ministry programs, 82% of the respondents indicated "usually" (20%) or "always" (62%) there were clearly defined objectives which reflected the mission of the school. Here, 11% offered "no way to judge," which means 38 of the participants surveyed do not have a clear idea of what the schools' campus ministry programs are doing. Again, the percentage of "no way to judge" was high—15% with regard to adequate institutional support of the campus ministry programs. However, the encouraging piece is that 78% of the responses selected "usually" or "always" for this item. Eighty-one percent of the survey participants selected "usually" or "always," stating that community service has clearly defined objectives and requirements. while 76% stated that there is adequate institutional support for these ventures. However, just about 10% of the

responses indicated “no way to judge.” Only 4% of respondents suggested that “rarely” are there clearly defined objectives or adequate institutional support for community service.

Sixty-eight of the respondents (20%) indicated there was “no way to judge” whether or not students had time to reflect on and share about their community service experiences with one another. Only 61% agreed that “usually” or “always” was this occurring. This leaves 19% of the respondents stating that students “rarely” or “sometimes” are given the opportunity to explore their community service experiences with others. These data imply that there is an opportunity to educate the larger school community regarding all of the particulars surrounding community service.

Eighty-two percent of survey participants stated that “usually” (25%) or “always” (57%) do community service programs relate to the mission of the school and are seen as integral to the overall educational program of the students. Only 10% see this as “rarely” or only “sometimes” happening. Last, 21% stated “no way to judge” if applicants for positions in the schools were made aware of the school’s mission, Catholic identity, or Christian Brother charism. Only 74% of the respondents agreed that this “usually” or “always” takes place. Once again, this may imply there is an opportunity for educating all members of the community of the efforts made during the hiring process to ensure Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism are adequately addressed.

### **Ceremony and Traditions**

Christian Brother charism and Catholic identity are supported through school ceremonies and traditions as indicated by an 83% overall selection of “usually” (26%) or “always” (57%). Nearly 93% of the participants indicated that there are appropriate ceremonies and rituals that celebrate the heritage and value system of the school. Further, these same ceremonies and rituals

are regularly held in the schools. While 79% agree that these ceremonies and rituals are evaluated in light of the schools' mission and the needs of the students, 13% responded that there was "no way to judge." Administrators of the schools have an opportunity to share the benefits of their particular ceremonies and rituals and the impact they have on students and adult members of the community with a wider audience. Student participation in planning, organizing, and conducting ceremonies and rituals received only a 70% combined "usually" (27%) and "always" (43%) score. Eleven percent of survey participants stated that there was "no way to judge," which leaves 19% suggesting that it "rarely" or only "sometimes" occurs. These percentages would indicate that school administrators might make more of an effort to involve their students in the planning, organizing, and conducting liturgies, prayer services, assemblies, and the like. Eighty-seven percent of responders indicated that the schools "usually" or "always" have honors and awards that reflect the mission of the school and its heritage. The implication can be drawn that overall the schools have a strong sense of tradition and use ceremonies and rituals to uphold their charism and Catholic identity.

### **Admissions**

The final section, Admissions, had 18% response as "no way to judge." This is a strong indicator that administrators may want to look at their admissions policies and make certain that all members of the school community are aware of them. Seventy-six percent of the survey participants responded that their school's admissions policy was consistent with the mission of the school. Fifteen percent stated there was "no way to judge," while only 2% indicated that it "rarely" was considered. Twenty-one percent of the respondents indicated that there was "no way to judge" whether the admissions policy was stated clearly and followed. Another 11% indicated that it was "rarely" or only "sometimes" followed. These points taken together may

suggest that a fuller understanding of admissions is required. Last, 18% of the respondents had “no way to judge” whether the admissions process acquainted prospective students and their families with the mission, beliefs, and philosophy of the school, while 83% agreed that it “usually” (22%) or “always” (53%) did.

Considering all of the data points provided by the 340 completed surveys, the overall response indicates a very positive perception of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism being supported by the five areas: school environment, spiritual life, programs, ceremonies and traditions, and admissions.

### **Section and Category Analysis: Faculty, Staff, Administrators, and Board Members**

The analysis of the data for this portion of the chapter will look at responses for each section of the survey by the four groups of professionals: faculty, staff, administrators, and board members. Comparisons of the data may point to opportunities for further study or education on the part of the leadership of the schools and the Edmund Rice Christian Brother Province. Consideration might be given to particular sections where “no way to judge” was selected much more often by any one group of professionals. For example, 58% of the staff and 66% of the faculty indicated there was “no way for them to judge” whether or not the board of directors held an annual retreat centered on the school’s mission statement and Catholic identity. Similarly, 33% of board members responded that “rarely” was there a board of directors’ retreat. In this particular example, it would be prudent to suggest that each individual school’s board of directors schedule a yearly retreat centered on their distinct mission statement and the proceedings of that shared with the larger school community.

## School Environment

Eighty-nine percent of the faculty, 79% of staff, 98% of administrators, and 90% of board members “usually” or “always” agreed that the schools’ environment supports a strong sense of Christian Brother charism and Catholic identity. There were no glaring irregularities in the data that would indicate that any of the groups were any less enthusiastic about the school’s religious environment. All the groups, as noted by their overwhelming choice of “usually” or “always,” indicated that there is an identifiable integration of faith with life and culture, that Catholic identity is immediately clear through use of symbols and space, that Christian Brother charism is in evidence in the use of symbols, and that images reflecting Catholic identity are prominently displayed throughout the school. Thirteen percent of staff, 14% of faculty, 4% of administrators, and 1% of board responders indicated that the universality of Catholicism is “sometimes” reflected in the school’s cultural awareness program.

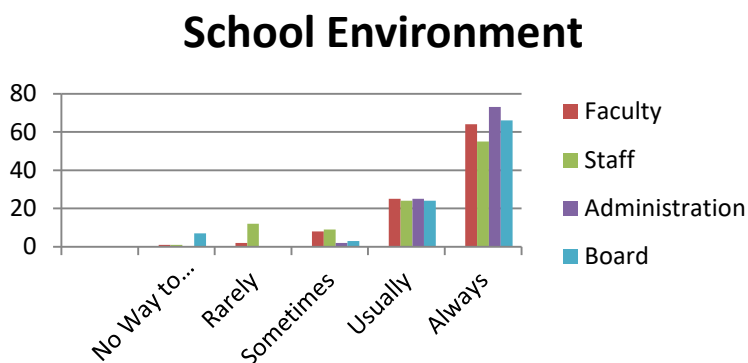


Figure 4. *School environment responses.*

These numbers may not seem significant, but they point to an area that may provide opportunity for comment by administration. Similarly, 13% of staff and 10% of faculty indicated that only “sometimes” was respect for diversity articulated and practiced in the school.

Realistically, only 24 out of 340 (7%) responses covering nine different schools indicated “sometimes.” However, this may signal a need to discuss diversity on a larger scale.

Ninety-six percent of board members and 93% of administrators selected “usually” or “always,” reinforcing the fact that programs of study, activities, athletics, and codes of discipline reflect the Gospel values expressed in the mission and philosophy statements of the school. Comparatively, 84% of staff and 89% of faculty chose “usually” or “always.” All of the percentages are overwhelmingly positive, but the small variation between board members/administrators and faculty/staff may be an opportunity for genuine dialogue so that all groups are aware of the perceptions held by the others.

The mission statement is prominently displayed receives an average of 90% agreement from all four groups. However, only 80% of the faculty perceives that the mission statement is used as a guide and resource for prayer, reflection, and planning. The other three groups recognize this by an 88%, 90%, and 87% response rate. Certainly, 80% is not disturbingly low, but it does indicate a different perception than that of staff, administrators, and board members.

Overall, all four groups indicated that the school environment is a positive indicator of a strong Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism in their schools.

### **Spiritual Life**

In this section, two groups (faculty and board members) stand out in that they only record 73% and 75% agreement with “usually” and “always” overall. The faculty grouping has a 9% “no way to judge” result and a 13% “sometimes” result. The board responses show a 20% “no way to judge,” which affected the overall rating. Surprisingly, staff’s overall rating of the spiritual life section was an 83%, while the administration polled at 87%. There are various areas of the spiritual life section of the survey that point to a need for some slight interventions.

All groups gave high ratings to the fact that appropriate attention is given to rituals and traditions that demonstrate Catholic identity. The lowest percentage was a 93% given by board members.

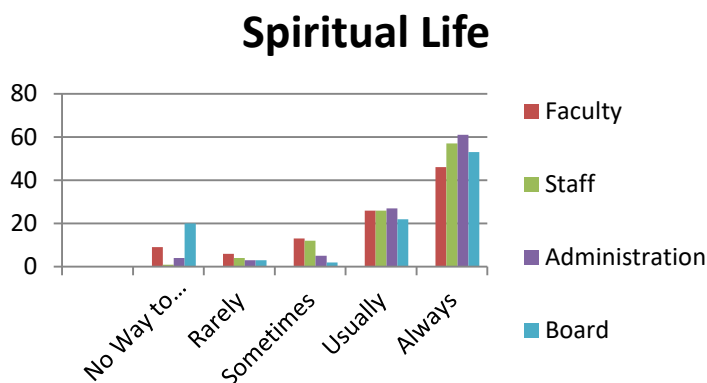


Figure 5. *Spiritual life responses.*

The opportunity for faculty to advance their understanding of Catholicism and what makes a school Catholic was rated fairly low by three of the four groups. Staff rated this item at 16% “sometimes,” while faculty themselves stated 19% “sometimes.” Board members had a 31% mark for “no way to judge,” while administrators gave it an 88% of “usually” or “always.” These statistics may suggest that administrators may want to evaluate their professional development opportunities, especially those centering on developing each person’s understanding of the Catholic faith and what makes a school Catholic. Board members’ survey showed a 44% rating for “no way to judge” Item Number 3 regarding whether or not there is an appropriate orientation program for new hires. The board response, along with 11% of staff, stating there was “no way to judge” would suggest that administrators have an opportunity to review its hiring and orientation programs and promote them to the larger school community. Similarly, faculty members indicated a 13% “sometimes” and 5% “rarely” rating for this same item. Only administrators gave it a high 87% rating.



The fourth item in the Spiritual Life section asks whether or not attention is given to building a Christian community among faculty and staff. Administrators' response of 98% "usually" and "always" is in contrast to the faculty response of 68%, fully 30 points difference between the two groups. Staff comes in with 74% agreement, while board members are an 83%. Board members also had a 17% "no way to judge" response. The disparity between administrators and faculty suggests more study be given this topic with appropriate attention to ensure that every Edmund Rice Christian Brother school work at building community based on Gospel values and Christian Brother tradition. There is also a disparity between faculty (64% "usually" and "always") and staff (67%) perception of in-service programs providing for their development as spiritual leaders and the perception held by administrators (91%). Board members' overall perception registered 72%, while they had a 29% result for "no way to judge." Again, the differences between faculty/staff and administrators suggest there is room for improvement concerning in-service programs designed to develop spiritual leadership in the "rank and file."

One of the hallmarks of a Catholic school is the ability and opportunity for the professional staff to experience an annual retreat—a time for prayer, reflection, and conversation centering on the mission and philosophy of the institution. The survey question for this topic showed mixed results from all four groups. A startling statistic is that 40% of board members responded that they had "no way to judge" this item. The average response rate for "usually" and "always" of staff, faculty, and administrators is only 78%—one of lowest averages for the survey as a whole. This would suggest that the Edmund Rice Christian Brother leadership, in concert with individual school leadership, develop a policy at the board of director level stating that an annual retreat be incorporated into the academic year.

Table 10

*Annual Retreat Responses*

	Staff	Faculty	Admin	Board
<b>No way to judge</b>	9%	7%	2%	40%
<b>Rarely</b>	5%	9%	9%	0%
<b>Sometimes</b>	7%	8%	11%	6%
<b>Usually</b>	22%	15%	15%	7%
<b>Always</b>	56%	61%	64%	47%

Table 10 shows the percentages of responses from each of the four groups. Similarly, the item dealing with the board members participating in an annual retreat provides opportunity for an intervention by the leadership of the Christian Brothers. Faculty (66%), staff (58%), and administrators (31%) indicated in large numbers that there was “no way to judge.” This item was among the lowest rated for “usually” or “always”—the average response for the four groups was 36%. The board response for “usually” and “always” was only 50%, indicating that a board retreat does not occur for every school annually.

The student retreat program and its definition within the context of the school’s mission received an average of 84% for “usually” and “always.” The average would have been higher except that board members indicated a 26% “no way to judge.” There was a 13% difference between administrator and faculty/staff perception for this item. This difference may suggest more study be given to the student retreat program and its efficacy at supporting the Catholic mission of the school. All four groups (96% average response) indicated that there are regular opportunities for prayer, reconciliation, and liturgy as integral parts of school life.

Appropriate attention is given to pastoral care of both faculty and students as indicated by the response of those surveyed. However, faculty response was the lowest for “usually” and “always” with a score of 78%, whereas administrator response was 95%. Again, the difference

between the two groups hints at a difference of opinion and that there is room for improvement. The last item in this section asks whether or not the spiritual life of the community is a priority in planning. Ninety percent of administrators, 89% of board members, 80% of staff, and only 74% of faculty indicated “usually” or “always.” There is a difference between administrator/board member and faculty/staff perception of this notion. This may well argue for greater communication between the groups, especially since the school’s spiritual life is fundamental for a strong sense of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism.

As indicated by the data review, and with just a few exceptions, all four of the groups indicated that the spiritual life of the school is in a good position to support a strong sense of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. However, there are a few areas of concern where proper interventions by leadership at both the school and Province level would help foster an improved sense of Christian Brother charism and the schools’ Catholic identity. Those concerns include annual retreats for faculty/staff and board members and in-service programs to foster spiritual leadership among faculty and staff.

### **Programs**

The Programs section of the survey shows that the faculty’s overall responses differ by more than 20 points with each of the other three groups’ selections of “usually” and “always.” The faculty response (overall for this section) is 63% (“usually” and “always”) compared to 84% staff, 86% administrators, and 83% for board members. The average percentage response for the first item in this section is 90% overall, supporting the concept that the school community and its programs are respectful of the presence of students of other faith beliefs (non-Catholics).

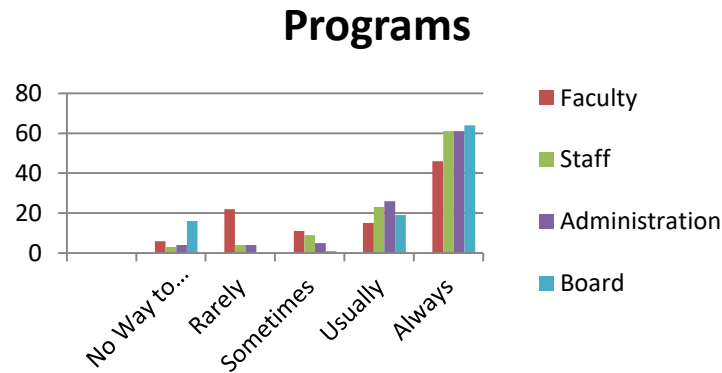


Figure 6. *Programs responses.*

The idea that the campus ministry program has clearly defined objectives reflecting the mission of the school and that there is adequate institutional support for the program received a favorable response from all four groups with an average response of 82% “usually” and “always.” The first part (clear objectives) would have had a greater average response, but all four groups had a segment that responded they had “no way to judge”: 13% staff, 9% faculty, 4% administrators, and 21% board members. Similarly, responses for adequate support had a large “no way to judge” component from staff (25%), faculty (16%), and board members (14%).

Similarly, when speaking to community service, the responses were lowered by each of the groups’ inability to judge. As to clearly defined objectives for community service, staff responded 15% and faculty at 11% as to “no way to judge.” Adequate institutional support received similar results for “no way to judge”: staff, 18% and faculty, 14%. What was striking for these two items were the board responses. Clear objectives for community service received a board response of 94% agreement for “usually” and “always,” while indicating with a 91% agreement for adequate institutional support. The assumption is that board members have more

than adequate information regarding community service in order to make a qualified judgement but do not have as much information regarding the overall campus ministry program.

Time afforded students to reflect on and share about their community service recorded some of the highest percentages of “no way to judge” responses. In fact, this point brought about the highest “rarely” response in the entire survey. Staff responded 9%, faculty 13% and administrators 5%. Both of these responses, “no way to judge” and “rarely,” might suggest that more time be invested in student reflection and sharing their community service experiences. This is also supported by the lower “usually” and “always” responses by each of the groups. Community service programs are seen as integral to the educational program of the students as supported by the administrators’ 87% response and board members’ 96% response of “usually” and “always”; however, both the staff (74%) and faculty (78%) seem less enthusiastic in their support of this concept. Again, the small disparity between board/administrators and faculty/staff open the way for a meaningful dialogue on the efficacy of community service programs.

The last item under Programs deals with the administrators’ ability to convey the mission, Catholic identity, and Christian Brother charism to applicants during the hiring process. This item received a large “no way to judge” across all four of the groups. This may suggest that proper hiring protocols be established and promulgated throughout each school community.

The responses put forth in this section underlie the notion that both Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism are supported by the programs in the schools, especially campus ministry and community service. There are a few areas where a small intervention here or there would bolster both Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. For example, more adequate

sharing of information regarding community service programs and campus ministry would alleviate the need to respond with “no way to judge.”

### Ceremony and Traditions

The section Ceremony and Traditions, received an average 84% of “usually” and “always” for the items listed. This indicates general agreement that the schools’ ceremonies and traditions support the concepts of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. The first item dealing with appropriate ceremonies and rituals celebrating the heritage and value system of the school received a high response rate (average 93%) of “usually” and “always” from all four groups.

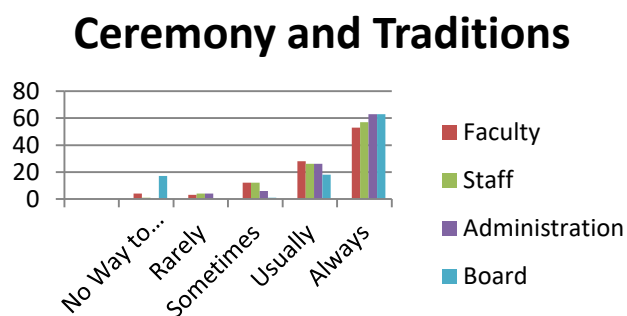


Figure 7. *Ceremony and traditions responses.*

This indicates that across the Province, the nine schools offer unique opportunities to celebrate Catholic faith and tradition along with Christian Brother heritage. However, when asked if these same ceremonies and rituals are evaluated according to the mission of the school and the needs of the students, 15% of staff, 10% of faculty, and 29% of board members reported there was “no way to judge.” Only administrators reported a favorable response by selecting “usually” and “always” (93%) to this query, while the other three groups average response was 75%. The third item under this heading, dealing with student participation in planning,

organizing, and conducting the ceremonies and rituals within the schools, received a low average of 71% response from the four groups. In fact, administrators responded with a 76% “usually” or “always” regarding student participation, which was the second lowest rating they gave. Their lowest rating went to providing students adequate time for reflection and discussion of student community service. This indicates a need for the schools to revise their practices and allow for more student participation in the planning, organizing, and conducting school rituals and ceremonies. Last, all four groups agreed by selecting “usually” or “always” (staff, 88%, faculty 82%, administrators and board members each 95%) that honors and awards reflect the mission of the school and its heritage.

Of the four items in this section, only one, that dealing with student participation, received agreement of “usually” or “always” fewer than 80% by all groups. It was indicated by staff, faculty, and board members that the schools’ ceremonies and rituals could be better evaluated against the mission of the school and the needs of the students. Overall however, ceremonies, rituals, and traditions across the nine schools are supportive of Christian Brother charism and Catholic identity.

### **Admissions**

This section of the survey produced the greatest disparity between staff/faculty responses and administrator/board responses. The average response for staff/faculty under the “usually” and “always” heading for the first item was 68%, while the administrator/board response was 90%.

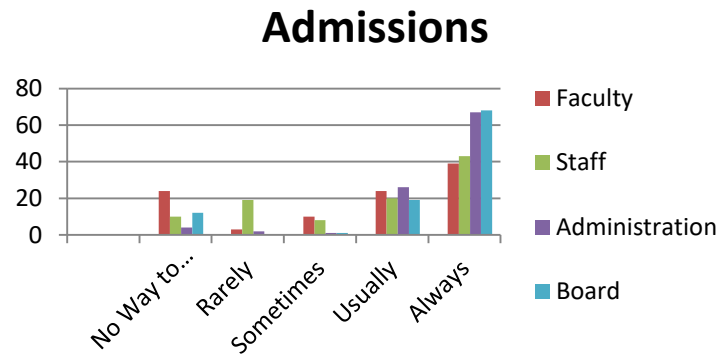


Figure 8. *Admissions responses.*

This item dealt with the admissions policy being consistent with the mission of the school. The explanation for this might be that 16% of staff and 20% of faculty stated they had “no way to judge.” These data entries point to a need to share the admission policy with all members of the school community. Similarly, when asked if the policy was stated clearly and followed, 25% of staff, 26% of faculty, 9% of administrators, and 17% of board members indicated there was “no way to judge.” Only 57% of faculty selected “usually” or “always” for this item, while 9% chose “rarely” and another 9% marked “sometimes.” Staff indications were not that much better with 2% selecting “rarely” and 9% choosing “sometimes.”

The final item in the Admissions section of the survey asks whether the admissions process acquaints students and families with the mission, beliefs, and philosophy of the school. Once again there is a large divide between administrators/board and staff/faculty. Staff selected “no way to judge” 20% of the time, while the faculty percentage was 25% and the board 10%. Administrators selected “usually” or “always” 91% compared with faculty (65%) and staff (71%). Board members’ percentage was an 88. These numbers would suggest that administrators and board members are far more conversant with admission policies than either



faculty or staff. Again, this provides an opportunity for administration to promulgate and explain admissions procedures and policy.

As stated earlier, the Admissions section produced the greatest disparity between administrators/board members and staff/faculty. The percentages for “no way to judge” were among the highest in the entire survey. Fortunately, “rarely” was very seldom selected, indicating that those with the ability to make a qualified judgment felt the admissions process and policies did in fact support the school’s Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism.

### **School Analysis**

This section of the chapter examines the survey results as they relate to the nine individual schools and the four different groups therein. Also, the review focuses on each of the five sections of the survey and the responses submitted by the members of the school community. As in the other sections, it is significant to report any out of the ordinary responses. Since this part of the review deals with individual schools, it is important to remember that the sample for each is smaller.

#### **All Hallows High School**

All Hallows, an all-boys high school founded in 1909 by the Christian Brothers, is located in the Bronx, New York City. The enrollment is approximately 560 young men with 36 faculty members, 3 administrators, 7 staff, and a board of directors of 17 members. Fifty-two percent of invited members of the school community participated by submitting their responses to the Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index. The number of surveys submitted was 39; however, only 33 were fully completed, representing 42% of the faculty, 29% of the staff, 100% of the administrators, and 76% of the board of directors.

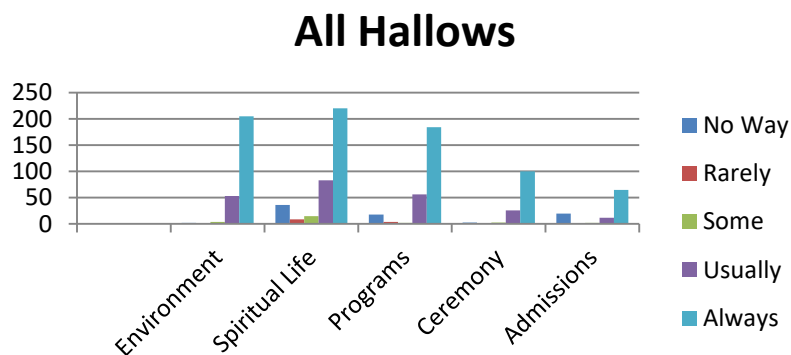


Figure 9. *All Hallows responses.*

Under the heading School Environment, the faculty, staff, administrators, and board members responded on average with 20% “usually” and 78% “always” on the nine items listed. Out of 264 possible responses for this section, only two were recorded as “no way to judge” and four indicated “sometimes,” while 53 responded “usually” and 205 were “always.” This indicates that Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism are well supported by the overall school environment. This would include an identifiable integration of faith with culture; a clear use of symbols, space, and images representative of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism; cultural programs reflecting the universality of Catholicism; respect for diversity; and elements of school life reflective of Gospel values. The data also support the fact that the school’s mission statement is prominently displayed and used as a guide for prayer, reflection, and planning.

The section under Spiritual Life is different in that the number of “no way to judge” climbed to 36 out of a possible 363. Seventeen of these come from the item dealing with the board retreat, while the remaining “no way to judge” numbers were scattered throughout the other ten items in this section. As mentioned previously, the board retreat is an item that invites

school and Province leadership into discussion that might properly lead to a stronger policy statement requiring such an annual retreat.

The other items in this section, specifically rituals and traditions demonstrating the school's Catholic identity; building a Christian community among faculty and staff; holding a faculty/staff retreat; having a well-defined student retreat program; incorporating regular opportunities for prayer, reconciliation, and liturgy; pastoral care of the community; and priority in planning the spiritual life of the community, all received a very positive response with an overall average of 94% of either "usually" or "always." Six individuals indicated that they had "no way to judge" whether the faculty had opportunities to advance its understanding of Catholicism and what makes the school Catholic. However, 86% of faculty responded either "usually" or "always" do they have the opportunity. Overall, the respondents felt very positive about the school's spiritual life and its ability to support Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism.

The third section, Programs, received an equally strong showing. Only one item dealing with student time for reflection on community service received a low rating of "usually" (27%) or "always" (36%). This is due to the large percentage (21%) of people responding that they had "no way to judge" whether or not the administration provided adequate time for reflection and sharing by students after performing community service. Apart from this one item, an average of 94% of "usually" and "always" was recorded for items that included programs having respect for students of other faiths; clearly defined objectives for community service and campus ministry programs; adequate institutional support for both; community service relating to the mission of the school; and applicants for positions in the school are made aware of the school's mission, Catholic identity, and Christian Brother charism.

The four items under Ceremony and Tradition garnered an average of 95%. Of the 132 possible responses for this section, only six were not recorded as either “usually” (26) or “always” (101). These numbers would indicate that the ceremonies and rituals that celebrate the heritage and value system of the school; are evaluated according to the mission; that students are involved in the planning, organizing, and conduction of these activities; and that honors and awards reflect the mission of the school and its heritage support the school’s Christian Brother charism and its Catholic identity.

Last, the survey section regarding the All Hallows’ admissions procedure received an overall 78% selection of “usually” or “always.” Once again, the “no way to judge” choice affected the overall average. Out of 99 possible responses, 20 were “no way to judge.” This 20% rating indicates that the school administration might consider clearly publicizing its admissions policies and procedures. However, if those 20 responses are taken out of the mix, then 77/79 responses were “usually” (12) and “always” (65). This would indicate that those with the appropriate knowledge to make a judgment agree that Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism are supported by the school’s admissions procedures and policies.

### **Bergen Catholic High School**

Bergen Catholic High School was founded in 1955 as a joint venture between the Archdiocese of Newark and the Congregation of Christian Brothers. Today Bergen Catholic has an all-male enrollment of approximately 668 with 49 faculty members, 16 staff, 13 administrators, and 13 members of the board of directors. Seventy-two members of the community participated in the survey process, but only 64 people (70%) submitted a completed survey for this research project. This breaks down to 46% of the board members, 76% of the faculty, 75% of the staff, and 69% of the administrators taking part in the survey experience.

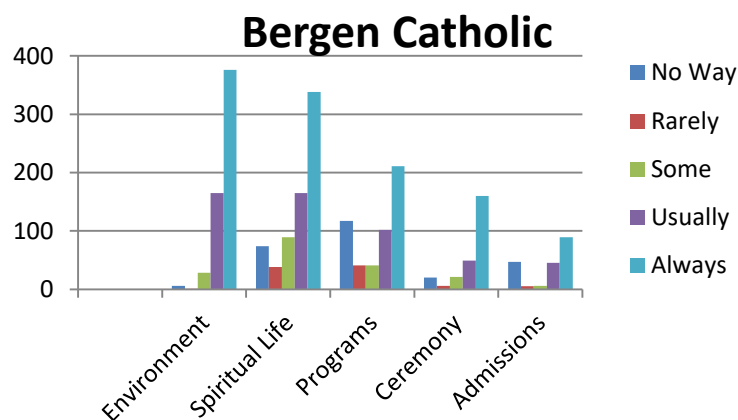


Figure 10. *Bergen Catholic responses.*

Reviewing all of the data for Bergen Catholic, 76% of all responses to all items in the survey were “usually” (22%) or “always” (54%). There was a large number (12%) of responses indicating people had “no way to judge” certain items. Also, 91 (4%) overall responses indicated “rarely.” Although this is not a large number, it is 17% of all responses for “rarely” throughout the entire survey. As the data are further analyzed, these figures might suggest areas for intervention by the school administration.

When viewing the data for school environment, the cumulative results for this section strongly suggest support for Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. The lowest combined percentage for one item was 87% of “usually” or “always,” and the highest was 100% of “usually” and “always,” which averages to a 95%. None of the items in this section of the survey suggests that Bergen Catholic is lacking in Catholic identity or Christian Brother charism. Respondents indicated that the school environment portrays an integration of faith with life and culture, that through use of symbols and space Catholic identity is clearly manifested, and that

images throughout the school reflect both Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. Further, the data show that the universality of Catholicism is reflected in school cultural awareness programs and there is respect for diversity articulated and practiced at the school. The mission statement is prominently displayed and used as a guide and resource for prayer, reflection, and planning.

The section on Spiritual Life differs from the School Environment section in that it only shows 72% respondents indicating “usually” or “always.” Ten percent of all responses for this section were “no way to judge,” while 5% indicated “rarely” and 13% marked “sometimes.” Of particular concern would be Items 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. Item 4, regarding building a Christian community among faculty and staff, garnered only 44% of respondents stating “always,” 22% “usually,” and 28% “sometimes.” Item 5, regarding in-service programs for faculty and staff to develop as spiritual leaders in the Catholic faith tradition, received mixed reviews. Nine percent of respondents stated this “rarely” takes place, 28% responded it “sometimes” occurs, while “usually” and “always” received 30% each. The sixth item in the section deals with the annual faculty retreat. The survey results seem inclusive: 13% state “no way to judge,” 19% “rarely,” 22% “sometimes,” 23% “usually,” and 23% “always.” The item dealing with the board retreat received the largest “no way to judge” percentage: 63%, while only 18% of participants indicated “usually” or “always.” The last item that might suggest concern is the school having a well-defined student retreat program. Fourteen percent of respondents cited “no way to judge,” while 3% stated “rarely” and 5% only “sometimes.” These five items deserve serious consideration by the Bergen Catholic administration. Although there is great unanimity regarding appropriate attention given to rituals and traditions that demonstrate the school’s Catholic identity, an orientation program for new faculty and staff, regular opportunities for

prayer, reconciliation and liturgy, pastoral care for student and adults, and that planning for the spiritual life of the school is a priority, the other items previously cited deserve attention. As cited in previous chapters, building community, providing prayerful opportunities such as retreat programs, and proclaiming the Word of God are all hallmarks of Catholic identity.

The Programs section of Bergen Catholic's response received the lowest cumulative average for the overall totals compared to the other four sections of the survey. In this section, only 61% of the respondents cited "usually" or "always." Twenty-three percent of the responses were "no way to judge," while 8% indicated "rarely," another 8% "sometimes," with "usually" getting 20% and "always" only 41%.

The first item asks if the school community and programs respect the presence of students of other faiths. Sixty-nine percent responded "always" with 22% indicating "usually." Of particular note are Items 4, 5, 6, and 7. Item 4, community service programs having clearly defined objectives and requirements, had the following responses: 30% "no way to judge," 11% "rarely," 13% "sometimes," 27% stating "usually," and 25% striking "always." Similarly, Item 5 regarding adequate institution support given to community service received mixed results: 30% "no way to judge," 13% "rarely," 14% "sometimes," 19% "usually," and 25% "always." Asked whether or not students received adequate time for reflection and sharing about their community service experience, 30% of respondents indicated "no way to judge," 17% said "rarely," 9% marked "sometimes," while "usually" and "always" received 22% each. The last item in this section showing low agreement has 33% of the respondents saying the community service programs "always" relate to the mission of the school with another 19% stating "usually" but with 9% marking only "sometimes," while a larger number (13%) indicate "rarely." The results for these four items provide opportunity for the administration at Bergen Catholic to

review their community service program and ensure that it aligns with the school mission so that it is seen as supportive of the school's Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. The data also suggest that a better publicized program might result in a higher percentage of responses in the "usually" and "always" categories.

The section dealing with Ceremony and Tradition fared better in terms of overall percentages. Eighty-two percent of the responses were marked in the "usually" (19%) or "always" (63%) categories. Only Item 3 received mixed notations. This item asked whether or not students play a prominent role in planning, organizing, and conducting school ceremonies. Four percent of those surveyed had "no way to judge," 6% reported "rarely," and another 13% stated "sometimes." These data would suggest that administration find more inclusive ways for students to participate. The other three items received responses ranging from 83% "usually" and "always" to 92% indicating that the school has adequate ceremonies, rituals, honors, and traditions that support a strong sense of Catholic identity and celebrate Christian Brother charism.

The final section, Admissions, also has mixed reviews. The lowest reporting item asks whether or not the school admissions policy is clearly stated and followed. Thirty-six of respondents state "always," 23% "usually," while 3% indicate "sometimes," and only 5% state "rarely." The three items under this heading have low overall agreement indicated by 20% "no way to judge" for Item 1, 33% for Item 2, and 20% for Item 3. These statistics would suggest that the school administration might benefit from a more clearly defined, articulated, and followed admissions' policy and procedure that reflects the mission of Bergen Catholic.



### Bro. Rice High School – Bloomfield Hills

Bro. Rice High School first opened its doors in 1960 with 200 freshmen. Today, there are approximately 580 young men in Grades 9 through 12, served by 47 faculty, 39 staff members, and 11 administrators. Their board of directors currently has 17 members. Of this number, 36 individuals submitted a survey, but only 30 members completed the process, resulting in a 26% participation rate. Six board members, 13 faculty, 7 staff members, and 4 administrators submitted a complete survey. The overall data reveal that there were 98 responses in the category “no way to judge,” 30 for “rarely,” 126 “sometimes,” with 306 at “usually,” and 460 for “always.” This shows that 45% of the responses were marked “always” and 30% “usually.”

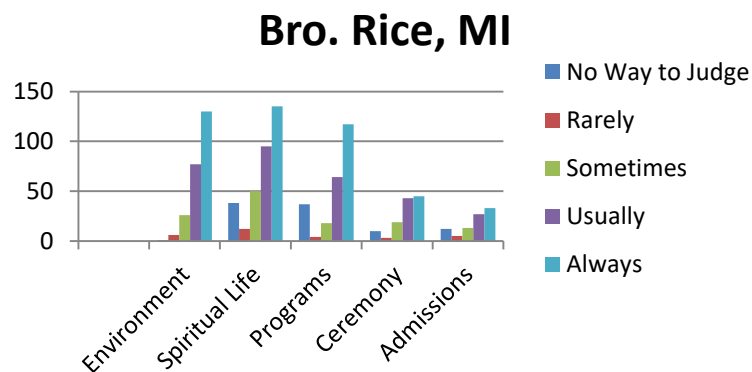


Figure 11. *Bro. Rice, MI responses.*

A closer inspection of each of the five sections of data shows a school community working toward increasing Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. The data also point out what programs or policies might deserve more attention from the Bro. Rice administration.

There were only two items in the School Environment section of the survey that might be called out for particular scrutiny, and neither seems to be a major stumbling block to establishing

and enjoying a strong sense of Christian Brother charism and Catholic identity. Item 5 asks whether or not the school's cultural awareness programs reflect the universality of Catholicism. Twenty percent of the respondents noted that this occurs "sometimes," while 30% indicate "usually," and 47% state "always." Remedying the 20% "sometimes" rating might only be a matter of defining how the school finds the universality of Catholicism within their programs. Item 8 questions if the mission statement is prominently displayed in the school and used in publications. According to 13% of the respondents, this occurs "rarely," and another 10% stated it occurs only "sometimes." This item is easily rectified by the administration posting the mission statement throughout the school building.

The other seven items share at least an 83% or higher rate of response of "usually" or "always." This may well indicate that overall the school's environment promotes Christian Brother charism as well as a strong sense of Catholic identity.

The Spiritual Life component of the survey shows a school that may very well benefit from sharing information about the programs among the faculty, staff, administration and board; for example, whether the board participates in an annual retreat centered on the school's mission statement and Catholic identity receives some of the largest "no way to judge" responses. Fifty percent of the Bro. Rice responses for this item were "no way to judge," and four of the six board responses indicated "rarely!" Similarly, Item 3, asking if there is an appropriate orientation program for new members of the community, received a 23% "no way to judge" response along with a 33% "sometimes" response. This response may show a need to clarify and publish programs intended to strengthen Catholic identity across the spectrum of the school community.

Similarly, Items 2 and 5 tallied poor responses. Providing opportunities for members of the school community to advance its understanding of Catholicism and what makes a school

Catholic (Item 2) polled only 23% “always” and 43% “usually.” Item 5, which asks about annual in-service programs to develop faculty and staff as spiritual leaders in the Catholic tradition, showed 13% as “no way to judge,” 7% “rarely,” 30% “sometimes,” and 23% and 27% as “usually” and “always,” respectively. The results of these two items might indicate the need for the school administration to be more proactive with respect to providing opportunities for community members to become more Catholic literate. Item 4, building a Christian community, had a 17% response stating that only “sometimes” does this occur. Alone, this is not a significant statistic; however, when viewed with the other responses, it provides an opportunity for Bro. Rice to become a better educational organization centered under the banner of Christian Brother charism and Catholic identity.

The remaining items, appropriate attention given to rituals and traditions that demonstrate the school’s Catholic identity, a retreat program for students that is well defined within the mission of the school, regular opportunities for prayer, reconciliation and reflection, and pastoral care of students and adults received strong agreement, which is representative of a vibrant Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism.

The overall considerations from the Bro. Rice, MI participants for the Spiritual Life section of the survey indicate there may be some confusion about the happenings on campus. The data, when viewed collectively, invite conversation for improving both student and adult experiences in the spiritual life of the community.

For the most part, the items under the Programs section of the survey received positive agreement. Three items, Numbers 3, 6, and 8, each tallied a large number of “no way to judge” responses, which lowered the tallies for “usually” and “always.” Item 3 asks whether the campus ministry program has adequate institutional support, and 23% said they had “no way to

judge,” while 70% responded “usually” (33%) and “always” (37%). Similarly, Items 6 (time is provided to students for reflection on community service) and 8 (applicants are made aware of the school’s mission, Catholic identity, and Christian Brother charism) each received a 37% response of “no way to judge.” The responses for these three items provide an opportunity for the Bro. Rice administration to publicize their programs and policies to all members of the community. The other five items each received favorable responses with an overall average of 87% of “usually” or “always.” The first item, the school community and programs respect the presence of students of other faiths garnered the highest combined “usually” and “always”—96%. Community service programs have clear objectives and receive adequate institutional support as evidenced by the 90% “usually” and 80% “always.” If one were able to discount the “no way to judge” responses, all of the items under Program would point to a vibrant Christian community with a well-developed sense of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism.

Two items under the Ceremony and Traditions section require closer inspection. Item 2, evaluation of ceremonies and rituals in light of the school’s mission and needs of the students and Item 3, students involved in the planning, organization and conducting of those same ceremonies and traditions both received a double digit “no way to judge.” Also, Item 3 received a 30% response rate of “sometimes” regarding student participation. The other two items, appropriate ceremonies and rituals celebrating the heritage and value system of the school and honors and awards reflecting the school’s mission and heritage both garnered sufficient agreement of “usually” and “always.” The data for this section show that Bro. Rice High School has an opportunity to better inform faculty, staff, administrators, and board members of programs and policies that support and strengthen Christian Brother charism and Catholic identity.

The data from the final section, Admissions, provide information that might prompt the administration of Bro. Rice to clearly articulate its policies and procedures regarding the admissions process. The first item asks whether the school admissions policy is consistent with the mission of the school. Twenty-three percent of respondents indicated “sometimes” and another 23% said “usually,” while 43% marked “always.” These data invite a review of the admissions policy. Item 2, speaks to a clearly stated admissions’ policy and received a 10% “rarely” and a 13% “sometimes.” The final item, suggesting that applicants and their families are acquainted with the school’s mission, beliefs, and philosophy during the admissions process received only a 73% agreement of “usually” (33%) and “always” (40%). All of these data points, taken together, suggest the administration carefully review the admissions process and clearly publicize it to their faculty, staff, and board members.

Once again, the high number of responses of “no way to judge” takes away from the perception that Bro. Rice, Bloomfield Hills, enjoys a strong sense of Christian Brother charism and Catholic identity. The survey reveals that there is opportunity to clarify and better publicize those policies and programs that are indicative of a vibrant and energized school community steeped in Gospel values and a heritage that is resplendent with Christian Brother charism.

### **Bro. Rice, Chicago**

Bro. Rice High School was opened in September of 1956 with a freshman class of 400 young men. Their enrollment is approximately 700 boys supported by a faculty of 48, a staff of 16 and administration numbering 12. They have a board of directors with 18 members. Of this number, eight board members, 14 faculty, four staff and four administrators participated in the survey. However, only five board members, 13 faculty, four administrators, and four staff members completed the process, which resulted in a 28% participation rate. On average, the

responses from Bro. Rice, Chicago, are favorable, breaking out as 9% “no way to judge,” 2% “rarely,” 8% “sometimes,” 24% “usually,” and 57% of the responses as “always.” The use of “rarely” as a choice only 2% of the time would indicate that across the spectrum, the faculty, staff, administration, and board members who participated deem that Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism is well supported by the policies and programs currently in effect at Bro. Rice.

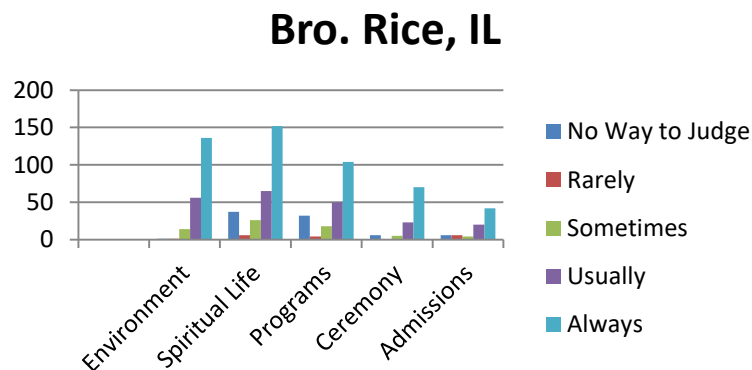


Figure 12. *Bro. Rice, IL responses.*

A review of the data for the section dealing with school environment reveals only three concerns. Items 8 and 9 both received a 15% “sometimes” response, while Item 7 garnered a 12% response for “sometimes.” Item 8 deals with the use of the school’s mission statement in publications and its display around the building, while Item 9 asks whether it is used as a guide and resource for prayer, reflection, and planning. Item 7 suggests that the program of study as well as activities, athletics, etc., reflect Gospel values as expressed in the mission and philosophy statements of the school. These were the only items of which there was not a high degree of agreement as indicated by the use of “usually” and “always.”

The second section, Spiritual Life, suffers from an abundant use of “no way to judge.” Items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 11 each have double digit percentages ranging from 12% to 50%. Only 2% of the responses for this section indicate “rarely,” while 9% marked “sometimes.”

Items 2, 4, 5, 10, and 11 each received a 15% response of “sometimes.” These data points suggest that the administration may want to consider looking at ways to offer more opportunities to advance faculty/staff understanding of Catholicism and what makes a school Catholic (Item 2): pay more attention to building a Christian community among faculty/staff (Item 4), provide more in-service programs developing faculty/staff as spiritual leaders in the Catholic faith (Item 5), ensure that pastoral care is present for both students and adults (Item 10), and ensure that the spiritual life of the community is a priority in planning. Please note that the use of “sometimes” suggests there may be an opportunity to positively affect faculty, staff, administration, and board perceptions of each of these items.

When responding to the survey items for Program, the Bro. Rice (Chicago) community had double digits indicating “no way to judge” for six out of eight items. These responses affected the overall averages of “usually” and “always” for those same items. This may suggest that clearly articulating and publicizing policies, programs, and procedures could increase the awareness that Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism enjoy strong support across all areas of community life at Bro. Rice. Items 3, 5, and 7 also have double digit (teens) responses for “sometimes.” Items 3 and 5 deal with adequate institutional support given to campus ministry and community service, while Item 7 asks if community service relates to the mission of the school. These slight nuances may offer the administration an opportunity for conversation about the importance of campus ministry and community service as quality programs supporting Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism.

The section dealing with Ceremony and Traditions enjoys wide agreement in all four items. Item 2, evaluation of ceremonies and rituals according to the mission of the school and the needs of the students was the only item that had a double digit (12%) response for “sometimes.” Appropriate ceremonies and rituals celebrating the heritage and value system of the school, student participation in the organizing, planning, and conducting the ceremonies and rituals, and honors and awards reflecting the mission of the school all received high percentages of “usually” and “always.”

The final section, Admissions, fared a little better than the three previous schools. However, that does not imply that school administration would not benefit from more clearly articulated and publicized admissions policies and procedures. Item 2, which asks if the admissions policy is clearly stated and followed, had a 12% “no way to judge” and a 12% “sometimes” rating. Eighty-one percent of the respondents stated that the admissions policy “usually” (27%) or “always” (65%) is consistent with the mission of the school. Also, 85% “usually” or “always” agree that the admissions process acquaints prospective families with the mission, beliefs, and philosophy of the school.

The various data points indicate that Bro. Rice (Chicago) enjoys strong support for their Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. This does not mean there is no room for improvement; there always is.

### **Catholic Memorial High School**

Opened in 1957, Catholic Memorial High School now has approximately 515 young men in Grades 9 through 12. These young men are part of an educational community with 48 faculty, 34 staff, 16 administrators, and 22 members of their board of directors. One staff member, six faculty members, five administrators, and six board members submitted the online survey. A



total of 17 completed surveys were part of the analysis. This represents only 14% of the eligible participants. In light of this, only a cursory examination of the data points for Catholic Memorial were reviewed. Given the paucity of responses, it would seem wise not to make generalizations for the entire school community based on only 17 completed responses. The overall response for each of the sections was extremely positive based on the 17 participants.

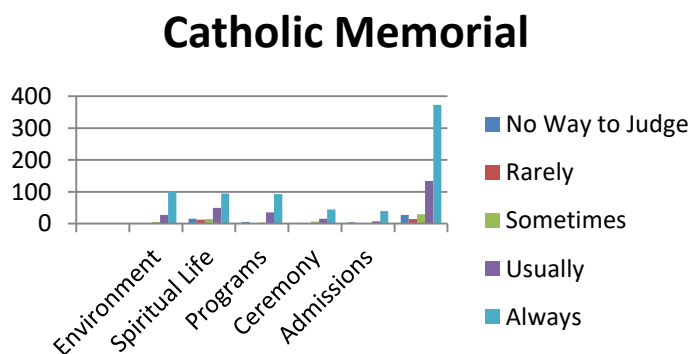


Figure 13. *Catholic Memorial responses.*

For the section School Environment, 95% of the responses were “usually” (20%) and “always” (75%). Spiritual Life had the lowest aggregate response at 78%, stating “usually” (27%) or “always” (51%), while the Programs section garnered 94% overall with “usually” at 26% and “always” at 68%. Ceremony and Traditions had a composite of 87% with “usually” indicated by 22% of responses and “always” having 65%. Last, the Admissions section of the survey had 14% “usually” and 76% “always.” A review of all data for each individual item did not result in any major point that demanded attention. One can only speculate that Catholic Memorial enjoys a strong sense of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism.

## Damien Memorial

Damien Memorial School was founded in 1962 and is located on the Island of Oahu, Hawaii. The school first opened as an all-boys school but has since become coeducational. Damien has approximately 481 students in Grades 9 through 12 and is staffed by 55 faculty, 21 staff members, and 8 administrators. The school has an 18-member board of directors. It should be noted that Damien also has a middle school component with approximately 160 students.

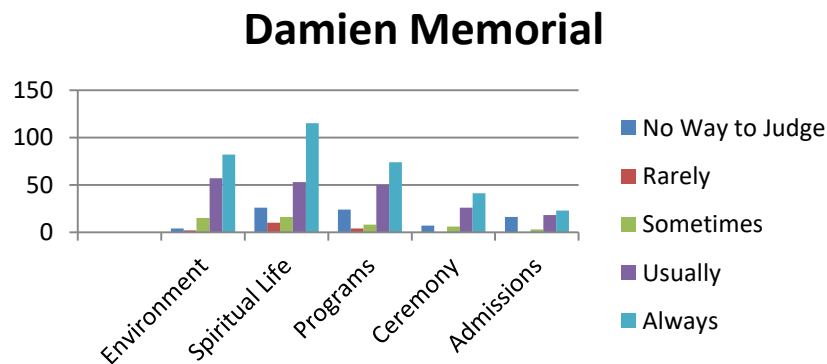


Figure 14. *Damien Memorial responses.*

Twenty-four members of the community invited to participate in the research project submitted a survey; however, only 20% completed the process. Six board members, 11 faculty, one administrator, and two staff members fully participated by filling out the entire survey. Similar to the Catholic Memorial experience, with such a small sample, a cursory review of the data sufficed. This in no way implies that Damien Memorial does not enjoy a strong sense of Christian Brother charism or of Catholic identity. It is just that the sample might be considered too small from which to draw many generalizations.

The overall analysis of the five sections of the survey is fairly positive. When viewing the responses for School Environment, they are in line with the previously cited data. Fifty-one

percent of all responses for this section were “always” with another 36% marked “usually.” Items 4, 8, and 9 had a higher than normal responses marked “sometimes.” Item 4 asks about evidence of symbols reflecting Christian Brother charism in the school. Items 8 and 9 speak to displaying the mission statement and using it as a resource for prayer, reflection, and planning. They garnered a 25% “sometimes” and 30% “sometimes,” respectively. This might suggest school administrators consider ensuring that Christian Brother symbols and the school’s mission statement are prominently displayed throughout the campus.

The Spiritual Life section had 12% responses as “no way to judge,” while “usually” had 24% and “always” had 52%. Item Number 2, opportunities to advance understanding of Catholicism and what makes a school Catholic, received a 20% response of “sometimes” and a 10% response for “rarely.” Item 7, dealing with the board retreat, once again had a high response for “no way to judge” (40%) and 20% for “rarely.” These two items might benefit from administrative intervention.

The section dealing with Programs also had a large number of responses in the “no way to judge” category, but this was balanced by a 31% “usually” and 46% “always.” As seen before, the item asking about student time for reflection and sharing received high numbers for “no way to judge” (25%) and 20% for “sometimes.” These data points may provide opportunities for the administration to influence the direction of the school’s programs.

Participants indicated favorably that the section for Ceremony and Traditions supported Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism by selecting either “usually” (33%) or “always” (51%). The last section, Admissions, had the lowest combined percentages of “usually” and “always” (68%). The high number of returns indicating “no way to judge” impacted this area. In Damien Memorial, as in other schools previously analyzed, a similar pattern developed

indicating that a clear, consistent, and published statement of policies and procedures for admissions should be addressed.

### **Iona Preparatory School**

Iona Preparatory School was founded in 1916, in New Rochelle, New York. It was opened as the Iona School for boys in grades 1 through 12. The elementary and secondary sections of the schools split in 1954, and each had its own campus. They were two independent and individual schools until 2012, when they were brought back together.

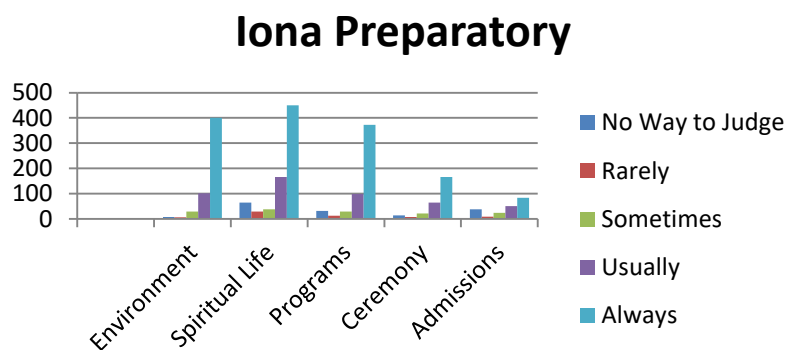


Figure 15. *Iona Preparatory responses.*

Today, Iona Prep consists of an Upper School and a Lower School under the direction of one board of directors comprised of 12 members. For purposes of this research project, only the faculty, staff, and administration of the Upper School were invited to participate. Currently, there are approximately 780 young men enrolled in the Upper School. There are 60 faculty, 24 staff, and 10 administrators on the Upper School campus; and all were invited to participate in the survey.

Seventy-four members of the community submitted surveys but only 68 were fully completed. Nine board members, 34 faculty, 15 staff members, and 10 administrators completed

the process, reflecting 64% of those invited. Overall, fully 85% of all responses fell into the “usually” (21%) or “always” (64%) columns, while 7% were “no way to judge,” 3% “rarely,” and 6% “sometimes.”

The School Environment section received an overall combined response average of 92% of “usually” (19%) and “always” (74%). Individual items ranged from a high of 100% for “usually” and “always” to a low of 88%. This would indicate that the school environment is such that it strongly supports Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. A review of each of the items in this section shows that there is no one item that demands administrative attention. As indicated by the response, there is an identifiable integration of faith with life and culture; symbols and space clearly indicate Catholic identity; images and symbols reflecting Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism are clearly evident; there is a universality of Catholicism reflected in Iona’s cultural awareness programs; diversity is respected, practiced, and articulated; Gospel values expressed in the mission and philosophy statements are reflected throughout; and the mission statement is prominent and used as a resource for prayer, reflection, and planning.

The next section of the survey, Spiritual Life, also received a good combined overall average of 82% with 22% reporting “usually” and 60% reporting “always.” There were two items that stood out with a larger number of responses indicated by “no way to judge.” Item 3, having an appropriate orientation program for new members of the professional staff received 13% of “no way to judge.” Also, Item 7, dealing with the annual board retreat, received a 47% “no way to judge.” This particular item, as seen in previous sections of this chapter, has tended to have a high percentage of “no way to judge,” along with higher than customary responses of “rarely” and “sometimes.” For Iona Prep, 22% stated “rarely” does the retreat occur. For this item, only 10% responded “usually,” and only 18% “always.” These two items affected the

overall percentage. The other nine items in this category have a combined “usually” and “always” anywhere between 84% and 100%. This would indicate that appropriate attention is given to rituals and traditions, demonstrating Iona’s Catholic identity; opportunities are provided to advance one’s understanding of Catholicism; the school strives to build a Christian community; in-service programs are offered to develop staff and faculty as spiritual leaders; an annual retreat is held; there is a well-defined student retreat program; prayer, reconciliation, and liturgy are integral parts of school life; students and adults are provided pastoral care; and, perhaps most importantly, the spiritual life of the community is a priority in planning.

A review of the responses for the Programs section of the survey finds Iona Prep with fairly consistent responses. Only Item 8, which asks if job candidates are made aware of the school’s mission, Catholic identity, and Christian Brother charism during the hiring process, received a lower than normal favorable average. This is due primarily to a 19% response rate that was marked “no way to judge.” Other than that, most respondents indicated that the school respects the presence of students of different faiths; and the campus ministry and community service programs are well defined within the mission of the school and receive adequate institutional support. Surprisingly, Item 6 (time for student reflection and sharing about community service) received a more favorable response than previous schools. Iona’s participants indicated by 31% “usually” and 49% “always” that time is provided for the students. Overall, the responses for this section of the survey would indicate that the programs at Iona Prep are supportive of Christian Brother charism and of the school’s Catholic identity.

Reviewing the data for the Ceremony and Traditions portion of the survey shows that Iona Prep has honors, awards, ceremonies, and traditions that help build the school’s sense of Catholic identity and strengthen their understanding of Christian Brother charism. Item 2 asks if

ceremonies and rituals are evaluated according to the mission of the school and the needs of the students. 12% of the respondents indicated they had “no way to judge.” Thus, this item received only 22% “usually” and 59% “always.” This may provide an opportunity for the administration to clarify the evaluation process for these school activities. Also, as indicated in previous parts of this chapter, prominent student involvement in organizing, planning, and conducting school rituals and ceremonies had lower percentages for “usually” and “always.” This is an opportunity for administration to bolster student leadership and participation in these areas.

Last, the analysis of the Admissions section follows a similar pattern that has been seen in previous schools. Overall, respondents indicated that admissions policies and procedures needed to be clear, consistent, and well publicized. None of the three items in this section received better than a 70% combined “usually” and “always.” This presents the administration with a clear invitation to provide all members of the professional community at Iona Preparatory with admissions policies and procedures that are known and understood by all.

The analysis of the data for Iona Prep is fairly consistent with the previous six schools. Most of the responses point to a vibrant spiritual life that is supported by solid programs based on Gospel values as expressed in the school’s mission statement. The school’s Christian Brother charism and Catholic identity are verified by the responses to the survey.

### **The Palma School**

Founded in 1951 and located in the Salinas Valley of California, Palma is a private, college-preparatory school for boys Grades 7 through 12, owned and operated by the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers.

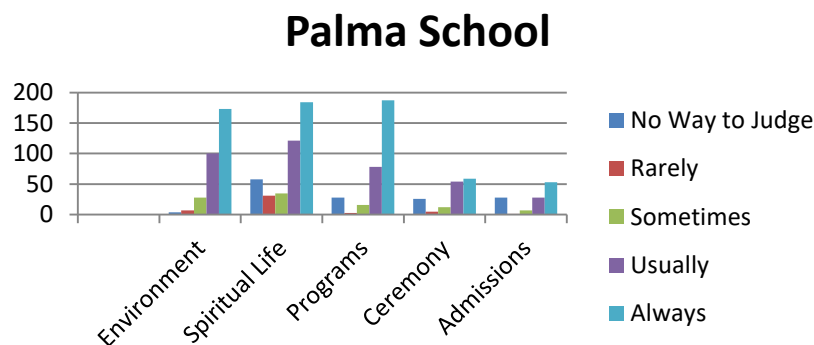


Figure 16. *Palma School responses.*

Today, Palma hosts approximately 360 boys in Grades 9 through 12 with 25 faculty, 13 staff members, and 12 administrators. The board of directors consists of 16 members. Sixty percent of those invited submitted a survey; however, only 39 people completed the process, bringing the percentage to 59. This included 8 board members, 17 faculty, 7 staff members, and 7 administrators. When reviewing a composite all of the responses for all of the survey items, 11% indicated there was “no way to judge,” 4% marked “rarely,” “sometimes” was selected 7% of the time, “usually” tallied at 29%, and “always” had a 49% rate.

The responses for the School Environment section from Palma mirrored those detailed earlier from the other Christian Brother schools with very little exception. Similar to the other schools, Item 5 received the lowest agreement of “usually” (41%) and “always” (36%) for a 77% return. This item speaks to the universality of Catholicism being reflected in Palma’s cultural awareness programs. Eight percent of the responses indicated there was “no way to judge,” while another 15% stated “sometimes.” The remaining eight items ranged from 82% to 97% of “usually” and “always,” indicating that both Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism are apparent and evidenced by Palma’s total school environment. There were very favorable



responses for an integration of faith with life and culture; use of space and symbols; images reflecting Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism; respect for diversity; programs reflecting Gospel values: and prominent display of the mission statement and its use as a resource for prayer, reflection and planning.

The Palma community's responses to the section on Spiritual Life were riddled with higher percentages in the first three categories: "no way to judge," "rarely," and "sometimes," which resulted in lower averages of "usually" and "always" as compared to the previous seven Christian Brother schools. For example, Item 3, which asks if there is an appropriate orientation program for new members of the faculty and staff, received a 26% "no way to judge," a 10% "rarely," and a 13% "sometimes," resulting in only 51% of the people indicating their agreement with 25% "usually" and 26% "always." Although this item found less agreement from most of the schools surveyed, this was one of the lowest. Item 2, dealing with faculty opportunity to advance its understanding of Catholicism and what makes a school Catholic, had a 15% response of "no way to judge" and a 10% response of "sometimes." The survey item (5), asking if attention is given to building a Christian community among faculty and staff, received a 15% "rarely" and a 13% "sometimes." Only 79% of respondents indicated that "usually" or "always" was there a faculty retreat held annually. As with other schools, Palma had a very low percentage of "usually" (3%) and "always" (18%) when queried about an annual board retreat to review the school's mission statement and Catholic identity. Speaking to pastoral care for students and adults, there was a 13% "no way to judge" and a 13% "sometimes" indicated. Last, 15% of those surveyed stated that the spiritual life of the school is "sometimes" a priority in planning with 36% saying "usually" and 38% "always." If taken individually, the percentages

are not all that drastic. However, when one considers all of the items that received lower than normal “usually” and “always” percentages, it begs the question “why?”

The responses given to the Spiritual Life section of the survey offer an opportunity to the Palma administration and board of directors to have a serious conversation with faculty, staff, administration, and board members centering on Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. A large number of the responses for those items cited above were in the “no way to judge” category. This may indicate that the administration just needs to better publicize what they are doing across the spiritual life spectrum of the school community. This in no way indicates that the Palma School is lacking in either area. It does suggest that the school might be able to do better regarding opportunities for better understanding of Catholicism, an orientation program for new hires, building a Christian community, in-service programs developing faculty and staff as spiritual leaders in the Catholic tradition, providing the professional staff and board with annual retreats, and making sure pastoral care is provided for both adults and students.

It should be noted that Palma’s response for providing rituals and traditions demonstrating their Catholic identity, having a retreat program for students that is well-defined within the mission of the school, and that regular opportunities for prayer, reconciliation, and liturgy are integral to school life all received very positive acclamation as evidenced by a 95% of “usually” or “always,” 87% of “usually” and “always,” and a 97% of “usually” and “always,” respectively.

The Programs section of the survey is reflective of schools cited earlier in the chapter. As seen in the analysis of data from the other Christian Brother schools, Items 6 (time provided for student reflection and sharing on community service experiences) and 8 (job applicants being made aware of the school’s mission, Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism) received a

large number of “no way to judge,” resulting in a lower overall average of “usually” or “always.” The remaining six items garnered respectable combined responses of “usually” and “always,” ranging from 85% to 97%. Items 2 (clearly defined objectives for campus ministry) and 3 (adequate institutional support for campus ministry) received a 13% and 10%, respectively, of no way to judge.” Even with these, both items had an 85% combined “usually” and “always.” Palma, according to the responses, respects the presence of students of other faiths, has service programs that are clearly defined with adequate institutional support and are seen as integral to the educational program of the students. All of this points to programs that relate to and are supportive of Christian Brother charism and Catholic identity.

The Palma responses for the fourth area, Ceremonies and Traditions, indicate (“usually” 31% and “always” 59%) that the school holds appropriate ceremonies and rituals celebrating their heritage and value system and that their honors and awards reflect the mission of the school (“usually” 49% and “always” 38%). However, 26% of the respondents stated that they had no way to judge whether those same ceremonies and rituals were evaluated according to the mission of the school and the needs of the students. As with the other schools surveyed, the Palma respondents rated student participation in the planning, organizing, and conducting of school ceremonies and rituals rather low. The results were 23% “no way to judge,” 8% “rarely,” 23% “sometimes,” 28% “usually,” and only 18% “always.” The large “no way to judge” response for Items 2 and 3 suggest the school may very well benefit from better publicizing how their ceremonies and rituals are evaluated as well as student participation in ceremonies and rituals. The data also invite the adult community to seek ways to increase student participation in the planning, organizing, and conducting of ceremonies and rituals.

The final section, Admissions, is consistent with analysis of the schools reviewed thus far. The three items presented received an overall average of 24% “usually” and 45% “always.” For Palma, the reason for the low “usually” and “always” scores is a result of 21% “no way to judge” for Item 1, a 28% response for Item 2, and a 23% tally for Item 3. As in other cases, the respondents did not agree that the admissions policies and procedures are clearly articulated, publicized, nor always followed. The data for this section invite the administration to review the admissions procedures and policies. Once this has been completed, it would prove beneficial to share these with the entire professional school community: faculty, staff, board, and administrators.

The results for the five areas of the survey show that the Palma School’s environment, spiritual life, programs, ceremonies and traditions, and admissions process that is supportive of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. There are a few items that invite inspection by the administration of the school, including student participation in ceremonies and rituals; strengthening the Palma Christian community, ensuring an annual retreat for the professional staff and board of directors, focusing on the school’s mission statement, and proclaiming to the larger community all that it does to support, improve, and energize its Christian Brother charism and Catholic identity.

### **St. Laurence High School**

Founded in 1961, St. Laurence is a Catholic, college preparatory high school conducted by the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers and located in Burbank, Illinois, just outside the city of Chicago. Until September of 2017, St. Laurence was an all-male high school with students in Grades 9 through 12. In September of 2017, the school admitted girls and is now a

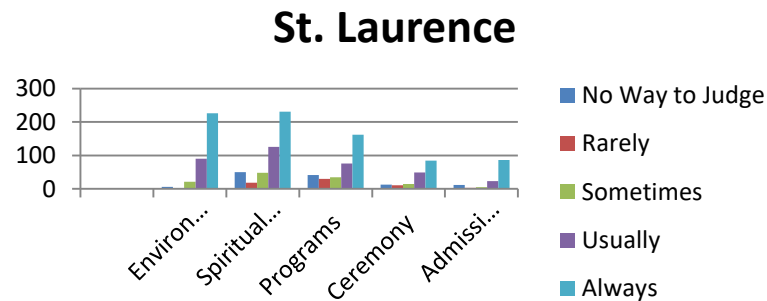


Figure 17. *St. Laurence responses.*

coeducational institution. The school has 44 faculty, 16 staff members, and 13 administrators, with a 15-member board of directors. Nine staff members, 19 faculty, 13 administrators, and 12 board members submitted surveys. However, only 8 staff members, 14 faculty, 10 administrators, and 11 board members completed the process, resulting in a 49% participation rate. The overall response rate broke down as follows: 8% “no way to judge,” 4% “rarely,” 8% “sometimes,” 25% “usually” and 54% “always.”

St. Laurence’s School Environment section was very positive with an overall 26% “usually” and 66% “always.” This is indicative of the responses throughout the section. Item 5, dealing with the universality of Catholicism reflected in the school’s cultural awareness program, received the lowest percentages for this section with 40% “usually” and 42% “always.” The other item that garnered a lower percentage was 9%, asking about the use of the mission statement as guide and resource for prayer, planning, and reflection. Fifty-three percent responded “always,” 30% “usually,” 5% “sometimes,” 7% “rarely,” and 5% “no way to judge.” Although a combined 83% “usually” and “always” is a confident number, the remaining percentages call attention to the item and may be an opportunity for administration to clarify. The other six items range from 88% “usually” and “always” to 98%. These data points suggest

that St. Laurence's school environment strongly supports its Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism.

The responses for the items in the Spiritual Life section range from a high ("usually" and "always") of 93% to a low of 51%. The 51% rating can be attributed to the 26% "no way to judge" and 14% "rarely" indications made by respondents to the question centering on the question of the board participating in a retreat dedicated to the mission statement and the Catholic identity of the school. Similar results have been recorded in the previous eight schools. The participants from St. Laurence recorded similar responses to Item 2, which asks if the faculty has opportunities to advance its understanding of Catholicism as seen from the other schools. Sixteen percent of the respondents indicated "sometimes" for this, while 7% indicated "no way to judge." Replies for Item 3 reflected those of the other schools. While 65% of the respondents indicated that there was "always" an appropriate orientation program for new members of the faculty/staff, 14% said there was "no way to judge." Administration might review its orientation program and ensure that all members of the community are aware of it. Items 1 (rituals and traditions demonstrate the school's Catholic identity), 4 (building a Christian community), and 9 (regular opportunities for prayer, reconciliation and liturgy are integral parts of school life) enjoyed a high percentage with 88% for Items 1 and 4 ("usually" and "always") and 93% for Item 9.

Item 5, dealing with in-service programs to develop faculty and staff as spiritual leaders in the Catholic faith tradition, received a 33% response of "usually" and 49% "" While these two percentages are good, the 12% "sometimes" and 7% "no way to judge" indicated the school might be able to increase awareness of and availability to such programs. As with the majority of other schools, the matter of the board retreat received a large (28%) "no way to judge"

response. As mentioned earlier, there is room for improvement. The retreat program for students received a mixed review: 16% said they had “no way to judge,” 2% “rarely,” 12% “sometimes,” 14% “usually,” and 56% “always.” While the 56% “always” is a good response, the remaining 44% invites the school to review its student retreat program and ensure that it is well defined within the mission.

The remaining two items, Item 10 (pastoral care for students and adults) and Item 11 (spiritual life of the community is a priority in planning) also had a mixed review. Item 10 garnered 35% “usually” and 35% “always.” The responses for Item 11 are similar with 19% “usually” and 53% “always.” The averages for these two items invite conversation and possible action on the part of the administration to ensure that the community is cared for in a pastoral sense and that the school’s spiritual life takes priority in planning.

The Programs section for St. Laurence had the highest overall percentages in the “no way to judge,” “rarely,” and “sometimes” categories. These responses had a negative impact on most of the individual items in the section. The first item in this section, respecting students from other faiths, received the highest combined percentage (88%) for “usually” (16%) and “always” (72%). Item 7, which asks about the community service programs and their relating to the mission of the school and seen as integral to the education program, also received positive responses (28% “usually” and 53% “always”).

The remaining six items did not fare as well. Speaking to the campus ministry program having clearly defined objectives, respondents indicated 14% of the time saying there was “no way to judge,” and another 16% stated “rarely” did this occur. Thirty percent said it “usually” had clearly defined objectives, and another 30% marked “always.” Clearly, 40% of the respondents expressed doubt regarding this item. The results for Item 3 were almost exactly the

same regarding adequate institutional support for campus ministry. Community service programs fared a little better with 28% saying there were “usually” clearly defined objectives with 47% responding that objectives were “always” clearly defined. As for adequate institutional support, 53% marked “always,” while 12% had “no way to judge.” As evidenced with previous schools, adequate time for student reflection and sharing was also on the low end with only 23% of respondents stating “always” and another 21% marking “usually.” Also, the St. Laurence response to the item asking if job applicants were made aware of the school’s mission, Catholic identity, and Christian Brother charism was in line with the other schools surveyed. Twenty-one percent stated they had “no way to judge” with 67% stating that it “always” occurred.

While there were some responses that were less than desirable, it would be unreasonable to state that the school’s program did not support Catholic identity or Christian Brother charism. What the data does support is that the St. Laurence administration has an opportunity to challenge itself to make more members of its professional staff and board of directors conversant with the programs in the school and the way they are administered and evaluated. For five of the eight items listed under Programs, the “no way to judge” option had double digits. However, Items 2, 3, and 6 had double digit percentages in the “rarely” category. Taken together, this suggests that St. Laurence can do better.

The responses to the Ceremony and Traditions section of the survey were similar to the other eight schools previously reviewed. Items 1 (appropriate ceremonies and rituals celebrate the heritage and value system of the school) and 4 (honors and awards reflect the mission of the school) both received a combined percentage of 86%, indicating support for their Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. As seen with the other schools, Items 2 (evaluation of



ceremonies and rituals) and 3 (student participation) were less favorably looked upon. Item 2 received 30% “usually” and 49% “always,” while Item 3’s results were much lower (28% “usually” and 30% “always”). These last two data points would suggest that the school administration review how it evaluates its awards and ceremonies and find ways to increase student participation in organizing, planning, and conducting rituals and ceremonies.

Surprisingly, the Admissions section for St. Laurence had some of the most favorable responses of all the schools. The first item seeking whether the admissions policy is consistent with the mission of the school received 74% “always” and 14% “usually.” That the admissions policy is clearly stated and followed garnered a 21% “usually” and 63% “always.” Last, does the process acquaint prospective families with the mission, beliefs, and philosophy of the school had a 63% “always” and 19% “usually” response. These percentages would indicate that the admissions process is seen as contributing to the school’s overall Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism.

### **Research Questions Analysis**

This section of Chapter 4 is designed to connect the result of the Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index with the overarching research questions.

1. What factors affect the Catholic identity of Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools in the United States?

Each of the five sections of the survey has various items related specifically to factors that impact the Catholic identity of Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools. The first four items in the first section, School Environment, influence Catholic identity. Item 1 asks whether the overall school environment portrays an identifiable integration of faith with life and culture.

Across all the schools, 4% responded “sometimes,” while 28% stated “usually,” and 67% marked “always.” Item 2 (Catholic identity of the school is immediately clear through use of symbols and space) received 15% responses indicating “sometimes,” 14% “usually,” and 71% “always.” Item 3, suggesting that images reflecting the Catholic identity and heritage of the school are prominently displayed throughout the campus, received a 3% “sometimes,” 14% “usually,” and 83% “always.” The fourth and last item for this section asks whether symbols reflecting the charism of the Christian Brothers are in evidence in the school. One percent responded that they had “no way to judge,” another 1% indicated “rarely,” while 7% stated “sometimes,” 26% “usually,” and 65% “always.”

Each of the four items received a rather high percentage for responses of “usually” or “always.” This indicates that those who participated in the survey felt strongly that these four items depicting part of the school environment have a large impact on Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools in the United States. Clearly, the survey shows that an environment with an identifiable integration of faith with life and culture, the proper use of space and symbols, the availability of images reflecting Catholic identity and heritage prominently displayed, and symbols reflecting Christian Brother charism in evidence are all factors that play an important role in supporting and promoting Catholic identity.

Items 2 and 11 under the Spiritual Life heading also contribute to the first research question. Item 2 asks if the faculty has opportunities to advance its understanding of Catholicism and what makes a school Catholic. Fully 9% of the respondents stated they had “no way to judge,” 4% indicated that “rarely” does this occur, 13% marked “sometimes” this takes place, while 24% responded “usually,” and 50% said “always.” Professional development opportunities to deepen one’s knowledge of the Catholic faith and the specifics that go into

making a school Catholic are important to maintain and strengthen that same Catholic identity within the school. The responses of 9% “no way to judge,” 4% “rarely,” and 13% “sometimes” to this item indicate that school and Province leadership might consider various ways to strengthen the knowledge and practice of the faith for individual members of the nine schools. This, in turn, should inform the adult members of each educational community of those things that make an educational community distinctly Catholic. Item 11, seeking to know if spiritual life is a priority in planning, received mixed reviews: 51% “always,” 29% “usually,” 12% “sometimes,” 4% “rarely,” and 4% “no way to judge.” Taken together, “usually” and “always” tallies 80% of the responses. This is a good indication that the spiritual life of the school community is taken seriously by the schools’ leadership. However, the other three responses signal that some members of the community feel that more can be done. The vast majority of responses indicate that the schools’ Catholic identity is positively affected by increasing a person’s understanding of the Catholic faith and what makes a school Catholic as well as insisting that a school’s spiritual life takes priority in planning.

The Programs section of the survey has two items that relate to the first research question. Item 1 under Programs seeks to know if the school community and school programs respect the presence of students of other faiths. Four percent said they had “no way to judge,” 2% indicated “rarely,” 5% marked “sometimes,” while 22% stated “usually,” and 67% “always.” The combined 89% of “usually” and “always” by the respondents strongly suggests that the nine Edmund Rice secondary schools surveyed regard all students with the respect they deserve as children of God. Item 8 does not fare as well. This survey item wants to determine whether, during the hiring process, applicants are made aware of the school’s mission, Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. Unfortunately, 21% of those surveyed checked “no way to

judge,” 1% stated “rarely,” and 3% said “sometimes” this occurs. However, 13% indicated “usually” and 61% said “always.” The 21% data point indicates that administration has an opportunity to inform all members of the community of their hiring practices. The positive responses for these two Program items indicate that the participants feel that respect for all students and conversations regarding mission, Catholic identity, and Christian Brother charism work to strengthen and shore up the overall Catholicity of the institution and help maintain Christian Brother influence over the educational setting.

The final section of the survey seeks to understand the place of admissions processes and policies and the effect they may have on the overall mission of the school as seen through the lens of Catholic identity. Item 1 (is the policy consistent with the mission of the school) and Item 3 (does the process acquaint students and families with the mission, beliefs, and philosophy of the school) are seen to have an impact on Catholic identity. Unfortunately, both items receive a large “no way to judge” response: 15% for Item 1 and 18% for Item 3. These responses are partly responsible for the lower than desirable outcome for “usually” and “always.” Item 1 has a 23% “usually” and 53% “always” response and Item 3 has a 22% “usually” and 53% “always.” While these data points do not dramatically affect an institution’s Catholic identity, the “no way to judge” response suggests that leadership in each of the nine schools can do a better job of ensuring that all members of the community are aware of their admissions procedures and policies. School leadership should have clearly articulated policies and procedures that are transparent and promulgated throughout the school community. Prospective applicants and their families will benefit from knowing the schools’ mission, philosophy, traditions, and heritage. This enables them to make a clear and conscious decision to join an educational community that complements their own belief system. In this way, the school strengthens its Catholic identity

and Christian Brother charism by accepting new students and families who are supportive of the overall mission of the school.

2. In the face of declining numbers of professed religious Brothers on staff in Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools, what programs and policies may help to protect the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice and the Catholic identity of the schools?

Across the United States, Edmund Rice Christian Brothers are becoming fewer and fewer. Old age and death continue to take a drastic toll on the number of available Brothers to carry on the work of their founder, Blessed Edmund Rice. In light of this, it is important to determine those things that will enable Province leadership, in partnership with school leaders, to continue to ensure Christian Brother charism and Catholic identity in their ministry sites.

Items 5 and 7 under the School Environment heading have direct bearing on the second research question. Item 5 speaks to the universality of Catholicism as reflected in the school's cultural awareness programs. While this item polled a 30% "usually" and 54% "always," it also had a 5% "no way to judge" rarely," and 10% "sometimes," indicating some improvement might be suggested. Although the 5%, 1%, and 10% are not large numbers themselves, taken together they indicate 16% of the survey participants do not "always" agree that a school's cultural awareness program adequately reflects Catholicism's universality. This is an invitation for school leadership to review their programs and ensure that they are in sync with the Catholic Churches' sense of universality. Item 7 inquires whether programs of study, activities, athletics, codes of conduct and discipline reflect the Gospel values expressed in the mission and philosophy statements of the school. Thirty percent of participants selected "usually," while another 60% chose "always." With a 90% combined response, this item clearly informs the school's Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. School leadership may wish to review

their programs across the curriculum to ensure they continue to reflect Gospel values. A yearly review of the school's mission statement and programs offered will foster a continued strengthening of Catholic teachings and Christian Brother heritage.

The Spiritual Life section of the survey has a number of items reflective of the second research question. Items 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 are all identified with programs and policies that may aid in preserving Christian Brother charism and the schools' Catholic identity.

The first item, appropriate attention given to rituals and traditions that demonstrate the school's Catholic identity received a combined 95% of "usually" (25%) and "always" (70%) response from survey participants. This indicates that in all of the schools there are rituals and traditions taking place that strongly maintain Catholic identity and foster Christian Brother charism. School and Province leadership have an opportunity to capture what is occurring in the schools now and continue to grow those programs.

The third item did not receive the same high percentages for "usually" and "always." This item seeks to know if there is an appropriate orientation program for new members of the faculty and staff with the following results: 14% had "no way to judge," 4% stated "rarely," 9% said "sometimes," 24% indicated "usually" with 50% selecting "always." This item is important to the continuation of Christian Brother charism as well as a school's Catholic identity. A formidable orientation program helps acquaint new members with the school's culture which is based on Catholic teachings and values as well as Christian Brother heritage. It might just be that not all members of the community are aware of the orientation programs available for new hires. For example, 44% of board member participants indicated they had "no way to judge" whether the school had an orientation program geared to acquaint new members with the

school's overall culture. This is easily remedied by informing all board members of hiring policies and orientation programs.

The fifth item in the Spiritual Life section asks if in-service programs annually consider the development of all faculty and staff as spiritual leaders in the Catholic faith tradition. Eight percent indicated they had "no way to judge," 5% stated "rarely," 16% said "sometimes," 31% "usually," and 41% marked "always." The 8%, 5%, and 16% response rate for the first three choices indicate there is an opportunity for Province and school leadership to review their annual offerings to include programs that enable adult members of the community to develop their own understandings of the Catholic faith and to feel comfortable to take a role in the school community as a spiritual leader.

Items 6 and 7 are somewhat related. One inquires whether a faculty/staff retreat is held annually, while the other asks about an annual retreat for board members. Forty percent of the board members responded that they had "no way to judge" if there was a faculty retreat, while 47% of all participants indicated they had "no way to judge" if there was an annual board retreat. Fifty-eight percent of respondents stated that there was "always" an annual retreat for faculty/staff with 14% agreeing a retreat "usually occurs," while 13% of all participants stated they had "no way to judge." Once again, the "no way to judge" response negatively impacts the overall positive percentage. This is truer for the question of the board retreat. Thirty-three percent of board members indicated that a board retreat "rarely" happens. An annual retreat for both groups is fundamental for the continuation of the Catholic mission and Christian Brother tradition of the schools. There is an opportunity for Province and school leadership to provide a well-developed retreat program in line with each school's mission to ensure Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. In the case of boards of directors, semi-annual retreats might be

better considered. Board members are volunteers and at times their availability is compromised. Retreats for employees (faculty, staff, and administrators) are fairly easy to organize since they might be considered a “captive audience.”

The final two items for this section, Items 9 and 10, both received positive agreement from survey participants. Item 9 states that regular opportunities for prayer, reconciliation, and liturgy are integral parts of school life. This item garnered a 19% “usually” and 76% “always” response, indicating that the schools do have significant programs for the development of their spiritual life through prayer, reconciliation, and liturgy. Item 10 seeks to know if pastoral care for students and adults is provided at an appropriate level. The overall results for this question are just a little less positive. Seven percent of respondents indicated there was “no way to judge,” 1% said “rarely” does this occur, and 9% marked that it happens only “sometimes.” Participants combined for an 84% “usually” and “always.” The results show that the schools, for the most part, have programs in place to care for the community pastorally. However, the remaining 16% argues for administrative review of programs already in place. The data also suggest it may just be a matter of explaining or publicizing what programs are available to the school community.

A review of the Programs section of the survey shows four items that directly respond to the second research question. The first item seeks to know if the school community and its programs are respectful of the presence of students of other faiths. Eighty-nine percent of participants stated “usually” (22%) and “always” (67%) the community and programs respected students of other faiths. The second item asks if the campus ministry program has clearly defined objectives which reflect the mission of the school. Eighty-two percent indicated that “usually” or “always” was this the case. It can be argued that the 11% of respondents selecting



“no way to judge” had a negative impact on the outcome of this question. As suggested previously, this might be remedied by fully publicizing the objectives of the campus ministry program in Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools.

Item 4 in this section is similar to Item 2. It asks whether the school’s community service program has clearly defined objectives and requirements. Respondents selected “no way to judge” 9% of the time, while indicating “rarely” 4%, and “sometimes” 6%, leaving 81% stating “usually” and “always.” Again, ensuring that community service objectives are clearly defined and publicized may very well strengthen the perception of the programs across each school population. Item 7 is closely aligned to Item 4. It inquires whether the community service program relates to the mission of the school and is seen as integral to the educational program of the students. Six percent of the participants had “no way to judge,” 4% thought “rarely” does community service relate to the overall program, another 8% stated that “sometimes” this occurs, while 25% selected “usually” and 57% “always.” An 82% agreement of “usually” and “always” for this item shows overall support for the community service programs in the schools; and further, most participants consider community service buttressing the school’s Catholic identity. However, the combined 12% “rarely” and “sometimes” selection suggests that school leaders may wish to review their community service programs to ensure they align with the overall mission of the school and are viewed as intrinsic to the overall curriculum.

The final item to consider under this research question is taken from the Ceremony and Traditions section, which asks if the schools regularly hold appropriate ceremonies and rituals that celebrate the heritage and value system of the school. Ninety-three of the participants selected “usually” (24%) and “always” (69%) for this item. Clearly, there are proper

ceremonies, honors, awards, and rituals across the Province that support Catholic identity and celebrate Christian Brother charism.

The review of the survey results shows there are any number of programs and policies in place that will continue to support, maintain, and strengthen the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice and his Brothers as well as uphold and reinforce the Catholic identity of each of the ministry sites.

3. What steps will help foster the Catholic identity and the sustainability of Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools?

The School Environment section of the survey has three items that are directly related to the third research question. Item 6 asks the participants if there is respect for diversity and is it articulated and practiced at the school. Ninety percent of the respondents stated that “usually” (30%) or “always” (60%) was this the case, while only 1% suggested there was “no way to judge,” another 1% stating “rarely,” and the remaining 7% said “sometimes.” School leaders may take this opportunity to solidify its commitment to keeping a diverse community—racially, socially, economically, and academically within their respective schools. This speaks to the universality of Catholicism as well.

Item 8 speaks to the publication and display of the school’s mission statement. Sixty-six percent responded “always,” 23% “usually,” and 8% “sometimes.” Only 3% said “rarely” was the mission statement displayed, and 1% thought there was “no way to judge.” The last item for this section wanted to know if the mission statement was used as a guide and resource for prayer, reflection and planning. Three percent of the participants had no way to judge, 4% stated rarely did this happen and 9% indicated that it was used sometimes. However, 30% selected usually with another 55% stating always was the mission statement used as a guide and resource for

prayer, reflection, and planning. The data for these three items indicate that the vast majority of schools have programs, policies, and procedures in place that support Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. It also shows that Province leadership, in coordination with school leaders, might take the opportunity to ensure that each school and ministry site display its mission statement and promulgate it in various publications. Keeping the mission statement clearly visible and in front of the school community may help guarantee it as a resource for planning, prayer, and reflection.

Items 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 10 under the Spiritual Life component of the survey provide insights into what steps might be taken to help foster Catholic identity and the sustainability of Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools.

Item 2 asks if the faculty has opportunities to advance its understanding of Catholicism and what makes a school Catholic. In response, the participants stated the following: 9% “no way to judge,” 4% “rarely,” 13% “sometimes,” 37% “usually,” and another 37% “always.” As indicated earlier in the chapter, the data suggest that school leaders might consider providing more programs that enable faculty, staff, administrators, and even board members occasions to study, learn, or enhance their knowledge of their faith, which should also enlighten their concept of what makes a school decidedly Catholic. Item 4 seeks to know if attention is given to building a Christian community among faculty and staff. To this inquiry, 46% of participants stated “always” while 31% selected “usually.” Another 23% were not as sure and indicated “no way to judge” (4%), “rarely” (5%), or only “sometimes” (14%) did this occur. Again, the data should prompt school leaders the opportunity to invite opportunities to build community based on Gospel values within each school.

Item 5 deals with in-service programs aimed at developing all faculty and staff as spiritual leaders in the Catholic tradition. Since 8% indicated they had “no way to judge,” 5 % said only “rarely” does this occur, and another 16% selected “sometimes,” administrators should open a conversation with faculty and staff as to how best to provide quality in-service programs for this purpose.

Items 6 and 7 inquire about annual retreats for faculty/staff and board members. As cited earlier in the chapter, both of these received larger than usual “no way to judge” responses. The data gathered on both items would indicate that school and Province leadership work together to build an effective retreat program for both groups. Providing opportunities for prayer and reflection on the mission of the school and its Catholic identity can only help. This effort is necessary for the continuation of Christian Brother charism and the Catholic identity of each school.

The pastoral care of students and adults in each of the schools is the crux of item 10. Overall, there was a mixed review. Nine percent suggested there was “no way to judge,” while 1% stated “rarely,” and another 9% said “sometimes.” These three data points alone invite a review of the school’s pastoral care programs. There is an opportunity to ensure that each member of the community is adequately cared for in a pastoral way. This affords the administration the chance to partner with faculty and staff to develop ways each group may be pastorally responsive to the other as well as to their students.

Under the Programs banner, four items (Items 3, 5, 6, and 7) respond to the third research question, offering ways to foster Catholic identity and help sustain Christian Brother schools. Items 3 and 5 are somewhat interconnected. One asks if there is adequate institutional support for campus ministry, and the other for community service; and they have similar results. Fifteen

percent of participants responded they had “no way to judge” for campus ministry, while 11% answered that for community service. There was a 78% combined “usually” and “always” for campus ministry and a 76% for community service. Neither combined percentage is terrible; however, the data suggest that school leaders might be in a better position if they publicized the institutional support for both programs in a more transparent fashion. Since 32% of the respondents for Item 3 and 34% for Item 5 did not indicate “usually” or “always,” there may be opportunity for increased institutional support for both campus ministry and community service.

Similarly, Items 6 and 7 are somewhat related. Item 6 asks if students are provided adequate time for reflection and sharing about their community service experience, and Item 7 asks if community service programs relate to the mission of the school and are seen as integral to the educational program of the students. For Item 6, 20% responded there was “no way to judge,” 8% said “rarely,” 11% stated “sometimes,” while only 27% responded “usually” and 34% “always.” Clearly, there is opportunity to raise the standards of the community service programs in the schools. Adequate time needs to be allocated for students to reflect, review, and share their experiences about community service. Students need to be cognizant of why they perform the service and what conditions exist that caused the service to be needed. For example, when students provide service in a poor neighborhood’s food pantry, they need to understand the causes for poverty and hunger. Further, students need to become the voices for those who are marginalized and find themselves voiceless in society. For item 7, 21% indicated they had “no way to judge,” only 1% indicated “rarely,” while 3% stated “sometimes.” The “no way to judge” response should be addressed by school leadership. It is only a matter of explaining to all concerned how community service programs relate to the mission of the school and are an integral part of the students’ educational program.

This research question ties in neatly with Section 4 of the survey, Ceremonies and Traditions. The first item asks if appropriate ceremonies and rituals celebrating the heritage and value system of the school are held regularly. This concept was readily agreed upon with an overall combined 93% of “usually” and “always” by the participants. Item 2 seeks to find out if these ceremonies and rituals are evaluated according to the mission of the school and the needs of the students. The response to this was marred by the 13% who indicated they had “no way to judge.” Only 2% stated it “rarely” occurred and another 6% indicated “sometimes.” The remaining 79% selected “usually” or “always.” These data suggest school leaders can improve their method of evaluation and share that with faculty, staff, and board members. Item 3 under Ceremonies and Traditions received the lowest percentages of “usually” (27%) and “always” (43%). The item asks if students play a prominent role in planning, organizing, and conducting school ceremonies and rituals. This is an opportunity for school administration to seek creative ways to involve students in every phase of their ceremonies and rituals. Campus ministers especially play an instrumental role in ensuring students are involved in the planning, organizing and conduction of all school related liturgies, prayer services, and other ceremonies. The last item asks if these same rituals and ceremonies are evaluated according to the school’s mission and the needs of the students. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents selected “usually” (26%) and “always” (61%). Although this data point is considered high, there is always room for improvement.

The final item to be considered under the third research question deals with Admissions. Item 2 under Admissions seeks to know if school admissions policies are stated clearly and followed. As stated in previous sections of this chapter, this item comes with mixed reviews. Fully 21% of the participants stated they had “no way to judge,” 5% said “rarely,” 6% selected

“sometimes,” while 22% indicated “usually” and another 45% marked “always.” For 32% of the respondents not to indicate “usually” or “always” signals there may be a difficulty. Once again, these data invite school administration to review their admissions policies and procedures. Once their review is completed, the school admissions policies must be clearly articulated, prominently displayed, generously shared, and carefully followed. It would also benefit the school community for complete transparency regarding admissions policies and procedures.

4. Are there differences in the perceptions of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism from one school to another?

The results of the Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index did not surface any substantial differences in the perception of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism from one school to the next. There were some slight differences in one item or another. In fact, there was great unanimity of responses across the spectrum from all schools. There were differences of perception from one group to another as reported in **Section and Category Analysis: Faculty, Staff, Administrators, and Board Members.**

### **Summary**

In this chapter, a complete review of the survey data was presented under four different categories: (1) aggregate—all schools, all categories; (2) section and category: faculty, staff, administrators, board members; (3) by school; and (4) by research question. Survey results from the 340 completed surveys have been analyzed, reviewed, and reported out. The results offered a number of opportunities for both Provincial leadership and school leadership, individually and collectively, independently and collaboratively, to review certain sections of their educational programs and make improvements. They also suggest that a greater sharing of information across the Provinces might enhance both Christian Brother charism and Catholic identity.

Chapter V includes a summary of the findings as they relate to the literature and the research questions. It offers suggestions for ensuring Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism in the nine schools in the United States that took part in the research. Last, Chapter V offers recommendations for additional research.



## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter V provides an overview of the research project by presenting the purpose of the study, conclusions of the survey results, a review of the research questions that allowed for the gathering of information, along with a summary of the findings and the implications for Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools as well as the North American Province of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers. The summary of the findings from the Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index is connected to the literature reviewed earlier while basing it within the conceptual framework which directed the research. The concluding part of Chapter V presents implications of the study while offering recommendations to school and Provincial leadership regarding the state of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism in the schools. It also presents opportunities for future research.

The importance of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism in the schools and ministry sites of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers cannot be underestimated. Catholic identity is perhaps the one concept that is at the very foundation, the very core, of all Catholic schools across the United States, if not the world. As one survey respondent stated, “The Catholic faith and the philosophy of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers are the most significant foundational elements of the school. Every area of school life and methodology is impacted by both.”

The purpose of the study was to gauge Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism in nine secondary schools under the banner of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers. Further, the research project was designed to discover those elements of the schools’ curriculum that

reinforce, enliven, energize, and strengthen both Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. Thomas Groome (1996) states in his article “What Makes a School Catholic” that “by curriculum, I intend the content taught, the process of teaching and the environment of the school” (p. 107). Last, the intent of the study was to provide school and Provincial leadership with strategies that would ensure the Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism of the schools and what elements might be transferred to other ministries under their care.

In order to achieve the purposes of the study, a quantitative approach was constructed and a survey instrument was designed. The Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index was adapted from work completed by Sr. Mary Frances Taymans. For purposes of this study, nine of the Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools in the United States were selected to participate. Faculty, staff, administrators, and board members from the following schools were invited to submit a survey instrument:

All Hallows High School, Bronx, NY

Bergen Catholic High School, Oradell, NJ

Brother Rice High School, Bloomfield Hills, MI

Brother Rice High School, Chicago, IL

Catholic Memorial High School, West Roxbury, MA

Damien Memorial High School, Honolulu, HA

Iona Preparatory School, New Rochelle, NY

Palma School, Salinas, CA

St. Laurence High School, Burbank, IL

There were approximately 841 members of the faculty, staff, administration, and boards of directors invited to participate in the research study. Of those four groups, 70 board members,

160 faculty members, 55 staff members, and 55 administrators submitted completed survey instruments. Table 11 indicates the participation rate of each group.

Table 11

*Participant Percentages by Profession*

Participation	Board	Faculty	Staff	Administration	Total
Invited	145	412	186	98	841
Completed Surveys	70	160	55	55	40
Percentage	48%	39%	30%	56%	40%

The results reported in Chapter IV were completely based on the information and data gathered from the survey instrument. Members of each of the school communities invited to participate in the research study submitted completed surveys, and the results are representative of those nine schools.

### **Conclusions of Survey Results**

In an article that appeared in *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, John Convey (2012) explains the importance of defining what is meant by Catholic identity. While giving a workshop on Catholic identity, a prominent pastor from a nearby parish simply asked the question, “What do you mean by Catholic identity?” Convey went on to explain to the pastor and others at the workshop the concepts that encompass Catholic identity. From that question, Convey took on another research project that produced his article “Perceptions of Catholic Identity: Views of Catholic School Administrators and Teachers” (Convey, 2012, p. 188).

Similarly, it is important for those associated with Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools and other ministries to understand Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. The responses to the Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index provide a large quantity of information upon which both school and Provincial leadership, together and individually, might consider reviewing programs, policies, and practices that strengthen, inform, and enliven Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism in their schools.

The responses to Section 1, School Environment, show overwhelming support for Christian Brother charism and Catholic identity in each of the schools. The responses for this section were very positive, signified by participants selecting either “usually” or “always” on average 90% of the time.

Timothy Cook (2004) explains that “Catholic imagination is fed through symbols and rituals. Catholic educational leaders need to be mindful, then, of providing a rich array of symbols and rituals that identify, promote, and celebrate the school’s core values and religious mission” (Cook, 2004, pp. 39-40). Items 1, 2, 3, and 4 from this section deal directly with the use of symbols and space. The responses reflect that Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism are well served through the use of symbols and space in each of the schools.

Items 5 and 6 are interconnected in that Item 5 speaks to the universality of Catholicism as reflected in the school’s cultural awareness programs and Item 6 targets respect for diversity. Again, respondents answered positively for both questions. However, it seems that the concept of universality was not understood by all, thus giving it a slightly lower percentage (84%) of “usually” and “always” compared to 90% for respect for diversity. Groome (1996) states that “. . . the best synonym for ‘catholic’ is ‘inclusive’ rather than the often-used word ‘universal’

. . . . ‘Catholic’ . . . means to include and welcome all, to embrace diverse ‘others’ in a participative and bonded community” (Groome, 1996, p. 123). Leadership on both the school and Provincial level may elect to better define the “universal” nature of Catholicism as it relates to cultural awareness programs.

Last, Items 7, 8, and 9 speak to the schools’ mission statement and how it is utilized. According to Sr. Mary Frances Taymans (1999), the schools’ mission statement is the “raison d’être of the institution . . . . It is a bold declaration of purpose, function and unique position (which) . . . captures the beliefs and values reflected in the philosophy as they relate to the purpose of the school” (Taymans, p. 16). Each of the items received a high percentage of agreement across the schools and across the groups. Overall, the responses to the section dealing with school environment reflect a very strong sense of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism.

The responses to Section 2, Spiritual Life, were not as robust as for School Environment. The aggregate percentage responses for the 11 items of “usually” and “always” range from a low of 31% for Item 7 and a high of 95% for Items 1 and 9. Item 7 asked participants to respond whether or not the board of directors participated in an annual retreat centered on the schools’ mission statement and Catholic identity. This is the only item in the survey that received such a low positive response and might be considered an outlier. The low response invites a review of a board retreat by both school and Provincial leadership. It received the largest “no way to judge” (47%) and “rarely” percentages (17%). Even the responses from board members indicate a concern. Board members responded 7% “no way to judge,” 33% “rarely,” 10% “sometimes,” 16% “usually,” and 34% “always.” Fr. Donald Rowe (2003), in his work *A Straight-Talking Guide to Running a School*, speaks to the importance of a board retreat. He explains that the

retreat is an “immersion experience.” He goes on to add there should be five goals for the retreat: a chance to know one another, reflect on opportunities for students, show evidence of the school’s success, discuss the vision for the school, and build a community of prayer and good works (Rowe, pp. 197, 198).

The first and ninth items in this section received a combined 95% of “usually” and “always” from survey participants and they are linked. Item 1 speaks to the school having rituals and traditions that demonstrate Catholic identity, while Item 9 asks if there are regular opportunities for prayer, reconciliation, and liturgy that are integral parts of school life. Fr. James Heft (2011), in his work *Catholic High Schools: Facing New Realities*, states that “school liturgies should be done well, readers well coached, musicians well practiced and the environment conducive to prayer . . . . Rituals and practices that require reflection wed moral formation to intellectual growth. Schools should ensure that communal rituals be an integral part of the student’s experience” (pp.162, 165). Certainly, these two items show a strong support for Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism.

Items 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 are asked with regard to programs for faculty and staff members. These five items received similar responses across the spectrum. Item 2 and 5 are connected. Item 2 asks if the faculty has opportunity to advance its understanding of Catholicism and what makes a school Catholic, while Item 5 seeks to know if in-service programs consider the development of faculty and staff as spiritual leaders in the Catholic faith tradition. Item 2 received a combined 74% of “usually” and “always,” while Item 5 garnered 72%. The responses suggest that school leadership, alongside Province leaders, continues to develop programs and opportunities for members of the adult community to deepen their knowledge of the Catholic faith. This in turn would help foster Catholic identity in the school. Fr. Harold Buetow (1988)

speaks to the importance of teacher development. “Catholic teachers guide youth toward eternal realities; no one can tell where the teacher’s influence ends . . . . To form such high-caliber teachers requires special care. Formation should be a happy blend of professional training, progress in faith, and personal growth. Superadded for the Catholic teacher is the faith dimension” (pp.268, 269).

Item 3 under Spiritual Life asks if there is an appropriate orientation program for new hires to the community. Administrators replied with 16% “usually” and 71% “always.” Although this item received only 74% combined average of “usually” and “always,” 14% had “no way of judging.” This would indicate that, for the most part, there is an appropriate orientation program for new members of the community although it is not publicized well enough.

The importance of building a Christian community among faculty and staff is crucial to the overall Catholic identity of the school. Cook (2004), in *Architects of Catholic Culture*, stresses that educational leaders need to build a distinctive culture based in the community of the school. “Catholic school culture is ‘a way of life,’ rooted in Christ, a Gospel-based creed and code . . . .” (p. xviii). Twenty-four percent of faculty members stated that only “sometimes” does this occur, while staff responded with a 9% “rarely” and 16% “sometimes.” That attention is given to building a Christian community among faculty and staff was hardly a question for administrators, who responded 40% “usually” and 58% “always.” This disparity invites conversation among the different groups as to what constitutes “building Christian community.” At the very least, administrators should review school programs and policies aimed at building community.

Similarly, the result for an annual faculty retreat was mixed. The telling statistic here is that 7% of faculty replied there was “no way to judge,” another 9% indicated “rarely,” while 8% stated “sometimes.” Administrators also had a mixed response with 9% stating “rarely” and 7% indicating “sometimes.” “The Catholic teacher must have a synthesis of faith, culture, and life and be alert for opportunities to witness to faith. Retreats, prayer, sharing, service, follow-up kindnesses, and other exercises should inculcate habits of reflection and deepening faith” (Buetow, 1988, p. 269). The responses by faculty, staff, and administrators, taken together, indicate there is room for improvement. An annual community retreat for the entire staff of each school should be a priority in planning.

The question regarding student retreats received a very positive 84% of “usually” and “always.” The only detractor for this item was a 10% response indicating there was no way to judge. Likewise, Item 10, pastoral care for the community is provided at an appropriate level received a combined 83% for usually and always. This suggests that the schools are very mindful of taking care of all the members of the community.

The last item in this section asks if the spiritual life of the community is a priority in planning. Eighty percent of the participants stated that “usually” or “always” this was the case. Although a positive response, it does leave room for questions. It would seem prudent for the administration to better publicize how decision making is impacted by the school’s mission and spiritual life program. The *National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools* (2012) acknowledges that “an excellent Catholic school is guided and driven by a clearly communicated mission that embraces a Catholic Identity rooted in Gospel values, centered on the Eucharist, and committed to faith formation, academic excellence



and service” (p. 17). In order to meet this standard, it would be sensible for the school’s spiritual life program to be a priority in planning.

The Programs section of the survey elicited responses that ranged from a high of 89% of “usually” and “always” to a low of 61% with an overall average of 78%.

The first item, respect for students of other faiths, received the highest combined “usually” and “always” percentage of 89%. In 2005, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, in their statement on Catholic schools said, “. . . Catholic schools should be available to students who are not Catholic and who wish to attend them. This has been a proud part of the history of Catholic schools in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. We must continue this outreach in the new millennium” (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, p. 9). This item also reflects the “universality” of Catholicism mentioned earlier and supports the notion put forth by the U.S. Catholic bishops. Christian Brother schools must remain open to students of all faiths, races, and nationalities.

Campus ministry programs across the spectrum of Christian Brother schools received a fairly high percentage from survey participants. The only difficulty with the survey results was the response for “no way to judge.” For Item 2, 11% of the respondents selected “no way to judge” with 13% indicating the same for Item 3. If those participants had been better informed about their school’s campus ministry programs, the combined “usually” and “always” may have surpassed the 90% mark. As one respondent to the survey stated, “Catholic identity is a part of all that we do here. You can see our Catholic identity in sports, academics, Campus Ministry. Leadership for young men is developed in every team that we have. I am referring to Campus Ministry, our trips to Mexico and Peru. We share our Catholic identity in all that we do.” If all

survey participants were as knowledgeable as this one, certainly the “no way to judge” percentage would have been considerably lower.

Similar to Items 2 and 3, Items 4, 5, 6, and 7 are similarly connected. Item 4 asks if community service programs have clearly defined objectives, while Item 5 seeks to know if there is adequate institutional support given. In Chapters I and II, the statement by the U.S. Catholic bishops, *To Teach as Jesus Did* (1972), was cited. This document established, for the first time, those constructs necessary for a Catholic school to be authentically Catholic. The bishops declared that proclaiming the Word of God, building community, and providing service were the three things absolutely necessary. A combined 81% of “usually” and “always” responses stated that the schools’ campus ministry programs had clearly defined objectives and requirements. For Item 5, however, the percentage drops to 76% due in large part to the 11% of respondents stating they had “no way to judge.”

These percentages show that school administration is in a position to clearly explain to all members of the community the value and objectives of both the campus ministry and community service programs. One survey participant stressed the importance of campus ministry and Christian service, stating the following:

I feel that we do a great job in promoting and practicing our Catholic identity/faith, while being mindful that there are others who have different beliefs and come from different cultures and backgrounds. Through our Campus Ministry and Christian Service programs, I feel that our students have an awareness, respect and better understanding of the world around us.

Item 6, which asks if time is given to students to reflect and share their community service experiences, received the lowest percentage (61%) of “usually” and “always” for this

section. This is due, in part, to the 20% of respondents who selected “no way to judge.” This would indicate that schools should review their program objectives and schedule time for students to understand more fully the reason for their service. Fortunately, 82% (“usually” and “always”) of the respondents indicated that community service programs relate to the mission of the school and are integral to the overall educational program of the students.

Last for the Program section, the survey asked if job applicants were made aware of the school’s mission, Catholic identity, and Christian Brother charism. Overall, 21% of the responses were “no way to judge.” In contrast, administrators, who are charged with the hiring process, responded with 13% “usually” and 75% “always.” These numbers argue for a clearly defined process for hiring new members of the school community. Speaking to the hiring process, Fr. Rowe (2003) offered these words: “You are not going to sustain the Catholic tradition and practice in your school if you do not hire people who are faith-filled” (Rowe, p. 240). The survey question is important for the Catholic identity of the school. Applicants for positions on staff or faculty must be aware of the ethos, philosophy and culture of the school prior to accepting a position. Fr. Rowe further explains that when hiring for mission, “. . . the candidate has, or is willing to adopt, the particular world-view that is part of the school’s vision of itself . . . . You are looking to find someone whose beliefs and sympathies lie within the school’s values” (Rowe, p. 243).

There were four items under the heading Ceremonies and Traditions. Item 1 asks if there are appropriate ceremonies and rituals that celebrate the heritage and value system of the school, while Item 2 seeks to understand if they are evaluated according to the mission of the school and the needs of the students. Cook (2015), in his work *Charism and Culture: Cultivating Catholic Identity in Catholic Schools*, explains that prayers, traditions, and liturgies are all important to

the life and culture of the school. “Spirited schools have strong traditions. Traditions, which include rituals, ceremonies, and celebrations, are symbolic acts that *go bone deep* into a school culture and cut to the heart of what a school community cherishes” (p. 21). Item 1 received a 95% overall “usually” or “always” response from survey participants and Item 2 only polled 79% “usually” and “always.” The reason for the discrepancy is that 13% of participants for Item 2 stated they had “no way to judge” if the ceremonies and rituals were evaluated. Closing out his chapter on “Aligning Symbolic Culture: Icons, Traditions and Mythology,” Cook (2015) states, “Last, a school should never assume that members know the significance of school symbols and traditions of the meaning behind school mythology. It is important for schools to continually educate members about the school’s symbolic culture” (Cook, 2015, p. 28).

The final two items in this section of the survey ask if students play a prominent part in planning, organizing, and conducting the school’s ceremonies and rituals and if school honors and awards reflect the mission of the school and its heritage. The latter item received a high percentage (87% “usually” or “always”) of agreement. The previous item, student involvement in ceremonies and rituals, only received a 70% agreement of “usually” or “always.” This is an issue that should be addressed by school administration. Standard 3 under the *National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools* (2012) states, “An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities outside the classroom for student faith formation, participation in liturgical and communal prayer, and action in service of social justice.” (National Standards, p. 19). The key word in the Standard is *participation*. Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools must develop policies and programs that provide students a prominent role in planning, organizing and conducting school rituals and ceremonies.

The Ceremony and Traditions section of the survey indicates a need for school administration to ensure student involvement in ceremonies and rituals and that they are evaluated according to the mission of the school and need of the students.

The final section of the survey, Admissions, received the largest aggregate percentage (36%) of “no way to judge.” Item 1, the admissions policy is consistent with the mission of the school received 15% “no way to judge,” 2% “rarely,” 7% “sometimes,” 23% “usually,” and 53% “always.” Clearly, the admissions policy needs to be promulgated to the wider school community to allow everyone to make a qualified determination. The second item, which asks if the policy is clearly stated and followed, received 21% “no way to judge,” 5% “rarely,” 6% “sometimes,” 23% “usually,” and only 45% “always.” This response indicates that administration needs to have greater conversations with faculty, staff, and board members regarding admissions practices. The final item asks if prospective families are acquainted with the mission, beliefs, and philosophy of the school during the admissions process. The result was an 18% “no way to judge,” 1% “rarely,” 6% “sometimes,” 22% “usually,” and 53% “always.” Once again, it was the percentage of respondents who did not have the information to make an informed decision that allowed smaller than desired “usually” and “always” selections.

The overall responses for this section would suggest that school administrations need to consider a better way of sharing the admissions process with faculty and staff. A clear admissions policy coupled with a transparent process would improve the overall percentages for this area of school life. Faculty and staff would benefit from information from administration regarding the admissions process and the policies followed.

### **Research Questions**

The project was conducted with the following research questions in mind:

1. What factors affect the Catholic identity of Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools in the United States?
2. In the face of declining numbers of professed religious Brothers on staff in Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools, what programs and policies may help to protect the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice and the Catholic identity of the schools?
3. What steps will help foster the Catholic identity and the sustainability of Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools?
4. Are there differences in the perceptions of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism from one school to another?

### **Research Question 1**

Research Question 1: What factors affect the Catholic identity of Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools in the United States? There were a number of questions throughout the survey that related directly to this research question. Beginning with the School Environment section, Items 1, 2, 3, and 4 were associated with factors that affect the Catholic identity of Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools. These four items received a significant response of “usually” or “always”: Item 1, 95%; Item 2, 85%; Item 3, 95%; and Item 4, 91%. From the respondent answers, the conclusion can be drawn that the environment of the schools portrays an identifiable integration of faith with life and culture. The Vatican document, *The Catholic School*, states the following: “These premises indicate the duties and the content of the Catholic school. Its task is fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life: the first is reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel; the second in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian” (Sacred Congregation, 1977, para. 37).

The second, third, and fourth items are all connected. They speak to Catholic identity being clearly evident through the use of symbols and space. Further, they ask if these images reflecting Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism are prominently displayed. The three items received a 91% average of “usually” or “always.” Archbishop J. Michael Miller explains the importance of such symbols and images:

If Catholic schools are to be true to their identity, they will suffuse their environment with a delight in the sacramental. Therefore, they should express physically and visibly the external signs of Catholic culture through images, symbols, icons, and other objects of traditional devotion. A chapel, classroom crucifixes and statues, liturgical celebrations, and other sacramental reminders of Catholic life, including good art that is not explicitly religious in its subject matter, should be evident. All these signs embody the community ethos of Catholicism. (Miller, 2005, p. 6)

The high percentage of agreement shows that Christian Brother schools have enough Catholic symbols throughout their respective campuses to indicate that Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism are unmistakably present.

The Spiritual Life component of the survey had two items relating to Research Question 1. Item 2 asks if faculty have opportunities to advance its understanding of Catholicism and what makes a school Catholic. Paragraph 26 of the Vatican document, entitled *Educating Together in Catholic Schools* (Sacred Congregation, 2007), states the following: “The transmission of the Christian message through teaching implies a mastery of the knowledge of the truths of the faith and of the principles of spiritual life that require constant improvement. This is why both consecrated and lay educators of the Catholic school need to follow an opportune formational theological itinerary.” From the Vatican perspective, it is important for

Catholic schools to have a bona fide professional development program for all staff members so that everyone can advance his/her understanding of their faith and what makes the school environment Catholic.

Item 11 is fairly straightforward: is the spiritual life of the community a priority in planning? Administrators (90%) and board members (89%) agreed strongly that it does receive priority in planning by indicating “usually” or “always.” However, faculty and staff response was different. Staff members indicated 5% “rarely,” 11% “sometimes,” 35% “usually,” and 45% “always,” while faculty marked “sometimes” 19% of the time, “usually” receiving 31%, and “always” 43%. The discrepancy might be attributable to administrators and board members being privy to the budgeting process and other administrative decision making. Fr. James Heft, when speaking about the formation of the young people in our schools stated that “Catholic educators need to strengthen the substance and quality of the religious education and formation of their students” (2011, p. 162). He further explains that religion teachers must always remain current in their fields; and school liturgies, rituals, retreats, and prayer services need to be well planned and practiced. Religion classes themselves, Heft argues, “should receive a prominent place” in scheduling (p. 162). It would be sound policy for administrators and board members to keep the spiritual life of the entire school community at the forefront of all planning and decision making.

Items 1 and 8 under the Program section of the survey relate to Research Question 1. Item 1 speaks to respecting the presence of students from other faith traditions. Eighty-nine percent of all responses were either “usually” (22%) or “always” (67%). Paragraph 57 of the Vatican document *The Catholic School* states the following:



A Catholic school in itself is far from being divisive or presumptuous. It does not exacerbate differences, but rather aids cooperation and contact with others. It opens itself to others and respects their way of thinking and of living. It wants to share their anxieties and their hopes as it, indeed, shares their present and future lot in this world.” (Sacred Congregation, 1977, p. 9)

The response of the participants shows that Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools understand that respect for those of other faiths is intrinsic to who they are.

Item 8 seeks to know whether applicants for positions in Christian Brother schools are made aware of the school’s Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism during the hiring process. This item received the second highest (21%) “no way to judge” percentage. 18% of faculty, 22% of staff, 11% of administrators, and 39% of board members responded that they had “no way to judge” this item. Eighty-eight percent of administrators did state that “usually” or “always” were applicants made aware of the school’s Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. The percentages of “no way to judge” would argue for a clearer policy with regard to information given to applicants for positions within Christian Brother schools.

The final section of the survey speaks to admissions policies and practices in the schools. Item 1 and 3 under this banner are associated with the first research question. Item 1 asks if the admissions policy is consistent with the mission of the school. Only 76% of participants indicated this occurs “usually” or “always.” It also had a large (15%) of “no way to judge” responses. Similarly, Item 3 seeks to know if prospective students and their families are acquainted with the mission, beliefs, and philosophy of the school during the admissions process. Seventy-five percent of participants indicated “usually” or “always,” while 18% said they had “no way to judge.” Fr. Rowe suggests that a school needs to define itself for its potential

families. During the admissions process, prospective students and their families should learn about the school's services, history, and "specialness." He explains that the "school's history gives credibility to its work with students . . . . Build up your school's history, sponsorship by the Catholic Church and religious community . . . ." (Rowe, 2003, pp. 271, 273).

The responses to the items related to the first research question reinforced some areas of Christian Brother school life that positively affect Catholic identity with the programs and practices that are already in place. The data also suggest areas where improvement can be achieved. It is clear from the participants' responses that there is a clear integration of faith with life and culture and that the schools employ space and symbols to great effect. Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism are visible and tangible in these areas. Similarly, throughout the schools there is a realization of the importance of respect for the faith traditions of non-Catholic students. Further, it was clear that respect of other faith traditions is practiced. While there was strong evidence of professional development opportunities for members of the community to develop their understanding of their faith and what makes a school Catholic, it was also clear that not all members of the school community were aware of the programs available to them. Although the schools seem to have an admissions policy that is consistent with the mission of the school, not all survey participants could state decisively that it is the case as evidenced by the "no way to judge" percentage. Similarly, not all participants were convinced that prospective students and their families were made aware of the school's mission and philosophy.

## **Research Question 2**

Research Question 2: In the face of declining numbers of professed religious Brothers on staff in Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools, what programs and policies may help to protect the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice and the Catholic identity of the schools? This research

question has 14 allied survey items: two under School Environment, seven in the Spiritual Life section four under Programs, and one from Ceremony and Traditions.

Items 5 and 7 from School Environment received positive responses of “usually” and “always” from the survey participants. Item 5 spoke to the universality of Catholicism and whether it was reflected in the school’s cultural awareness programs. Eighty-four percent of responses were “usually” or “always” for this item. Item 7 sought to know if programs reflected the Gospel values expressed in the mission and philosophy statements of the schools and garnered a 90% response of “usually” and “always.” Thomas Groome (2003), speaking to those things that make a school decidedly Catholic, suggests the emphasis placed on the communal aspect of Catholic schools makes it “truly a place of welcome and inclusion, and educates students that ‘neighbor’ has no limits.” He further explains that “teaching the *tradition* is catholic as it convinces students of the universality of God’s saving presence . . .” (Groome, 1996, p. 123).

The Spiritual Life section of the survey has Items 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 all linked to the second research question. The first item, appropriate attention is given to rituals and tradition that demonstrate the school’s Catholic identity received a 95% agreement of “usually” and “always.” Standard 3, which was cited previously, from the *National Standards and Benchmarks for Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools* says that to be an excellent Catholic school, opportunities for students, outside of the classroom to participate in prayer, liturgy and actively engage in service, are absolutely necessary (2012, p. 19). The very positive response to Item 1 strongly suggests that Christian Brother schools seek and find ways to fulfill Standard 3.

Item 3 speaks to a proper orientation program for new faculty and staff. The large (14%) “no way to judge” percentage took away from the “usually” and “always” responses. Seen in light of the Vatican document, *Educating Together in Catholic Schools* (Sacred Congregation, 2007), it is incumbent upon school leaders to ensure that all members of the staff are made aware of the school’s mission, philosophy, and Christian Brother charism. Item 5 takes this concept a bit further by asking if there are annual in-service programs to develop all faculty and staff as spiritual leaders in the Catholic tradition. Paragraph 24 of the document states the following:

It is not sufficient simply to care about professional updating in the strict sense. The synthesis between faith, culture and life that educators of the Catholic school are called to achieve is, in fact, reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel and in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian. (Sacred Congregation, 2007)

Responses for this item were not as robust as some previous items. 16% of responses indicated that only “sometimes” does this take place which, taken alone and in light of the above Vatican statement, suggests that school administrators should make a concerted effort to ensure there are annual opportunities for faculty and staff to develop their individual faith lives. Fr. Heft argues that “. . . leaders of Catholic schools need to organize, on a monthly basis, opportunities for the faculty to learn more about the Catholic tradition in general and the mission of the school in particular” (2011, p. 132).

Items 6, 7, and 8 discuss the opportunity for faculty/staff, board members, and students to experience an annual retreat. Item 6 had a 13% “no way to judge”; Item 7, a 47% response; and Item 8, 10%. These three data points suggest that not all members of the community are aware of the retreat opportunities outside their own group experience. Fr. Buetow (1988), when

discussing the faith dimension of lay members of the staff, suggests that they be provided opportunities to share prayer, faith experiences, and their personal experiences; and one way to accomplish this is through faculty/staff retreats (1988, p. 253). Fr. Jim Heft argues that retreats and programs for students reinforce what happens in religion classes while providing opportunities for students to give and hear witness talks. He goes on to add that these programs can have a tremendous impact on and help shape the school's culture (2011, p. 162). Last, Item 7 speaks to the importance of a board retreat. Cited earlier, this item received the largest "no way to judge" percentage. A previous citation from Fr. Rowe's work *A Straight-Talking Guide to Running a School* (2003) suggests that a board retreat is a perfect opportunity to bring board members together to get to know one another, discuss the importance of the program in relation to the students, and relate it all back to the mission of the school.

The final item in this section seeks to know if there are regular opportunities for prayer, reconciliation, and liturgy and if these are integral to school life. This item received one of the highest "usually" and "always" percentages at 95%. In fact, 76% of the respondents indicated "always" for this item—the highest percentage for "always" in the entire survey. Clearly then, each of the schools understands the importance of developing prayer opportunities for all constituents. It follows Standard 3 from the *National Standards and Benchmarks for Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools*, specifically Objective 3.1, which states, "Every student is offered timely and regular opportunities to learn about and experience the nature and importance of prayer, the Eucharist, and liturgy" (2012, p. 19). Objective 4.1 states primarily the same thing, only directed at faculty and staff. Objective 5.6 provides for board members as follows: "The governing body engages in formation and ongoing training and self-evaluation for itself and the leadership team to ensure the faithful execution of their respective responsibilities"

(p. 20).

Under the Programs section, there are four items directly related to Research Question 2: 1, 2, 4, and 7. The first item asks if the school community and its programs respect the presence of students of other faiths, and 89% of respondents agreed with “usually” or “always.” A number of Vatican documents speak about the universality of the Church and that must follow in Her schools for them to be authentically Catholic. Thomas Groome (1996) has already been cited in this regard, especially when he speaks about inclusivity. Also, Fr. Heft makes it clear when he states, “. . . it is important to celebrate a prayer service that non-Catholic Christian students can participate in as fully as Catholic students” (2011, p. 162). Heft is speaking to the importance of prayer, liturgy, and retreats in high schools. This shows the need to be aware of students who do not come from a Catholic faith tradition. However, Heft limited his comment to Christian students. Today’s Christian Brother schools have a wide mix of faith traditions, including Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and others.

Item 2 and 4 are similar and seek to know if campus ministry and community service programs have clearly defined objectives. Eighty-two percent of respondents indicated that “usually” or “always” campus ministry had defined objectives, while 81% stated that community service did. The “no way to judge” responses took away from “usually” or “always.” The positive responses speak to the validity of both programs in Christian Brother schools. Once again, the *National Standards and Benchmarks* calls for opportunities for students in Catholic schools to participate in programs outside of the classroom that support the school’s Catholic identity (2012, Standard 3, p. 19). The final item deals with community service programs being an integral part of the students’ educational programs. Fifty-seven percent of respondents indicated “always” with 25% marking “usually,” suggesting that community service programs in

Christian Brother schools promote not only Catholic identity but also Christian Brother charism. The Christian Brothers' motto is simply "To Do and To Teach." The community service programs are very much reflected in the "to do" part. One survey participant commented as follows:

I feel that we do a great job in promoting and practicing our Catholic identity/faith, while being mindful that there are others who have different beliefs and come from different cultures and backgrounds. Through our Campus Ministry and Christian Service programs, I feel that our students have an awareness, respect and better understanding of the world around us.

The data from the responses indicate that the decline in the number of Christian Brothers ministering in the schools has been compensated for by a number of programs implemented to augment Catholic identity and the insertion of many competent lay teachers who are "Catholic literate" and understand what it means to work in a Christian Brother school. The responses show that the schools are places of inclusivity where programs support the spiritual development of students and teachers alike. Those same data do suggest that administrators could put more emphasis on in-service programs to help foster spiritual leadership within the faculty and staff. The data support the fact that there are ample opportunities for all members of the community to join in prayer, reconciliation, and liturgies. It also shows that a school's programs of study, activities, athletics, and codes of conduct and discipline are reflective of Gospel values. However, some of the data strongly suggest that a retreat for board members become a biannual or annual occurrence. Also, the responses imply that an orientation program for new members of the professional school community is necessary to continue to foster the mission and philosophy of the schools in the tradition of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers. Last, community service

and campus ministry programs seem well placed with clearly defined objectives. However, there was some hint that these two programs would benefit from clearly articulating and publicizing those same objectives.

### **Research Question 3**

Research Question 3: What steps will help foster the Catholic identity and the sustainability of Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools? More than half of the survey items are connected with this research question. Item 6 from the School Environment section asks if respect for diversity is articulated and practiced in the school. One survey participant answered that question this way:

Our commitment to all levels of diversity (economic, geographical, ethnic, religious) has been the hallmark of our school's reputation for many years. The world that we're preparing our students for is diverse—our workplaces and our society reflect an enormous range of backgrounds and experiences. Succeeding in that world requires having had the experience of diversity in its many forms.

Ninety percent of the responses were “usually” or “always.” “It requires courage,” argues Heft, “to recognize the strengths of other religious traditions and not just point out their deficiencies, and alternately, to accept the deficiencies of one's own traditions and not just trumpet one's own strengths . . . ” (Heft, 2011, p. 132).

Items 8 and 9 are connected in that they both deal with the school's mission statement. The question posed: Is the mission statement posted prominently throughout the campus and is it used as a guide and resource for prayer, reflection, and planning. Eighty-nine percent of respondents stated the mission statement was posted prominently, while 85% said it was “usually” or “always” used as a guide and resource for prayer. As cited previously, Sr. Mary



Frances Taymans (1999) suggests the school's mission statement is the core reason for the school's existence. Cook (2004) explains that the school's mission statement "defines, inspires, and guides the school community in all it does." He goes further by saying that as it "serves as the keystone of a school's cultural architecture, it should be showcased at every opportunity." (2004, p. 22). Additionally, Cook suggests that it must drive all decision making in and around the school (p. 23).

The Spiritual Life section has six items that are reflective of the third research question. Item 2 and Item 5 are connected. Item 2 asks if the faculty has opportunities to advance its understanding of Catholicism and what makes a school Catholic, while Item 5 asks if there are annual in-service programs for the development of faculty and staff as spiritual leaders in the Catholic faith tradition. As shown earlier, these two received mixed reviews. For Item 2, nine percent of respondents said they had "no way of judging," 13% stated that "sometimes" they had opportunities, while 37% marked "usually" and another 37% marked "always." Item 5 had an 8% "no way to judge," 16% "sometimes" with 31% "usually" and 41% "always." Fr. Heft was cited earlier stating that administrators needed to bring together the faculty on a monthly basis to delve into the Catholic faith and to discuss the school's mission (2011, p. 132). Paragraph 27 of the Vatican document, *Lay Catholics In Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (Sacred Congregation, 1982) states the following: "The first requirement, then, for a lay educator who wishes to live out his or her ecclesial vocation, is the acquisition of a solid professional formation. In the case of an educator . . . it is not enough that the initial training be at a good level; this must be maintained and deepened, always bringing it up to date." School administrators need to provide opportunities for all members of the staff to deepen their understanding of Catholicism and what

makes their school decidedly Catholic while developing them into spiritual leaders for the school.

Item 4 asks if attention is given to building a Christian community among faculty and staff. Four percent stated they had “no way to judge,” 5% said “rarely,” 14% stated “sometimes,” while 31% responded “usually,” and 41% “always.” The United States bishops, in their 1972 message *To Teach as Jesus Did*, insisted that to be an authentically Catholic school, it must proclaim the message, provide service, and build community (p. 23). In Paragraph 22 of *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (Sacred Congregation, 1982), the Vatican states that “when the educational community is at the same time a Christian community . . . this is what the educational community of a Catholic school must always be striving toward.” The data, along with current literature, suggest that school administrators need to focus attention on building a strong sense of Christian community among faculty, staff, and students.

Items 6 and 7 seek to find if retreats are held for faculty/staff and for board members. Seventy-two percent of participants stated that “usually” or “always” there was a retreat for faculty/staff, while 13% had “no way to judge,” 7% said “rarely,” and 8% “sometimes.” The result for the board retreat was less positive with 47% “no way to judge” and only 21% “always.” Fr. Buetow (1988) speaks to the importance of a faculty retreat, while Fr. Rowe (2003) stresses the need for a board retreat. In light of Research Question 3, it seems prudent to suggest to school and Provincial leadership that retreat programs for faculty/staff and another for board members become policy and held yearly for faculty/staff and every other year for boards of directors.

The last item for this section asks if pastoral care is provided at appropriate levels for students and faculty. Two Vatican documents speak to the pastoral care of both students and

teachers. The document, *The Catholic School*, regarding the pastoral care of teachers, states that it is important to continue the development of teachers through additional educational programs and professional organizations (Sacred Congregation, 1966, Paragraphs 78, 79). In paragraph 19 of *The Religious Dimension of Education* (Sacred Congregation, 1988), the Vatican speaks to the pastoral care of students by saying that when a Catholic school is academically sound but does not present the virtues of the faith, there is need for change. Further, in Paragraph 31, the Vatican calls a genuine Catholic school a “pastoral instrument” that mediates between faith and culture. Thirty-four percent of survey respondents marked “usually” and 49% “always” for a combined 83%. Clearly, a large majority of participants feel the schools are pastorally concerned. Still, 17% may feel disenfranchised, which leaves room for administration to increase efforts to be pastorally responsive to all constituents.

Programs Items 3, 5, 6, and 7 tie in with the third research question. Items 3 and 5 are similar in that they ask if there is adequate institutional support for campus ministry and community service. Apart from the larger than normal “no way to judge” for each of the items, there seems to be consensus that adequate support is given to both programs. As cited previously, Standard 3 of the *National Standards and Benchmarks for Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools* (2012, p. 19), calls for various student opportunities to participate in faith formation programs outside of the classroom experience, including liturgies, prayer services, and Christian service. *To Teach as Jesus Did*, the 1972 document published by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, underscores the three attributes of a Catholic school: message, community, and service. Items 6 and 7 also speak to community service. Item 6 asks if students have time to reflect on and share their experiences concerning their service experience. Again, the *National Standards and Benchmarks*, as well as *To Teach as Jesus Did*, both speak to the

importance of service. Unfortunately, 20% of participants had “no way to judge” if students were provided time for reflection and sharing. Only 54% of faculty members stated that “usually” or “always” were students provided the time and opportunity. Faculty members would be those who might provide the opportunity, and perhaps this occurs only in Religion classes. Administrators need to ensure students have adequate time to reflect on their service. Seventy-eight percent of participants indicated that “usually” or “always” did community service programs relate to the mission of the school and was seen as an integral part of the educational program.

All four of the Ceremony and Traditions items correspond to the third research question. The importance of ceremonies and rituals was stated earlier in the chapter. Cook (2015) spoke to the necessity of linking rituals and ceremonies to the mission of the school as well as to the schools’ founding order and patron. Ninety-five percent of participants indicated “usually” or “always” that the schools had appropriate ceremonies and rituals celebrating their heritage. One survey participant wrote as follows:

The Catholic identity of the school is visible and vibrant. We have daily (prayer), monthly (mass) and annual rituals and practices (Founder's Day, Catholic Schools Week, fundraising efforts, service requirements and opportunities here and abroad) that invite members of the community to engage in Catholic traditions and reflect on Gospel values. Unfortunately, 13% of the respondents indicated they had “no way to judge” if those same rituals and ceremonies were evaluated according to the mission of the school or the needs of the students. The data indicate that the schools have a very good and vibrant program of rituals and ceremonies. It does not show how they are evaluated or even if they are. Administrators might

consider evaluation on an annual basis to ensure that the rituals and ceremonies reflect the mission of the school as well as the needs of the students.

The third item asks if students play a prominent role in planning, organizing, and conducting the school's ceremonies and rituals. One participant wrote, "There are regular religious services, there are opportunities for the students to participate in the services in a variety of capacities." However, this was the only comment regarding student participation that suggests they have a "prominent" role. Last for this section, 87% of respondents stated that honors and awards reflected the mission of the school and its heritage. Cook states, "Symbols, rituals, and stories nourish the Catholic imagination and inspire faith. A Catholic school's symbolic culture is a vehicle of faith formation and charism transmission" (2015, p. 28).

From the analysis of the data, it seems that the schools are already providing steps that will help foster their Catholic identity and the sustainability of Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools. As indicated by the responses, there is great respect for diversity; and mission statements are prominently displayed and used as a guide and resource for prayer, reflection, and planning. There are some programs for faculty and staff members to deepen their understanding of the Catholic faith tradition, discuss what tangible and intangible things make a school Catholic, and to develop themselves as spiritual leaders. However, there were indications that this could be improved. This is an opportunity for school and Province leadership to continue collaborating on programs and policies that would continue informing Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism.

The responses indicated there was room for improvement for schools to build truly Christian communities while attending to the pastoral needs of all constituents. While it was acknowledged there was a retreat program, clarification needs to be undertaken regarding board

participation. This is an invitation for school and Province leaders to solidify the retreat policies at the local (school) and Provincial levels. Overall, there is much support for the schools' campus ministry and community service programs, which are seen to be integral to the overall student educational program. However, the data made it evident that time for students to reflect and share their experiences is integral to their growth as human beings, especially in the Catholic/Christian traditions. Additionally, schools are being asked to broaden their programs to include not only service/learning, but also advocacy—becoming the voice for the voiceless.

Last, for Research Question 3, the data strongly suggest that there are ceremonies and programs already in place that support Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. The only charge to administrative leadership is that students need to be provided more opportunity to play a prominent role in the planning, organizing, and conducting of liturgies, rituals, and ceremonies, all of which reflect the heritage and traditions of the schools. One participant shared the following observation: “The school features a vibrant spiritual life that incorporates faith-based traditions and rituals. Numerous retreat and community service opportunities allow for faculty and students to put their faith into practice on a daily basis. In addition, a general, welcoming, respectful, Catholic atmosphere is present in our classrooms.”

The final survey question connected to the third research question is Item 2 under Admissions, which asks if the admissions policy is clearly stated and followed. Unfortunately, 21% of participants had “no way to judge” this item. Twenty-three percent indicated “usually” with 45% stating “always.” If one were to disregard the “no way to judge” response, the combined “usually” and “always” would be considered very high. However, the data show that admissions policies need to be clearly stated and followed.

#### **Research Question 4**

Research Question 4: Are there differences in the perceptions of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism from one school to another? As stated at the end of Chapter IV, there were no substantial differences uncovered in the data from one school to another. There was quite a bit of unanimity among the schools.

#### **Implications of the Study**

One of the survey participants summed up the experience of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism with the following statement:

The Catholic faith and philosophy of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers are the most significant foundational elements of the school. Every area of school life and methodology is impacted by both. The school climate of a faith-filled, caring environment assists with the deepening of every community member's relationship with God - regardless of faith tradition. Additionally, every program has as goals - learning and spiritual enrichment.

The data provided by the survey participants support this statement throughout. The one unstated implication in the quote centers on the question: What happens when there are no more Christian Brothers in the schools? How does that impact Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism?

Each one of the survey questions was designed to help provide answers to the research questions as well as the two above. From the data submitted, there seems to be an abundance of programs and policies already in place that enlivens, strengthens, and invigorates Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism in the nine schools involved in the study. A large majority of the responses from the School Environment section showed overwhelming support of

Christian Brother charism and Catholic identity. There was a clear indication that school environment portrays an integration of faith with life and culture. The schools make excellent use of symbols, images, and space—all showing evidence of Christian Brother charism and Catholic identity. There is a healthy respect for diversity demonstrated by the schools' cultural awareness programs. Gospel values expressed in the schools' mission statements play a prominent role in programs of study, athletics, activities, and codes of conduct. School mission statements are clearly visible in and around campus and used in publications. Decision making, prayer, and reflection are all done in light of the schools' stated mission. One respondent put it this way:

The Catholic Identity of the school is clearly evident in the symbols and quotations prominently displayed around the school. The underlying message to students of "brotherhood" rooted in Gospel values is strongly communicated. Additionally, the Gospel message of bringing good news to the poor and marginalized is very clearly emphasized through a strong advocacy and campus ministry program.

The survey section centering on Spiritual Life indicated a few minor concerns; but overall, the data show that Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools are well grounded in Gospel values, Christian Brother charism, and their Catholic identity. The data suggest that school leaders should continue developing programs that advance faculty/staff understanding of Catholicism and those things that make a school decidedly Catholic. Also, communicating to all constituents the orientation program for new hires while providing opportunities for all members of the community to develop themselves as spiritual leaders would reinforce the work already done to maintain and strengthen Catholic identity. By ensuring that spiritual life is a priority in planning, school and Province leaders would protect the sanctity of faculty/staff, student, and



board member retreats. This step would also provide additional opportunities to an already impressive array of occasions for prayer, reconciliation, and liturgy. Similarly, this would enable all members of the school to work toward a truly Christian community that works toward a pastoral care program for everyone. One response read as follows:

The school features a vibrant spiritual life that incorporates faith-based traditions and rituals. Numerous retreat and community service opportunities allow for faculty and students to put their faith into practice on a daily basis. In addition, a general, welcoming, respectful, Catholic atmosphere is present in our classrooms.

Under the Programs banner there were a few minor concerns uncovered by the survey responses but nothing that cannot be corrected given some attention. From the data collected, it is clear that students of other faiths are accepted and respected for who they are in Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools. Both the campus ministry and community service programs have well-defined objectives and receive adequate institutional support. The only negative was those members of the community who could not give a qualified response to those questions on the survey. This might prompt school leadership to promote those programs and the institutional support given. The data also showed that community service programs relate directly to the schools' mission and is viewed as an integral part of the overall educational program. Although a majority of responses indicated that applicants are made aware of the schools' mission, Catholic identity, and Christian Brother charism during the hiring process, it would seem prudent for school leaders to clarify when and what information is shared with those applicants. Overall, the programs in Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools are strong and vibrant and reflect a tangible Catholic identity while embracing an energetic Christian Brother charism. One survey participant expressed the following:

I would describe the Catholic identity as excellent in relation to the climate and culture of our school. Programs and services at our school all express our Catholic identity. I have worked here for the past 22 years and seen less and less Christian Brothers involved in the daily life of the school; at the same time, I have seen so many great things become a daily part of our school that reflect our Catholic identity & Christian Brothers Heritage. At the same time, I believe we can always improve what we are doing now.

All of the responses to the Ceremony and Traditions section of the survey strongly suggest that Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools have an abundance of rituals, awards, and ceremonies that celebrate our Catholic identity and promote Christian Brother charism. The response was overwhelmingly positive, stating that there are appropriate ceremonies and rituals held regularly throughout the nine schools surveyed. The data also show that honors and awards reflect the mission and heritage of those nine schools. The data did point out that not all members of the community knew if those same rituals, ceremonies, and traditions were evaluated according to the mission of the schools or the needs of the students. This invites school leadership to review their evaluation processes and share that review with the entire school community. The data were inconclusive regarding students playing a prominent role in the planning, organizing, and conducting of school ceremonies and rituals. However, there were instances in the survey that clearly reflected student roles as evidenced by one respondent's statement: "The percentage of students participating in the peer ministry program is high (approximately 25% of the senior class) and these young men develop and exercise leadership roles in the school community." These data suggest that each school examine the roles students have in their campus ministry and other programs and have serious conversations about how they

might involve students in the design, implementation, and execution of liturgies, prayer services, honors and award ceremonies.

The final section of the survey presented data that reinforce the schools' sense of mission, Catholic identity, and Christian Brother charism during the admissions process. A majority of the respondents expressed overall agreement that the schools' admissions policy is consistent with the respective school's mission. Further, the admissions process does acquaint prospective students and their families with the mission, beliefs, and philosophy of the school. However, data were lacking sufficient agreement to show that respondents thought their school's admissions policy was clearly stated and always followed. This would imply that school administrators might take the time to clarify their respective admissions policies and procedures and openly broadcast them to the entire school community.

### **Recommendations for Practice–School/Local Level**

#### **School Environment**

Overall, this section of the survey received the highest percentage of agreement from respondents. Schools are encouraged to continue effective use of space, images, and symbols that reinforce Catholic identity and enliven Christian Brother charism. As a practice, school leadership should employ the mission statement as a tool for guidance, reflection, and planning at the opening faculty meeting each year. Leadership should consider utilizing the school mission statement as an introduction to the first board of directors meeting for the year. It would be prudent to provide copies of the mission statement to each board member for each board meeting to ensure that any decisions are made in light of the school's mission. To further ensure that all decisions are aligned with the school's stated mission, school and board leaders might consider instituting a Mission Effectiveness Committee at the board level.

Last, the data showed there was some small concern regarding the universality of Catholicism. It would benefit school leadership and the community to assess the school's respect for diversity in light of this each year.

### **Spiritual Life**

While receiving a majority of positive percentages, there were a few items that suggest both Province and school leadership review. In order to help ensure a vibrant, enlightened, and energetic campus spiritual life, school leaders should definitely continue providing appropriate rituals and traditions that demonstrate the schools' Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism along with frequent opportunities for prayer, reconciliation, and liturgy. All schools have the responsibility to provide annual in-service opportunities for faculty and staff to deepen their knowledge and awareness of Catholicism and what makes a school Catholic. This in turn will help them to develop as spiritual leaders in the Catholic faith tradition.

### **Programs**

Although the Programs section of the survey received a majority of agreement from respondents, a few areas of concern did surface. Those in school leadership positions must insist on fostering programs that reflect Catholic identity while strengthening Christian Brother charism. To this end, continued support of campus ministry and community service learning programs are an absolute necessity. The data submitted showed that each of the schools has a fairly substantial Christian service program. It would prove beneficial to the students and the school community to expand this practice to include service learning and advocacy. This would deepen a student's understanding of why service is a Gospel imperative, help explain the reasons why the service is required, and encourage students to become the voice for the voiceless. One of the primary ways for this to occur is for schools to provide appropriate opportunities for

students to reflect and share their service learning experiences. School leadership may also want to consider expanding their commitment to campus ministry by creating three distinct positions: (1) Director of Campus Ministry, responsible for developing the spiritual formation program for students, cultivating and forming student campus ministers, designing and supervising class retreat programs, and overseeing all elements of the school's Spiritual Life, especially as it pertains to students; (2) Director of Student Service Learning (or Assistant Director of Campus Ministry), who works closely with the Director of Campus Ministry to coordinate Christian Service Learning Programs and oversee student advocacy programs; and (3) Director of Mission Integration, who is responsible for developing the spiritual formation program for adult members of the community, supervise curricular advocacy efforts, and ensure presence of Edmund Rice Christian Brother charism.

As the number of active Edmund Rice Christian Brothers continues to decline, it is important to have in place programs, policies, and practices that can enable the Congregation leadership to maintain the schools' Catholic identity as well as Christian Brother charism. School leaders must practice hiring intentionally by employing teachers and staff members who are Catholic, well versed in their faith, and who practice it. They must ensure that applicants are made aware of the schools' mission, Catholic identity, and Christian Brother heritage so that the applicant can see if he/she can "buy into" the schools' culture. Once hired, school leaders need to have an orientation program for new staff, further educating them in the mission, philosophy, Catholic identity, Christian Brother charism, and history of the school.

### **Ceremony and Traditions**

This section of the survey garnered a very positive majority of agreement. Only one item needs serious consideration—student involvement in organizing, planning, and conducting

school liturgies, rituals, and ceremonies. The leadership of the Christian Brother schools must continue developing and offering liturgies, ceremonies, and rituals that are consistent with the school's value systems and stated mission. They also need to ensure that each school develops a curriculum for the study of the life of Blessed Edmund Rice, founder of the Congregation of Christian Brothers. Students new to the school must be met with an orientation program that includes the history of the school, the values of the Christian Brothers, and the life of Blessed Edmund Rice. Last, school leaders must expand programs that train students to take on the responsibility of planning, organizing, and executing liturgies, prayer services, awards ceremonies, retreats, and other opportunities for student involvement at appropriate levels.

### **Admissions**

Of the five areas of the survey, the section on Admissions gives the most pause for concern. Although the majority of responses were "usually" or "always," the "no way to judge" option was used more frequently than in the other four areas of the survey. Leadership of each Edmund Rice Christian Brother school should review their admissions policies and procedures to ensure they align with the school's stated mission. Further, they should ensure that those policies and procedures are published, stated clearly, and understood by all members of the faculty and staff. This practice would help guarantee a transparent admissions process so that everyone acknowledges that the policies and procedures are followed.

### **Recommendations for Policy–School/Local Level**

#### **School Environment**

Although no "red flags" were raised with regard to school mission statements, it would prove worthwhile for each school to establish a policy to review their mission statement annually. As times change, so do students as well as the schools' demographics. For example,

when the Congregation of Christian Brothers first arrived in the United States, they founded schools to educate the sons of Irish immigrants. However, 120 years later, there are very few sons of recent Irish immigrants in the schools. As times change, school leadership must ensure that the schools' mission is reflective of that and that administrative practice is always aligned with the mission. Annual review of programs of study, activities, athletics, codes of conduct and discipline will help ensure they reflect Gospel values and the schools' mission and philosophy statements.

### **Spiritual Life**

As mentioned earlier, this section of the survey received general agreement across most items. However, school leadership might consider establishing a policy that ensures the school's spiritual life is a priority in planning. This action may very well assure there is an annual faculty retreat; promote opportunities that foster the building of a Christian community among faculty, staff, students and parents; and ensure pastoral care of all members of the community.

There was only one item in the survey that really stood out with regard to negative acknowledgement. No one group or school had a majority of "usually" or "always" for the item concerning a retreat for members of the board of directors. It may prove very beneficial for Province leadership, working in collaboration with school and board leaders, to establish a policy stating that board members must engage in a one-day retreat at least every two years. This retreat needs to center on the mission of the school, its Catholic identity, and Christian Brother charism.

### **Admissions**

As stated above, of the five survey sections, the Admissions section had the least agreement overall of "usually" and "always." The data suggest that school leadership

establishing a policy that admissions materials are consistent with the mission of the school, contains information regarding the school's beliefs, philosophy, history, and Christian Brother heritage, and that the process is transparent to all constituents.

### **Other Considerations**

The data were collected from nine Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools across continental United States and Hawaii. The information offered above details recommendations that be can be instituted at the local school level. However, there is a large context here since all of the schools belong to the Edmund Rice network of schools in North America. This allows for programs and policies that can be offered at a Provincial level, inviting all of the Christian Brother schools to participate.

The Edmund Rice Christian Brothers already offer a number of cross-school programs that bring representatives of the various schools together at different times of the year. In September, the Province offers a student leadership workshop called ACTION and has been doing so for over 40 years. Three students are selected from each of the schools to attend the four-day workshop designed to develop Edmund Rice leaders. The ACTION workshop provides the students with an experience of "brotherhood" that transcends the individual school. The workshop's design gives each student the understanding that he/she belongs to something much larger than the school they represent. It is an opportunity to enhance student understanding of the Edmund Rice Christian Brother charism which he/she can then share back home.

There is also a Province-wide faculty/staff retreat entitled Called and Gifted. This program brings educators from around the Province together for a four-day retreat which is centered on the life and charism of Blessed Edmund Rice.



The Province Office of Educational Services sponsors a school leaders' retreat in October of each year and a school leaders' business meeting in March. These are opportunities for the leadership of the schools to interact with Provincial leadership and with each other.

Last, the Province sponsors a one-day retreat/orientation for new board members. Similar to the student, faculty/staff experiences, Board members become increasingly aware that they belong to a larger group working toward the same ends across the continent. It is also an opportunity to educate board members with regard to mission, philosophy, and Catholic identity as well as Christian Brother charism.

### **Recommendations for Practice–Province Level**

In light of the above information, Province leadership, working with school leaders, might consider calling for a Province-wide assembly of school administrators, faculty, staff, and board members to continue conversations on the following topics: mission, governance, funding, Catholic identity, and Christian Brother charism. Additionally, it may help to strengthen Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism to gather Campus Ministers from all the schools to discuss best practices for ensuring those items.

These are just a few recommendations that will help reinforce, maintain, and build upon Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism over the next few years. It seems, from the analysis of the surveys which the nine schools involved in the study submitted, that each school has a firm foundation rooted in its Catholic faith and Christian Brother heritage.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The data collected from the survey indicate that the Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools enjoy a strong, vibrant, resilient, and enlivened sense of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. It also suggests a few areas where school and province leadership might work

together to enhance and secure those things—tangible and intangible—that make the schools decidedly Catholic in the Blessed Edmund Rice tradition. However, the study is not exhaustive. There are still areas open to future research.

This study was designed to gauge the perceptions of the adult members of the school community with regard to Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. The research was not intended to measure student thoughts about the Catholic identity of their school. It would be interesting to ask senior students their impressions of Catholic identity as it relates to school environment, spiritual life, programs, ceremonies and traditions, and admissions. There might even be an opportunity to do a longitudinal study by surveying freshmen at the end of their first year and again just prior to graduation. How did their perceptions of Catholic identity change over the three years? What programs were most effective at conveying Catholic values and Christian Brother ideals?

Although not part of this study, but uncovered by the data, was the difference in perceptions between faculty/staff and administrators/board members. For much of the survey, when areas of concern were uncovered, there was usually a difference in the perceptions of faculty/staff and administrators/board members. What are some of causes for the differences in perception? Is there a major difference in the way administrator and faculty members view the same issue?

The design of the survey did not ask for specifics about any one program or policy that engages members of the community in building or maintaining Catholic identity and/or Christian Brother charism. Are there programs and policies already in place in one school that could possibly benefit another? What are the best practices already in place that can be shared from one school to another?

One last thought about Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. As mentioned, the study was designed for faculty, staff, administrators, and board members, many of whom are alumni of Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools. Those members of the staff of the nine schools who are alumni “buy into” the message, the community, and the service. However, there are countless thousands of alumni across the nation who may have varying perceptions of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism. It would be most interesting to design a study involving alumni from the Christian Brother schools. Figure 18 (created by Thomas R. Leto), compiled from the research, shows those concepts indicative of a strong sense of Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism in those Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools involved in the study.

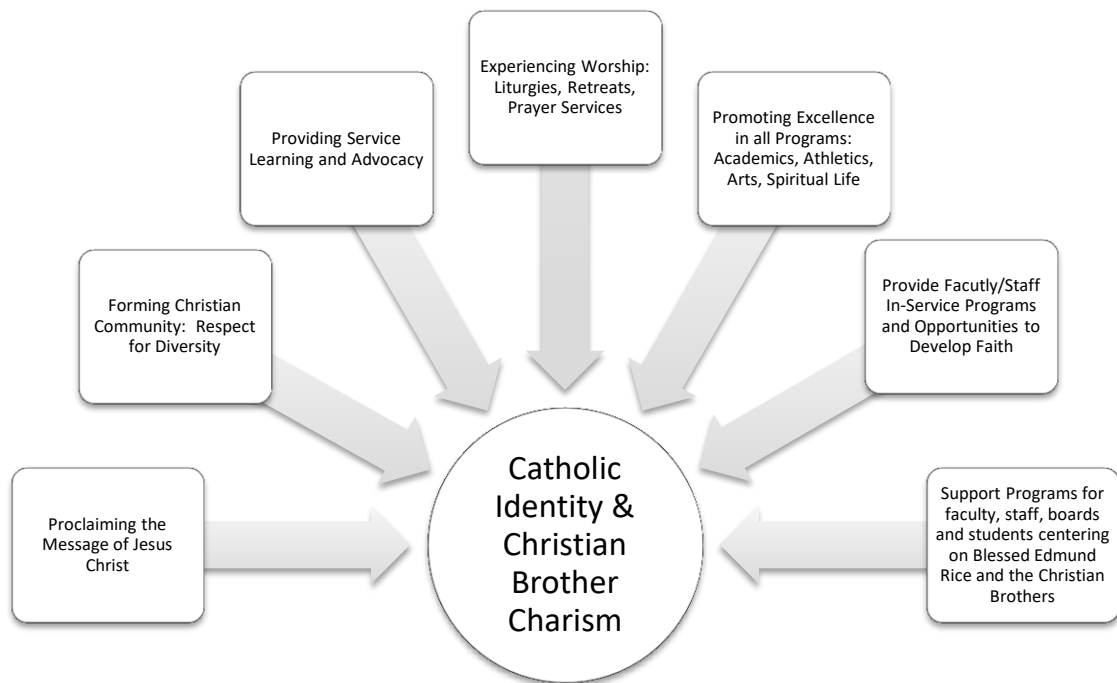


Figure 18. *Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism.*

The importance, the impact, the result of Christian Brother education in the United States is extremely difficult to measure. However, this study provides some valuable insights into the workings of the schools and those programs and policies that help to foster Catholic identity. As the research points out, Catholic identity is at the core of every Catholic school.

Paragraph 154 in the document *To Teach as Jesus Did*, published by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1972, summed it up:

Like the mission and message of Jesus Christ, the Church's educational mission is universal—for all men, at all times, in all places. In our world and in our nations, the mission of Christian education is of critical importance. The truth of Jesus Christ must be taught, the love of Jesus Christ must be extended.

For the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers, we do this through a distinctively Catholic environment steeped in the heritage and traditions of Blessed Edmund Rice and his followers.

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## Appendix A

### Survey Instrument

## Edmund Rice Christian Brother Catholic Identity Index

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to assess the Catholic identity of Edmund Rice Christian Brother high schools in the United States. Christian Brother high schools have served young men and women of North America since 1876. For many of those years, there was a large contingent of Christian Brothers teaching and administering in the schools. Over time, the number of vowed religious has decreased on those same campuses. Over the past 25 years, there has been a concerted effort to strengthen the Catholic identity of each Christian Brother school. All Christian Brother schools are at a crucial point in their history.

This survey will help plan for the next five to ten years. The survey will involve only administrators, faculty/staff, and members of the respective Boards of Directors. Each questionnaire will be scored and reported out by school and in the aggregate.

Your participation in this study is purely voluntary. **Consent to participate is indicated by returning the survey to the researcher.** All surveys are anonymous other than asking for some demographic information as follows:

**Kindly check the appropriate box.**

Staff  Faculty  Administrator  Board Member

- All Hallows High School, Bronx, NY
- Bergen Catholic High School, Oradell, NJ
- Brother Rice High School, Bloomfield Hills, MI
- Brother Rice High School, Chicago, IL
- Catholic Memorial High School, West Roxbury, MA
- Damien Memorial High School, Honolulu, HA
- Iona Preparatory School, New Rochelle, NY
- Palma School, Salinas, CA
- St. Laurence High School, Burbank, IL

**Directions:** Using the code at the right, please indicate your agreement with each item by checking the appropriate box.

**SCALE CODE**

<p><b>5 - Always</b></p> <p><b>4 - Usually</b></p> <p><b>3 - Sometimes</b></p> <p><b>2 - Rarely</b></p> <p><b>1 - No way to Judge</b></p>	<p><b>Use these codes to indicate your agreement with each of the statements.</b></p>
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<b>School Environment</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1. The school environment portrays an identifiable integration of faith with life and culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The Catholic identity of the school is immediately clear through use of symbols and space.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Images reflecting the Catholic identity and heritage of the school are prominently displayed throughout the school facility.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Symbols reflecting the charism of the Christian Brothers are evident.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The universality of Catholicism is reflected in the school's cultural awareness programs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Respect for diversity is articulated and practiced at the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Programs of study, activities, athletics, codes of conduct and discipline reflect the Gospel values expressed in the mission and philosophy statements of your school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. The mission statement is prominently displayed in the school and in publications.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. The mission statement is used as guide and resource for prayer, reflection and planning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Spiritual Life</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1. Appropriate attention is given to rituals and traditions that demonstrate the school's Catholic identity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The faculty has opportunities to advance its understanding of Catholicism and what makes a school Catholic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. There is an appropriate orientation program for new members of the faculty and staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Attention is given to building a Christian community among faculty and staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. In-service programs annually consider the development of all faculty and staff as spiritual leaders in the Catholic faith tradition.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. A faculty retreat is held annually	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. The Board of Directors participates in an annual retreat centered on the school's mission statement and Catholic identity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. The retreat program for students is well defined with the mission of the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Regular opportunities for prayer, reconciliation and liturgy are integral parts of school life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Pastoral care for students and faculty is provided at an appropriate level.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. The spiritual life of the community is a priority in planning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Programs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1. The school community and school programs respect the presence of students of other faiths.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The campus ministry program has clearly defined objectives reflecting the mission of	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

the school.

- |  |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3. Adequate institutional support is given to campus ministry.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Community service programs have clearly defined objectives and requirements.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Adequate institutional support is given to community service.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Time is provided for students to reflect on and share about community service experiences with fellow students.                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Community service programs relate to the mission of the school and are seen as integral to the educational program of the students. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. During the hiring process, applicants are made aware of the School's mission, Catholic identity and Christian Brother charism.      |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |

### **Ceremony and Traditions**

**1            2            3            4            5**

- |  |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Appropriate ceremonies and rituals that celebrate the heritage and value system of the school are regularly held. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Ceremonies and rituals are evaluated according to the mission of the school and the needs of the students.        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Students play a prominent part in planning, organizing and conducting the school's ceremonies and rituals.        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Honors and awards reflect the mission of the school and its heritage.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### **Admissions**

**1            2            3            4            5**

- |  |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The admissions policy is consistent with the mission of the school. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. The admissions policy is stated clearly and followed.               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- 3. The admissions process acquaints students and their families with the mission, beliefs and philosophy of the school.

How would you describe the Catholic identity of the school in relation to climate, culture and integration of programs and services?

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Thank you for your participation in this study.

Reference

Taymans, Mary Frances. (1999), *Validating the Vision - An Assessment Protocol for Mission Effectiveness, Institutional Accreditation, and Strategic Planning in the Catholic High School*. National Catholic Educational Association, Washington, DC. Used by permission.

## Appendix B



November 8, 2017

Bro. Thomas R. Leto

Dear Brother Leto,

The Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board has reviewed the information you have submitted addressing the concerns for your proposal entitled "Catholic Identity in Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools in the United States." Your research protocol is hereby accepted as revised and is categorized as exempt.

Please note that, where applicable, subjects must sign and must be given a copy of the Seton Hall University current stamped Letter of Solicitation or Consent Form before the subjects' participation. All data, as well as the investigator's copies of the signed Consent Forms, must be retained by the principal investigator for a period of at least three years following the termination of the project.

Should you wish to make changes to the IRB approved procedures, the following materials must be submitted for IRB review and be approved by the IRB prior to being instituted:

- Description of proposed revisions;
- *If applicable*, any new or revised materials, such as recruitment fliers, letters to subjects, or consent documents; and
- *If applicable*, updated letters of approval from cooperating institutions and IRBs.

At the present time, there is no need for further action on your part with the IRB.

*In harmony with federal regulations, none of the investigators or research staff involved in the study took part in the final decision.*

Sincerely,

Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph.D.  
Professor  
Director, Institutional Review Board

cc: Dr. Anthony Colella

**Office of Institutional Review Board**

Presidents Hall • 400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079 • Tel: 973.313.6314 • Fax: 973.275.2361 • [www.shu.edu](http://www.shu.edu)

**REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH, DEMONSTRATION OR  
RELATED ACTIVITIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**

All material must be typed.

PROJECT TITLE: **Catholic Identity in Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools in the United States**

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT:

In making **this application**, I(we) certify that I(we) have read and understand the University's policies and procedures governing research, development, and related activities involving human subjects. I (we) shall comply with the letter and spirit of those policies. I(we) further acknowledge my(our) obligation to (1) obtain written approval of significant deviations from the originally-approved protocol BEFORE making those deviations, and (2) report immediately all adverse effects of the study on the subjects to the Director of the Institutional Review Board, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ 07079.

RESEARCHER(S) Bro. Thomas R. Leto 6/24/17  
DATE

\*\*Please print or type out names of all researchers below signature.  
Use separate sheet of paper, if necessary.\*\*

My signature indicates that I have reviewed the attached materials of my student advisee and consider them to meet IRB standards.

RESEARCHER'S FACULTY ADVISOR Dr. Anthony Colella 6/13/17  
DATE

\*\*Please print or type out name below signature\*\*

The request for approval submitted by the above researcher(s) was considered by the IRB for Research Involving Human Subjects Research at the Sept 2017 meeting.

The application was approved  not approved  by the Committee. Special conditions were  were not  set by the IRB. (Any special conditions are described on the reverse side.)

DIRECTOR, Mary T. Puziello, Ph.D. 11/8/17  
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL  
REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH  
DATE