Understanding the Diversity of Catholic Higher Education: A New Empirical Guide for Evaluating the Influence of Catholic Identity

PERRY L. GLANZER (iD)
Professor of Educational Foundations
Baylor University, Waco, Texas, USA

THEODORE F. COCKLE (iD)
Educational Leadership
Baylor University, Waco, Texas, USA

JESSICA MARTIN
Educational Leadership
Baylor University, Waco, Texas, USA

SCOTT ALEXANDER
Educational Leadership
Baylor University, Waco, Texas, USA

Although scholars have often described faith-based universities in America as "church-related," we argue this classification tells us virtually nothing about how the Catholic identity influences the mission, rhetoric, curriculum, or policies of Catholic institutions. Although Morey and Piderit (2006, Catholic higher education: A culture in crisis*) created a more sophisticated four-part typology of Catholic institutions, we find that students, parents, administrators, and scholars, particularly scholars interested in institutional secularization, need a better means of empirical analysis to determine the degree to which the Catholic identity of an institution influences key administrative decisions of the university. Thus, we propose a method of content analysis that can quantify how the Catholic identity shapes key administrative, curricular, and cocurricular decisions and thereby places Catholic institutions upon a continuum. We then apply our new Operationalizing Faith Identity Guide (OFIG) to Catholic institutions in the United States to demonstrate the helpfulness of its application.*

Replication: The data needed to duplicate and replicate the findings in the paper will be made available immediately following publication.

Keywords: Catholic higher education, Church-related higher education, faith-based higher education, institutional identity.

Since Protestant denominations sponsored most early institutions of American higher education, higher education scholars have primarily told the story of American faith-based higher education through the lens of Protestant denominational affiliation. As a result of this lens, they have described faith-based and largely Protestant institutions, as "denominational" (Astin 1962; Gross 1968; Tewksbury 1932), "sectarian" (Gellhorn and Greenawalt 1970; Hofstadter and Smith 1961), "church-based" (Budde and Wright 2004), "church-affiliated" (Astin and Lee 1972), and most often, "church-related" (Benne 2001; Cuninggim 1994; Parsonage 1978; Patton 1940; Wicke 1964).

When trying to understand Catholic institutions, there are multiple problems with these descriptors. For one, Catholic institutions may be sponsored by religious orders, but never denominations or sects. The major problem, however, is that the terms reveal virtually nothing about the core identity of an institution or the nature of their relationship to the Church and to the institution's embodiment of the Catholic identity. For example, consider the most popular recent term, "church-related." One can be "related" to another person, institution, or idea—a big difference, however, exists between being a sibling and being a distant fourth cousin. Just as we have a wide variety of family relationships, faith-related institutions have a wide variety of relationships with their religious tradition.

This ambiguity creates difficulties for students, parents, faculty and staff, administrators, and scholars. For example, based on the three dozen responses one of us received to an article about choosing a Christian college (Glanzer, 2021), future students, parents, faculty, and staff are desperate for better ways to understand and distinguish among faith-based universities as they weigh what may be a $250,000 decision. Although less a matter of cost, future faculty and staff are equally interested in the faith commitments of various institutions as they make choices about their career. Finally, academics debating questions of institutional secularization also need a clear set of indicators for evaluating the degree to which administrators and faculty differentiate their institution from secular norms (Sommerville 1998). Thus, we need a method that would help students, parents, future faculty and staff, academics, and the public in general understand how administrators apply the Catholic identity when governing their institutions.

To help promote this empirical understanding, we need different terminology unhampered by broad, outdated categories that can employ empirical markers agreed upon by a wide range of higher-education scholars, whether Protestant or Catholic, religious, or nonreligious. Although Benne (2001) and Morey and Piderit (2006) proposed two helpful alternative typologies to address the problem we mentioned, we find important limitations when using these typologies to understand specific institutions within a larger context. Thus, we set forth a method of evaluating the influence of a Catholic identity on institutional decision making that uses 12 categories of markers related to an institution's mission, rhetoric, membership requirements, curriculum, cocurricular, and governance. We then apply the method of evaluation, the Operationalizing Faith Identity Guide (OFIG), to institutions associated with Catholicism to provide a clearer, empirically grounded understanding of the diverse ways that institutions demonstrate their commitment to a Catholic identity.

Historical and Literature Review

For the first 250 years of American higher education, Catholic institutions remained on the margins and in the shadow of Protestant institutions (Tewksbury 1932/2011). In 1907, the undergraduate enrollment at Catholic colleges and universities totaled less than 9800 students (less than 3 percent of total college enrollment at the time) and not one Catholic institution offered a doctoral degree (Leahy 1991:4; National Center for Education Statistics 2021:table 301.20). Only in the early 20th century did Catholic higher education in the United States begin to achieve the dominance it now has among faith-based institutions (Gleason, 1992, 1995; Hassenger 1967; Schier and Russett 2002). For example, by 1940, Catholic enrollment had swelled to 162,000 students at over 200 colleges and universities comprising close to 11 percent of the total college enrollment (Gleason 1992:234; National Center for Education Statistics 2021:table 301.20).

Despite these gains, the early ways scholars classified faith-based institutions remained decidedly Protestant. The term "church-related" gained prevalence with the formation of the National Council of Church-Related Colleges in 1932 and was a Protestant invention (Patton 1940).

The use of the term continued to grow throughout the last half of the 20th century because it provided a helpful way to disguise the growing secularization of elite Protestant institutions (Marsden 2021).

Of course, Catholic higher education was encountering its own struggles with modernity and secularization as evidenced by the Land O' Lakes Statement (1967), but, unlike the secularization of elite Protestant universities such as Yale and Princeton, elite Catholic institutions maintained their Catholic identity and mission during this time (Gleason 1995). Still, more recent scholars such as Burtchaell (1998) and Morey and Piderit (2006) have suggested that Catholic institutions continue to face the danger of disengaging from their Catholic mission.

The application of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* to the United States was a response by the Catholic Church to maintain, preserve, and enhance the Catholic identity of higher education. *Ex Corde Ecclesia* certainly promoted increased contemporary scholarly interest in evaluating the Catholic identity of faculty (Sullins 2004), mission statements (Estanek, James, and Norton 2006), vision statements (Abelman and Dalessandro 2008), websites (Gambescia and Paolucci 2011), and marketing strategies (Milian and Rizk 2018) of Catholic institutions in the United States.

Sullins (2004) examined the *Ex Corde* claim that a critical mass of faculty (50 percent) should be maintained to preserve the Catholic character of the institution. Based on a sample of 1290 faculty at 100 institutions, he determined:

> Institutions having a majority of Catholic faculty exhibit four properties consistent with stronger Catholic identity: a policy of preferential hiring for Catholics ("hiring for mission"), a higher proportion of Catholic students, higher faculty aspiration for Catholic identity, and longer faculty tenure in the institution (p. 83).

Thus, he concluded that the 50% critical mass was important for preserving and enhancing the Catholic mission.

Estanek, James, and Norton (2006) identified mission statements as the more public-facing articulation of various components of institutional identity, and their consequent content analysis of mission statements affirmed the role mission statements played in directly identifying an institution as Catholic, as was the case in 94.5 percent of the institutions studied. Also worth noting, 42 percent of studied mission statements articulated themes related to the Catholic intellectual tradition, and 76 percent referred to the history and tradition of their religious order (Estanek, James, and Norton 2006).

Similarly, Abelman and Dalessandro's (2008) assessment of 21 Catholic university and college vision statements found them to be significantly clearer, more compelling, and more complex than those at other religious universities regarding priorities and key characteristics (Abelman and Dalessandro 2008). Yet, they also noted that the institutions did not share the statements with the university community as much as other religious schools, nor were they used to articulate the practical benefits of a Catholic education.

Gambescia and Paolucci's (2011) study comes the closest to the type of study we undertook. In light of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*'s charge for every Catholic institution "to make known its Catholic identity . . . in some. . . public document" (2000:n. 2 section 3), they evaluated 206 Catholic institutions' public websites for indicators of Catholic identity using the following seven markers: Catholic on home page, affiliation with sponsoring Catholic entity, lead academic statement (i.e., evidence of academics outcomes directly impacted by Catholic identity), human resources page (i.e., communicated expectation that prospective employees recognize and respect the Catholic mission and purpose), Catholic worship, Catholic social service, and Catholic heritage. They found, on average, that the institutions had 3.7 of these seven markers. The most common were mention of a Catholic sponsoring entity (89 percent) and Catholic worship (77 percent).

Together, such research has contributed to a more robust understanding of institutional markers of Catholic identity, yielding insight that allows researchers to build upon the helpful but limited typologies that emerged in 2001 and 2006.

Two Helpful Four-Part Typologies

Although a typology did not immediately emerge that helped make sense of how different Catholic institutions were responding to various identity pressures, researchers Benne (2001) and Morey and Piderit (2006) developed typologies for evaluating Christian institutions according to their identity markers. For sociologists and historians in particular, these typologies are helpful in thinking through conversations about institutional secularization (Sommerville 1998). In order to determine whether an institution is secularizing, we need a set of indicators that can help us judge whether such secularization is indeed happening. The following two sections describe the recent typologies that inform the set of indicators we develop.

Robert Benne

Benne's typology (2001) helped address the controversy brewing over "Christian" and "church-related" language by proposing a more complex typology. The typology relied upon nine different identity markers: (1) Public relevance of Christian vision; (2) Public rhetoric; (3) Membership requirements; (4) Religion/theology department; (5) Religion/theology required courses; (6) Chapel; (7) Ethos; (8) Support by church; and (9) Governance. This specificity created a sophisticated typology that noted the multiple areas of an institution's culture where the faith identity could shape the institution. Yet, Benne's typology was still largely Protestant in nature. Unlike formerly Protestant institutions, even progressive Catholic institutions still emphasize the Catholic identity and mission of the institution. In addition, Benne used Protestant terms in his evaluative framework such as "required chapel" that does not apply in a Catholic context where Mass is always available but hardly ever required.

Morey and Piderit

Although in their 2006 work, *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis*, Morey and Piderit did not mention Benne's (2001) work at all, it is likely that they were influenced by it. They clearly wanted to create a different four-part typology to help readers understand and classify Catholic institutions. Thus, although the four-part typology has similarities to Benne's approach, it also demonstrated some important differences.

The first type of institution Morey and Piderit described as Catholic *Immersion* institutions. These schools usually admit only Catholic faculty, staff, and students (with some exceptions) and seek to educate students for service in the Church and to society. They require four or more courses in Catholic theology/philosophy, literature, and church history, and they enforce Catholic moral norms in cocurricular life. Institutions provide numerous opportunities for attending Mass and there is a strong cultural emphasis of participating in daily or weekly Mass. Catholic practices such as "prayerful, aesthetic, and regular celebration of the Eucharist" (p. 71) are encouraged.

The second type of institution, the Catholic *Persuasion* model, seeks to give all students knowledge and appreciation of the Catholic tradition, regardless of whether they are Catholic themselves. The institutions keep Catholic faculty and staff in the majority and a majority of recruited students are Catholic. In the curriculum, they require one or two courses on Catholic theology/philosophy (usually moral theology and moral philosophy). Similar to the Immersion model they have separate male and female residence halls and Catholic social norms are enforced. Student groups at variance with Catholic teaching are not sanctioned (e.g., pro-choice group).

The Catholic *Diaspora* institutions have different goals. They are meant to be a winsome Catholic witness to the region in a way that attracts non-Catholics. Thus, although the senior administration is required to be Catholic, the majority of faculty and students are not Catholic. These schools may require one general theology course and do not enforce Catholic standards of conduct in cocurricular life—except in certain cases of campus speakers or student groups (e.g., a pro-choice group). Mass is provided but participation is modest, and the institution provides support for other religious traditions.

Finally, Catholic *Cohort* institutions seek to help students gain a general appreciation of religious diversity and provide for a small group of leaders to promote the Catholic tradition. Thus, beyond upper administration and perhaps the chair of the theology department, there are no expectations of Catholic identity and commitment among faculty, staff, or students. Speakers and student groups with positions contrary to the Catholic Church are welcome. A general religion course is required, and other religions receive institutional support. These institutions support the Catholic tradition by providing resources for Catholic studies program, institutions, or centers. It should be noted that in all four of these institutional types, the president and the trustees are expected to be Catholic—usually informed, committed, and practicing Catholics.

The difference between Benne (2001) and Morey and Piderit's (2006) typology, is that with Morey and Piderit the more pluralistic institutions are not seen as unfaithful to the tradition or as secularized but are instead understood as different ways of expressing a Catholic mission. They recognize that there may be strategic Catholic reasons for not emphasizing the Catholic identity in certain areas. Benne implies in his typology that failing to consider the Christian identity in a particular area is a compromise. Of course, the weakness of Morey and Piderit's approach may be that one excuses the compromise and lack of consideration of the Catholic identity in the name of mission when it may in fact be simple unfaithfulness or compromise.

The Limits of Both Approaches

Overall, both typologies clearly improved upon the old simplistic distinctions. Yet, one of the difficulties with both approaches is that they make it difficult to evaluate specific institutions. For example, an institution may fit into one type in some areas (e.g., in the number of required religion courses), but may not fit that same type in another area (e.g., cocurricular expectations). Although this ambiguity can be helpful at times, it creates confusion around how to understand and characterize institutions. A classification approach is needed that uses easily applicable empirical markers to evaluate how faith informs (or does not inform) a variety of decisions at all types of institutions.

Thus, the central idea for this paper is that instead of providing a four-group typology into which an institution must fit based on an evaluation of somewhat ambiguous markers related to the four categories, it would be much better, from an empirical vantage point, to identify Catholic institutions along a continuum. Every institution has certain publicly expressed markers that indicate where and whether the Catholic identity made a difference in key administrative decisions regarding the institution's life.

We believe a numbering system that identifies and adds up these markers can provide a better appraisal of how a given institution prioritizes and enacts its faith-based identity. Furthermore, the evaluation of each distinct marker could be easily debated and verified by any party, whether by the institution itself or a scholar of any religious identity (including none). Finally, we believe this type of empirical guide will avoid making classifications regarding Christian identity a doctrinal test or what Cuninggim (1994) termed a "battle cry."

Method

Our study used the following definition of college or university as borrowed from Glanzer, Carpenter, and Lantinga's (2011) study of international Christian colleges and universities. They (and we) defined a college or university as an institution that is a baccalaureate college, master's college and university, or doctoral-granting institution (p. 725). Like Glanzer, Carpenter, and Lantinga (2011), we did not include "special-focus institutions… [like] seminaries, teacher's colleges or schools of engineering and technology, or associate's colleges" (p. 726).

Empirical Framework

In total, based on our review of Benne (2001), Morey and Piderit (2006), literature indicating what would help retain a Catholic identity (e.g., Abelman and Dalessandro 2008; Briel, Goodpaster, and Naughton 2021; Estanek, James, and Norton 2006; Gambescia and Paolucci 2011; Milian and Rizk 2018; Sullins 2004), and our own empirical research (cite withheld for review), we determined that there are 12 key administrative decisions that can be influenced by an institution's faith-based identity. Moreover, most of these decisions can be classified with clearly defined criteria. Below we outline how we set up our classification system:

(1) Mission: Here, we used the following codes to classify the *type* of mission statement:
   - Catholic identity affirmed (C) or Catholic Order and Catholic Identity (COI) affirmed (2)
   - O/D: Only Religious Order/Diocese affirmed (1)
   - N: Neither identity language exists in the mission statement (0)
(2) Vice President for Mission, Priest, or Catholic College Chaplain on the Executive Cabinet (1). Although these positions may exist at an institution and not be on the Executive Cabinet, because the decision to place this role on the Executive Committee suggests the person would have a higher level of authority to influence the direction of the university, we only scored those who were on the cabinet.
(3) First-Page Rhetoric: We looked at the first page of the website to see how they identified themselves
   - Explicitly Christian/Catholic (EC): When we talk about explicitly Christian/Catholic language, we do not simply mean moral language (e.g., "come learn how to serve"). We only identified theological reasoning or language (1)
   - No distinctively Christian/Catholic language (NC): (0)
(4) "About Us" Rhetoric: We looked at the "About Us" webpage, and used the following coding system:
   - Explicitly Christian/Catholic (EC): (1)
   - No distinctively Christian language (NC): (0)
(5) Membership Requirements: We looked at their admissions pages and faculty/staff hiring pages to understand if their institutions require students, faculty, and staff to sign or affirm statements of faith or Catholic identity. Then, we used the following coding system:
   - Membership Requirements for Students: A student must profess to be a Catholic to attend (1)
   - Membership Requirements for Faculty: The official Catholic application of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* in the United States reads,

> the university should strive to recruit and appoint Catholics as professors so that, to the extent possible, those committed to the witness of the faith will constitute a majority of the faculty. All professors are expected to be aware of and committed to the Catholic mission and identity of their institutions. (The Application of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* to the United States 2000).

If an institution indicated no departure from this teaching or required membership for only a particular department (e.g., the theology department), we scored them a 0.5.
If a faculty member must be Catholic to be employed at the institution, we scored the institution a one.

- Membership Requirements for Staff (Y/N): A staff member must profess to be a Catholic to be employed at the institution (1).

Membership Requirements for president. The president must be a Catholic (1). The official Catholic application of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* in the United States reads, "The university president should be a Catholic." (*The Application of Ex Corde Ecclesiae to the United States* 2000). However, a footnote reads,

> When a candidate who is not a Catholic is being considered for appointment as president of a Catholic university, the university should consult with the competent ecclesiastical authority about the matter. In all cases, the president should express his or her commitment to the university's Catholic mission and identity (online, footnote 36).

Thus, we checked to see if in some cases the president could not be a Catholic. If those institutions allowed the president not to be Catholic, we scored them a 0.5.

- Christian/Catholic Requirement for Governance: Are there any church/denominational/order requirements for being on the governance board? All (1); Some (0.5); None (0)

  (6) Theology, Religion, Christian Studies, Bible, and so on: This marker refers to the name of the institutions' department that deals with religion, Christianity, Bible, and so on. The major reason we use this marker is because it indicates an administrative decision to focus exclusively on theology (which indicates a focus on the Christian tradition) versus religious studies (which includes the study of non-Christian traditions and mirrors what would occur in a secular university). To put it another way, secular or secularized institutions do not have theology departments. They have religious studies or religion departments.
      - Theology, Christian Studies, or Similar Distinctly Christian Department Title (1)
      - Religion (0)
  (7) Required Bible/Theology Classes:
      - Required *Christian* Bible/Theology Classes (1–10). We decided to use the number of courses instead of total hours, since we thought the number of courses is the most significant indicator of a particular commitment to the Christian faith identity. The largest number of required theology courses we found among Catholic institutions was 10.
  (8) Christian/Catholic Institute, Center, or Program: The center, institute, or program is not simply moral (e.g., focus on business ethics or social justice), but it focuses on fostering a Catholic identity.
      - One or more (1)
      - None (0)
  (9) Chapel/Mass: This section evaluates the presence of chapel or Mass on campus. We should note that this presence is only a small part of chaplaincy services; however, since secular institutions also have chaplaincy services, we decided to highlight this particular element.
      - Required Chapel/Mass (2)
      - Voluntary University Chapel/Mass available and privileged (1)
      - No University-sponsored Chapel/Mass (0)
  (10) Student groups.
      - The religious student groups on campus are exclusively Christian (1) One limitation with this coding is that it not possible to tell if this is an administrative decision or simply a lack of religious diversity. Still, either way it says something about the campus ethos.
      - MF: Other religious groups (0). The approach to student organizations is similar to that of a state university.
      - NRG: No student religious groups on the campus (0)

(11) Code of Conduct: *We located the code of conduct and* classified it as follows:
- C: "Christian"—the student handbook makes reference to explicitly Christian language (theological, biblical, Catholic social teaching) to justify a particular moral position (e.g., sexual conduct forbidden outside of marriage between a man and woman justified by Catholic theology or social teaching) (2)
- M: "Moral"—this community covenant does not use explicitly Christian language, but it takes moral positions that are uniquely Christian (e.g., sexual conduct forbidden outside of marriage) (1)
- L: "Legal"—this community covenant or student handbook code does not use explicitly moral or Christian language. Instead, it reads much more like a legal document found at pluralistic institutions (0)

(12) Church or Order Financial Support: Does the Catholic Church, diocese, local Catholic churches, or sponsoring order provide financial support?
- Yes (1)
- No or don't know (0)

Highest Possible Total: 28

Overall, our analytical approach provides an alternative to the typology approach set forth by Benne (2001), Morey and Piderit (2006) in that we did not check to see if institutions fell into one of four predetermined types. Instead, we wanted to identify where institutions fell along a broad continuum from 0 to 28.

What the OFIG Does and Does Not Measure

We wish to be clear that the OFIG and the total score do not measure the impact of the various decisions, nor does it imply that all these decisions can be equated. For example, the influence of having a vice president for mission or required Christian courses may be more or less important than other factors concerning the Christian mission. It simply seeks to quantify the number of times the institution has made decisions that would distinguish it from a state or private secular university based on Christian/Catholic identity. In addition, the score does not measure the strength of Christianity/Catholicism (e.g., a school with a higher score is not inherently "more Christian/Catholic" than a school with a lower score). Debating the theological reasoning of an institution's decisions requires an agreed upon narrative about the purpose and function of Christian higher education that we do not intend to broach here. Furthermore, unfortunately our guide does not measure the extent of campus ministry on the campus. We considered measuring full-time campus ministry staff, but quickly realized delineating which roles did and did not count as full-time ministry staff was more nuanced than the guide was intended to be at this point.

A Test Analysis of Christian Institutions

To test our OFIG, we applied it to all Catholic and Protestant colleges and universities in the United States that met the definition mentioned earlier. Thus, we did not include special-focus institutions like seminaries, teacher's colleges or schools of engineering and technology, or associate's colleges. We also did not include institutions that do not offer majors in at least two distinct areas of study beyond Christianity or those related to church vocations (e.g., Ministry, Christian Education, Christian counseling, etc.).

Data Collection
The data collection for this study occurred in a four-step process. First, we identified Catholic and Protestant colleges and universities having some current or past faith-based influence using Cuninggim (1994), the *College Blue Book* (2000) index of colleges in the United States, and

the Association for Catholic Colleges and Universities (https://www.accunet.org/Membership-Directory). Our initial list of Catholic institutions included 185 colleges and universities (it shrank to 182 due to two closures and the removal of an institution that is no longer affiliated with the Catholic Church). Next, we analyzed the official websites and supporting materials from each institution and coded the results using our proposed classification system. We coded the first 20 institutions together as a research team to create a common understanding of how we would code each of the institutions. Following an initial coding by a research team comprised of graduate students, the Principal Investigators double-checked their coding with a heightened focus on markers that were particularly subjective (e.g., code of conduct). Third, for data that were not readily accessible, such as the existence of faith requirements for the president or board or the financial support of a church or denomination, we emailed the President's Office of each institution. Fourth and finally, we emailed the final list of findings for each institution to the President's Office for a member check and received responses from 32, a response rate of 18 percent.

This paper reports the results for Catholic institutions, although we do make mention of our findings for Protestant institutions in the findings and discussion (Glanzer et al., 2022). Although we had Catholics on the research team, the lead PIs for this research are Protestant Christians. Thus, this perspective could lead to a lack of understanding of certain nuances or a Protestant bias in interpretation. The lead PI's do value the diversity of institutions in America, including Catholic institutions, so we value the existence of these institutions as part of the most diverse system of faith-based education in the world (cite withheld for review). Furthermore, we think that diversity of universities associated with various Catholic orders, dioceses, or independent institutions also add to this diversity and its overall strength.

Findings

One of the most noteworthy findings from our analysis of Catholic institutions is that, within the institutions that maintained at least some affiliation with the Catholic Church, not one Catholic institution was completely secular according to the OFIG. Table 1 indicates the percentage of Catholic institutions that we found to have particular markers.

As the table indicates, one of the major reasons not one Catholic institution scored below 3.5 is that virtually all of them refer to their Catholic and their order identity (if applicable) in their mission statement (96 percent). In fact, only two institutions did not mention a Catholic or order identity, and only three mentioned the order alone. Furthermore, all offer Mass on campus. In addition, 82 percent of institutions affirmed their Catholic identity in the "About Us" section. In addition, three-fourths of institutions explicitly require the president to be Catholic and over two-thirds (69 percent) require a Christian course of all students and only have Christian student groups on campus (72 percent).

The majority of Catholic institutions, however, do not require two or more Christian courses (42 percent require at least two), nor do they refer to Christian reasoning in their code of conduct (46 percent) or use Christian reasoning to justify any part of it (23 percent). In addition, beyond the president, less than 5 percent require faculty or staff to be Catholic and only 2 percent require students to be Catholic.

In order to explore patterns among Catholic institutions, we created tables that indicate the percentage of Catholic institutions at different score levels for various individual markers (see Tables 2–5). Because the patterns of change from faith-based decisions to secularized decisions were not uniform across all the various markers, it is, empirically speaking, best to understand the changes on a continuum instead of by a typology.

Yet, we can point to moments when certain key shifts occur. For example, as Table 3 illustrates, not one institution scoring 7 or below mentions the Catholic tradition in their code of conduct or uses Catholic moral reasoning in the code.

Table 1: Summary of institutions receiving points by decision-making category

Administrative decision-making category	Total institutions	Percentage of N
Voluntary mass exists & Is privileged	181	100%
Mission statement mentions Catholic mission	174	96%
Catholic ID mentioned on About Us page	150	82%
Catholic ID requirement for president	136	75%
Only Christian student groups	131	72%
Required Christian courses (1+)	126	69%
Christian Dept. name	118	65%
Christian centers or institutes	100	55%
VP mission	99	54%
Church $ support	86	47%
Code of conduct contains mention of Catholicism	83	46%
Required Christian courses (2+)	77	42%
Partial Catholic membership requirements for board	77	42%
First web page mentions Christian identity	64	35%
Christian reasoning or covenant in conduct code	42	23%
Required Christian courses (3+)	33	18%
Required Christian courses (4+)	14	8%
Catholic membership requirement for faculty	9	5%
Catholic membership requirement for staff	8	4%
Catholic membership requirement for students	4	2%
Catholic identity requirement for entire board	2	1%
Mass is mandatory	2	1%

Note: N = 182.

Similarly, if one looks at Table 4, one can observe that not one institution scoring 14 or below requires the faculty or staff be Catholic and not one institution scoring 16 or below requires the students to all be Catholics.

If one looks at Table 5, one finds that not one institution scoring 10 or less requires three or more courses related to the Christian intellectual tradition. In addition, institutions scoring seven or less do not require any courses related to the Christian tradition.

DISCUSSION

We want to start our discussion of these findings by reiterating a noteworthy point: The OFIG only identifies empirical realities and not financial realities or theological reasoning. Thus, there may be a cost or theological reason for why an institution may not have a Catholic institute or operationalize the Catholic identity through particular administrative means. A "0" in some scores does not necessarily mean Catholic teaching animates an institution less. Sometimes, it simply means an institution does not have the necessary resources or accountability structures. At other times, it may mean that the institution wants to focus on the common good and not exclusively the Christian or Catholic community. With these points in mind, we discuss three key findings in light of other literature.

Table 2: Institutions receiving points for decisions related to rhetoric by score

Score	n	Mission statement mentions affiliation		Mission statement affirms a Catholic mission		About Us		First web page mentions Christian identity or statements	
		n_1	%	n_2	%	n_3	%	n_4	%
3.5–5	2	2	100	0	0	1	50	0	0
5.5–6	4	4	100	4	100	2	50	0	0
6.5–7	9	9	100	9	100	3	33	3	33
7.5–8	20	20	100	17	85	13	65	4	20
8.5–9	18	17	94	17	94	11	61	4	22
9.5–10	26	25	96	25	96	24	92	5	19
10.5–11	15	15	100	15	100	14	93	4	27
11.5–12	30	30	100	30	100	26	87	12	40
12.5–13	18	18	100	18	100	16	89	7	39
13.5–14	16	16	100	16	100	16	100	7	44
14.5–15	10	10	100	10	100	10	100	7	70
15.5–16	5	5	100	5	100	5	100	4	80
16.5–19	3	3	100	3	100	3	100	3	100
19.5–24	6	6	100	6	100	5	83	4	67

Table 3: Institutions receiving points for decisions related to cocurricular and other dimensions

Score	n	Only Christian student groups		Code of conduct Catholic mention		Christian moral reasoning in code		Church or Order support		VP mission		Distinct Catholic centers	
		n_1	%	n_1	%	n_1	%	n_1	%	n_1	%	n_1	%
3.5–5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5.5–6	4	1	25	0	0	0	0	1	25	0	0	1	25
6.5–7	9	8	88	0	0	0	0	4	44	1	11	1	11
7.5–8	20	14	70	3	15	1	5	9	45	9	45	5	25
8.5–9	18	9	50	5	28	3	17	5	28	8	44	7	39
9.5–10	26	18	69	14	54	5	19	9	35	12	46	18	69
10.5–11	15	8	53	5	33	1	7	9	60	9	60	8	53
11.5–12	30	22	73	15	30	6	20	16	53	22	73	14	47
12.5–13	18	16	89	10	56	4	22	10	56	13	72	14	78
13.5–14	16	15	94	12	75	8	50	6	38	9	56	12	75
14.5–15	10	7	70	6	60	4	40	7	70	8	80	10	100
15.5–16	5	4	80	4	80	2	40	1	20	4	80	5	100
16.5–19	3	2	67	3	100	3	100	3	100	2	67	3	100
19.5–24	6	5	83	6	100	5	83	3	50	1	17	2	33

*Note*: Percentages are of the n for each score group according to Table 1.

Table 4: Institutions receiving points for decisions related to Catholic membership requirements

Score	n	Students		Faculty		Staff		President		Partial board		Entire board	
		n_1	%	n_1	%	n_1	%	n_1	%	n_1	%	n_1	%
3.5–5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0
5.5–6	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	75	0	0	0	0
6.5–7	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	44	4	44	0	0
7.5–8	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	70	13	65	0	0
8.5–9	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	56	11	61	0	0
9.5–10	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	65	14	54	0	0
10.5–11	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	80	8	53	1	7
11.5–12	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	37	76	18	60	0	0
12.5–13	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	78	14	78	0	0
13.5–14	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	88	12	75	0	0
14.5–15	10	0	0	2	20	2	20	10	100	8	80	0	0
15.5–16	5	0	0	1	10	1	10	5	100	5	100	1	20
16.5–19	3	1	33	1	33	1	33	3	100	3	100	2	67
19.5–24	6	3	50	6	100	5	83	6	100	6	100	1	17

Table 5: Institutions receiving points for decisions related to curricular and departmental decisions

Score	N	Christian Dept. Name versus Religion		Required Christian courses (1+)		Required Christian courses (2+)		Required Christian courses (3+)		Required Christian courses (4+)	
		n_1	%	n_1	%	n_1	%	n_1	%	n_1	%
3.5–5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5.5–6	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6.5–7	9	1	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7.5–8	20	3	15	3	15	0	0	0	0	0	0
8.5–9	18	10	56	8	44	2	11	0	0	0	0
9.5–10	26	20	49	16	62	3	12	0	0	0	0
10.5–11	15	8	53	13	87	7	47	2	13	0	0
11.5–12	30	25	83	29	97	16	53	3	10	0	0
12.5–13	18	17	94	17	94	13	72	5	28	2	11
13.5–14	16	16	100	16	100	14	88	6	38	3	19
14.5–15	10	10	100	10	100	9	90	4	40	1	10
15.5–16	5	5	100	5	100	5	100	5	100	1	20
16.5–19	3	3	100	3	100	3	100	2	67	0	0
19.5–24	6	6	100	6	100	6	100	6	100	6	100

Figure 1

Frequency distribution of Catholic and Protestant institutions by score [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]
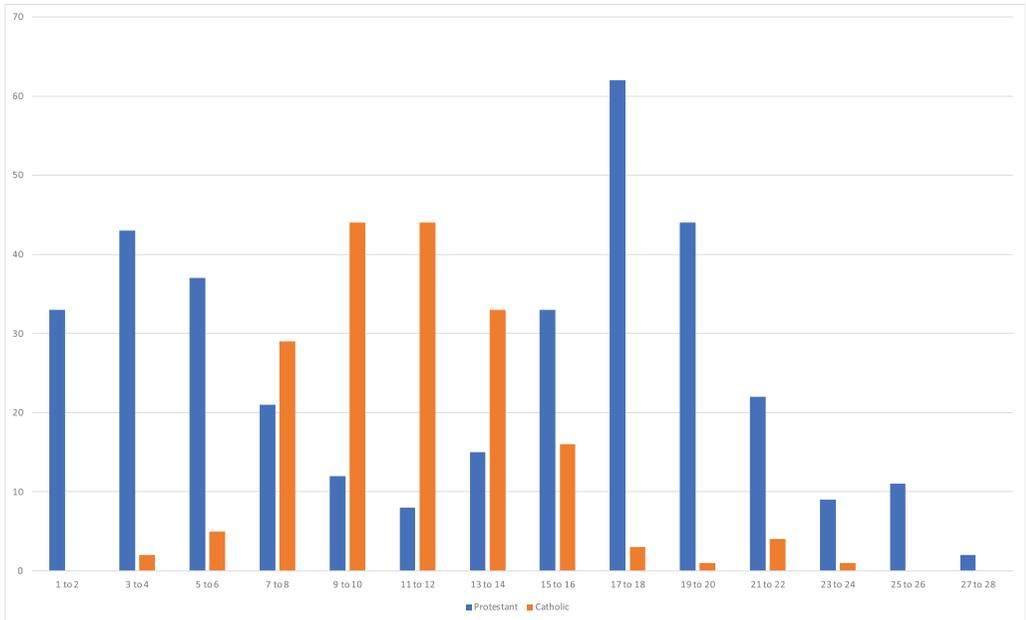
Catholic versus Protestant Patterns

Although not detailed in this paper, we undertook a similar analysis of Protestant institutions of higher education (cite withheld for review). We found a number of fascinating differences. As mentioned in the findings, not one Catholic institution was completely secular according to the OFIG, but we found 83 Protestant institutions scored 0 on our 28-point OFIG and were therefore declassified as "faith-based" (Glanzer et al., 2022). Catholic institutions were also significantly different from Protestant institutions in another way; the Protestant institutions tended to gather in the extremes of the OFIG whereas Catholic institutions gathered toward the middle of the OFIG (see Figure 1). In other word, whereas 76 percent of Protestant institutions scored below 7.5 or 17 and above, 88 percent of Catholic institutions scored from 7.5 to 17 (see Table 1).

Two other differences highlight a uniquely Catholic pattern. Whereas only 17 percent of Protestant institutions had a vice president for mission and only 10 percent had Christian centers or institutes, 55 percent of Catholic institutions had Christian centers/institutions, and 54 percent had a vice president for mission. In these respects, Catholic institutions take a different approach to the intersection of Christianity and administration than Protestant institutions.

Morey and Piderit Typology and Concerns

Does the Morey and Piderit Typology accurately capture what we found through our empirical study? Overall, we think our OFIG shares some consistency with the typology approach employed by Morey and Piderit (2006). Yet, despite the general coherence across our works, our OFIG provides additional detail and complexity that demonstrates the need to understand these changes along a continuum, and it subsequently raises questions about one of their categories. In the middle of Morey and Piderit's four types, we would place what we call the General Catholic University. These institutions were characterized by a certain basic level of Catholic commitment that one might expect at an institution thusly named. These institutions also had a clear Catholic

mission and identity but no membership requirements for faculty, staff, or students. They also tended toward having a vice president for mission (73 percent), a center (58 percent), a theology department (88 percent), at least one required Christian course (96 percent), a mention of Catholicism in the student code of conduct (52 percent), and voluntary Mass (100 percent). Students looking for the basics of Catholic education would find what they sought at one of these institutions.

In addition, we suggest that more differentiation is needed in the category Morey and Piderit (2006) describe to be the least influenced by their Catholic identity—Catholic Cohort institutions. For instance, Morey and Piderit mention that although Catholic Cohort institutions do not favor the Catholic identity in many of their administrative decisions, institutional leaders still provide for a small group (or cohort) of leaders responsible for promoting the Catholic tradition. These small groups typically receive institutional support for a small Catholic studies program, an institute, or a center. In addition, these institutions expect the president and the trustees to be Catholics—usually informed, committed, and practicing Catholics.

Based upon our findings, we would raise questions about the extent of resources, such as centers or institutes that focus on the Catholic mission, present at these types of "cohort" institutions. Of the 53 institutions scoring nine and below, only 26 percent actually have a Catholic institute, center, or Catholic studies center. What they likely need to do is create an additional category to capture institutions on the low end of our OFIG, the minimally Catholic institutions (scoring 3.5–7). At these institutions, we found less than the basics and less than a protected cohort. In this regard, the Morey and Piderit typology is too optimistic.

We believe using our findings in this way, in conjunction with existing literature, demonstrates the value of findings from our specific empirical measures. These measures can be used to help refine existing typologies and to help institutions clarify visions. For example, if institutional leaders believed their institution would be classified as a cohort model according to Morey and Piderit (2006), yet score seven or below on our OFIG, they could decide whether they would like to devote the necessary resources to Catholic faculty and students to meet the cohort designation. In this way, our OFIG and classification system are a means of description capable of helping scholars describe the field, as well as a means of self-evaluation for practitioners and administrative leaders.

Apart from the typology, our findings also reaffirmed one concern from Morey and Piderit (2006). They noted the crisis facing Catholic higher education with the decline of the vibrancy of religious orders. Our findings bolster that conclusion. We found that the most recent Catholic institution started by an order is Neumann University, which originated in 1965. In contrast, the seven Catholic institutions started since that time all score above 17 on the OFIG, but not one of them was started by an order. It appears future expansion of Catholic higher education will not be initiated by orders. Furthermore, our findings clarify that the lay people starting these institutions want them to be comprehensively and distinctively Catholic. Although a recent book on the future of Catholic higher education (Heft 2021) mentions the importance of lay leadership, our empirical findings reveal that its importance warrants further emphasis.

We suggest that it may indicate future clashes between the educational vision of conservative laity and the leaders of shrinking Catholic orders. The educational leaders from the orders may interpret emphasis upon maintaining distinctive Catholic identity as creating more Catholic-focused institutions that focus solely on the good of the Church versus institutions focused on serving the common good and broader public. Yet, conservative laity may see the necessity of these changes as a result of a shift in strategy amidst a post-Christian culture. They perceive that the more hostile higher-education culture (e.g., Manturuk 2022) requires what one popular Eastern Orthodox

writer has described as a *The Benedict Option* strategy (Dreher 2017), more distinctly Christian and separate institutions that maintain the Church's educational mission and faithfulness.[1]

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDY

One important limitation regarding the OFIG is that it does not measure—nor was it intended to measure—the religious beliefs, belonging, or behavior of the university community members. Future studies could include that data to provide an extension to the OFIG. Second, the OFIG seeks only to identify specific administrative decisions and policies. The OFIG does not score whether the decision was made for theological or Christian reasons (e.g., we want to be hospitable to all different types of students, faculty, administrators, etc., since the Bible teaches hospitality to the stranger). In other words, *the OFIG should not be considered a measure of how Christian an institution is or how committed to the faith it is*. Rather, it simply identifies the number of instances the Christian identity is used to make specified administrative choices favoring Christianity in ways distinct from a nonreligious pluralistic university. We do claim, however, that if an institution does not make any of these choices, it should not be classified as a faith-based institution.

Regarding the data collection, the largest and most interesting limitation stems from the fact that institutions vary widely in the amount of information they place on their websites or offer in their response to our email survey. For example, some institutions have their annual reports and by-laws publicly available online whereas other institutions place even their student handbook behind a security filter, thus limiting the information accessible to our research team.

The massive variation in institutional practice provided another challenge to the accuracy of the data collection. For example, some schools had one code of conduct whereas other schools had separate documents for their rules and regulations and their community covenant. If a researcher could only locate the rules and policies, they may score that school one way and accidentally disregard the points that institution should have gained from the presence of the code of conduct or community covenant.

Furthermore, multiple researchers participated independently during the data collection process. Although the PIs double checked most of this information, this vast amount of data leaves a lot of room for human error to enter into the data set, as there could be typos, mistakes in coding, formatting errors as a result of compiling the information, or simply inconsistencies in the recording of information that required "judgment calls."

As mentioned earlier, the data used for this study is constantly changing and being corrected. Thus, in order to refine the database, we will be making it publicly available to other scholars both so that they can suggest corrections and use it in their own work. The database is now available at (). One area that one reviewer mentioned should merit future study is the role that institutional size and Carnegie classification might play in differences among the institutions. We also think the nature of the sponsoring religious order, or the lack of a sponsoring order, likely plays a role as well.

CONCLUSION

Higher education—at the institutional level and the national level—is consistently adapting to contextual changes. Consequently, educational scholarship faces the challenge of keeping pace with these many changes in order to assess and inform current educational practices. Despite significant shifts in the American religious landscape, the language used to describe institutional

---

[1] We are thankful for the comment from an anonymous reviewer that helped illuminate this important point.

faith identities has remained largely the same for decades. Consequently, we have proposed it is time to do away with the overly simplistic (and at times misleading) language of "church-related" to describe the variety of faith-influenced institutions in the United States. An evaluation of existing typologies (Benne 2001; Morey and Piderit 2006) revealed that, though meritorious, they too lacked the nuance needed to depict the complexities of Christian higher education. In response, we have presented the OFIG, which we believe offers researchers a more accurate, empirically grounded, and comprehensive approach to evaluating an institution's connection to the Christian faith—whether Protestant or Catholic. The OFIG provided a means to explicate previously unseen themes in Catholic higher education including a general evasion of complete secularization and the corresponding tendency for institutions to score in the middle of the OFIG rather than at the extremes. In addition, we found that, in general, the Catholic institutions that scored the highest on our OFIG were lay led rather than led by a particular diocese or religious order. We believe the OFIG is a significant contribution to faith-based higher-education literature, and we hope scholars and institutional leaders alike will use it to further our collective work within the field.

REFERENCES

Abelman, Robe, and Amy Dalessandro. 2008. An assessment of the institutional vision of Catholic colleges and universities. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 12(2):221–54.

Astin, Alexander W. 1962. An empirical characterization of higher educational institutions. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 53(5):224–35.

Astin, Alexander W., and Calvin B.T. Lee. 1972. *The invisible colleges: A profile of small, private colleges with limited resources*. Hightstown, NJ: McGraw-Hill.</bib>

Benne, Robert. 2001. *Quality with soul: How six premier colleges and universities keep faith with their religious traditions*. Grand Rapids: MI William B. Eerdmans.

Briel, Don J., Kenneth E. Goodpaster, and Michael J. Naughton. 2021. *What we hold in trust: Rediscovering the purpose of Catholic higher education*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University Press of America.

Budde, Michael L., and John Wright. 2004. *Conflicting allegiances: The church-based university in a liberal democratic society*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

Burtchaell, James T. 1998. *The dying of the light: The disengagement of the colleges and universities from their Christian churches*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Cuninggim, Merrimon. 1994. *Uneasy partners: The college and the church*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Dreher, Rod. 2017. *The Benedict option: A strategy for Christians in a post-Christian nation*. New York, NY: Sentinel.

Estanek, Sandra, Michael James, and Daniel Norton. 2006. Assessing Catholic identity: A study of mission statements of Catholic colleges and universities. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 10(2):199–217. https://doi.org/10.15365/joce.1002062013.

Gambescia, Stephen, and Rocco Paolucci. 2011. Nature and extent of Catholic identity communicated through official websites of US Catholic colleges and universities. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 15(1):3–27.

Gellhorn, Walter, and Kent Greenawalt. 1970. *The sectarian college and the public purse: Fordham—A case study*. New York: Oceana Publications.

Glanzer, Perry L., Joel Carpenter, and Nick Lantinga. 2011. Looking for God in the university: Examining trends in Christian higher education. *Higher Education* 61(6):721–55.

Glanzer, Perry L. 2021. A guide to choosing a Christian college. *The Gospel Coalition*. thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/evangelical-history/a-guide-to-choosing-a-christian-college/

Gleason, Philip. 1995. *Contending with modernity: Catholic higher education in the twentieth century*. New York: Oxford University Press.

_____

Gross, Edward. 1968. Universities as organizations: A research approach. *American Sociological Review* (August): 518–43.

Hassenger, Robert. 1967. *The shape of Catholic higher education*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Heft, James L. 2021. *The future of Catholic higher education*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hofstadter, Richard, and Wilson. Smith. 1961. *American higher education: A documentary history*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Land O' Lakes Statement. 1967. Available at https://archives.nd.edu/episodes/visitors/lol/idea.htm.

Leahy, William. P. 1991. *Adapting to America Catholics, Jesuits, and higher education in the twentieth century*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Manturuk, Kim. 2022. Blind review is blind to discrimination. In *Inside Higher Education*. Available at https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2022/05/25/blind-review-process-can-perpetuate-discrimination-opinion.

Marsden, George. 2021. *The soul of the American university revisited: From Protestant to postsecular*. New York:Oxford University Press.

Morey, Melanie, and John Piderit. 2006. *Catholic higher education: A culture in crisis*. New York, N: Oxford University Press.

Milian, Roger P., and Jessica Rizk. 2018. Marketing Catholic higher education: Holistic self-actualization, personalized learning, and wholesome goodness. *Higher Education* 76(1):51–66. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-017-0193-2.

National Center for Education Statistics. 2021. Digest of Education Statistics, Table 301.20. Available at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_301.20.asp.

Parsonage, Robert R. 1978. *Church-related higher education*.Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press.

Patton, Leslie K. 1940. *The purposes of church-related colleges: A critical study—A proposed program*. New York: Columbia University.

Schier, Tracy, and Cynthia Russett, eds. 2002. *Catholic women's colleges in America*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Sommerville, C. John 1998. Secular society/Religious population: Our tacit rules for using the term "secularization. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37:249–53.

Sullins, D. Paul 2004. The difference Catholic makes: Catholic faculty and Catholic identity. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43(1):83–101.

Tewksbury, Donald George. 1932/2011. *The founding of American colleges and universities before the Civil War: With particular reference to the religious influences bearing upon the college movement*. Eastford, CT: Martino Publishing.

The Application of Ex Corde Ecclesiae to the United States. 2000. *American Catholic Bishops*. Available at https://www.usccb.org/committees/catholic-education/application-ex-corde-ecclesiae-united-states.

The College Blue Book, 45th ed. 2000. MacMillian Reference.

Wicke, Myron. 1964. *The church-related college*. The Center for Applied Research in Education.

Glanzer, Perry L. 2021. A guide to choosing a Christian college. The Gospel Coalition. thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/evangelical-history/a-guide-to-choosing-a-christian-college/

Glanzer, Perry L., Cockle, Theodore F., Martin, Jessica, & Alexander, Scott. 2022. Getting rid of "church-realted" colleges and universities: Applying a new faith-based identity scale to American Protestant higher education. Unpublished manuscript currently under consideration.