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Charism Formation in Dominican Institutions of Higher Education

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CHARISM FORMATION IN DOMINICAN INSTITUTIONS
OF HIGHER EDUCATION

BY

JENNIFER E. SCHAAF, OP

A written project submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to all the Dominican women who have served and continue to serve in higher education. May they be known for how their lives shape college and university students to serve the Church and world in bringing about the reign of God.

I am grateful for the many women and men who serve at Dominican colleges and universities, especially those who assisted in this project through conversations, replying to surveys, and hosting me on campus.

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For my religious community, friends, family, and colleagues who have supported my research and study while also serving in ministry full-time, I am indebted to the ways in which you have covered my responsibilities and assisted when I needed the extra time, finances, and distracting conversations.

For the students, faculty, staff, and alumni who have been impacted by Dominican sisters serving in higher education, and for those who will carry on the tradition even after sisters no longer serve at the institutions, may you continue to carry on the mission in your lives.

ABSTRACT

CHARISM FORMATION IN DOMINICAN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Using a qualitative approach, this research project examined the practices of charism formation and mission education at institutions of higher education founded by Dominican Sisters in the US.

Broad surveys of those in roles responsible for mission at the institutions were followed by select site visits—conducted in person and virtually—and interviews. Websites and published materials about the institutions, curriculum, visible signs on campus and activities that are integral to the mission were examined as part of this project.

As the number of Dominican Sisters available to serve in their founded institutions decreases, this research may provide a path forward in ways by which institutions can continue their original inspiration in ever-changing times. Themes of collaboration, integration, and prioritizing minority populations are common among the ways that Dominican institutions continue working in the spirit of their founders.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	5
Purpose of the Study	5
Research Question	7
Hypotheses	7
Context of the Study	9
Overview of Methods	12
Significance of Study	12
Background and Role of the Researcher	13
Limitations and Delimitations	14
Summary	15
CHAPTER TWO: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION	16
Introduction	16

Serving the Poor and Marginalized as Gospel Mandate and Key Element of Dominican Life	16
Preaching as Naming Grace.....	19
The Authority of Women Religious’ Leadership as Gift from God.....	21
Religious Life as Consecration for Mission.....	25
A Theology of Dominican Education	27
Dominican Spirituality: A Complex Integration of Four Pillars	32
Charism and Mission Today	34
Summary	35
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	37
Introduction.....	37
Research and Data Collection Methods.....	37
Setting	42
Data Collection	42
Data Analysis	43
Summary of Procedures	43
Ethical Considerations	43
Summary	44
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	45

Introduction.....	45
Data Descriptions, Analyses, Results	45
Survey Response Results	49
Site Visits	58
Site Visit #1: Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois	59
Site Visit #2: Barry University, Miami Shores, Florida	66
Site Visit #3: Mount Saint Mary College, Newburgh, NY.....	73
Site Visit #4 : Dominican College, Blauvelt, NY.....	79
Surprises from the results and further questions.....	86
Critical areas for best practices	90
Summary	92
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS	94
Introduction.....	94
Conclusions from the study	94
Areas of research for further study	100
Contributions to the study of the practice of ministerial leadership.....	102
Summary.....	104
DEFINITIONS OF TERMS	105
REFERENCES	106

APPENDIX A: Institutional Review Board Approval	110
APPENDIX B: Participant Consent Form.....	112
APPENDIX C: Survey	115

List of Figures and Table

Figure 1: Geographic location of respondents, which represent ten of the thirteen institutions.....	47
Figure 2: The vocation of respondents.....	47
Figure 3: The highest degree earned by each respondent.	48
Figure 4: Related previous ministry or work experiences of respondents.....	49
Table 1: Survey responses by college/university of required or optional mission-related aspects of orientation or academic courses.....	57

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

St. Dominic, from the founding of the Dominican Order in the 1200s, focused on education (*Ordo Praedicatorum* 2021). The early friars (see definition of terms located before References section) were expected to be educated and to educate others. At the time, education was needed to counter heresies. For Dominic, in particular, seeking and preaching the truth was focused as a counter to the dualism being proclaimed by the Albigensians.

In the US today, Dominicans currently run eighteen colleges and universities. Of those, thirteen are run by congregations of women that are part of the Dominican Sisters Conference, a collaborative, voluntary organization of Dominican women's congregations in the US (Dominican Sisters Conference 2016). Often founded to educate young religious sisters, these colleges and universities now provide education to students who are diverse culturally, religiously, and geographically. As the sisters' numbers have decreased since the height of religious life in the US, the sisters' ministries have diversified from being primarily focused on education and health care to supporting many different ministries. The number of sisters serving in higher education has, therefore, decreased dramatically. Even with these shifts, the Dominican charism continues to have as much, if not more, relevance in higher education today than when the Order was founded. Seeking and preaching truth is critical at a time when conspiracy theories, "fake news," and opinion presented as fact are leading to divisiveness in the Church, the US, and the world.

The term “charism” in the context of this paper refers to a divinely inspired grace, gift, or talent. The Dominicans, or Order of Preachers, are best known for preaching, but the Dominican preaching charism is connected to other aspects of Dominican life: study, prayer, and community. Preaching takes place in a particular context and is aimed toward a particular audience. The preaching charism may include traditional pulpit preaching, but it also includes preaching through actions and symbols. Preaching the good news means that those who need the good news hear it. The good news may unsettle others, like Jesus did in his time—and when St. Dominic preached in his time. A charism, or gift that can be developed, fuels participation in God’s mission in a particular way. For many Dominicans, this preaching charism has translated into direct service to poor and marginalized communities by providing quality education at affordable costs. It includes infusing service and social justice into the curriculum, as well as theology and spirituality into campus events. Dominicans have, since their foundation, held democratic processes of electing leadership, and they continue to focus on dialogue and consensus, which is also part of the charism. Preaching can involve the whole Dominican community as decisions are made and directions are set.

As a Dominican sister who has worked in campus ministry for over a decade—and with Catholic students of varying ages for two decades—for me, Catholic education is incredibly important. Although I am currently serving at a secular campus, I believe Catholic higher education plays a specific role in educating students who come from underprivileged backgrounds, diverse perspectives, and who are taught skills that come from a place of faith for the benefit of the world. This is true of colleges and universities founded by many orders of male and female religious: Jesuit, Franciscan, Benedictine,

and Holy Cross. Numerous other religious communities founded schools of all different levels, and each one has their own gift and mission, within the larger mission of the Catholic Church.

As Dominican friar Gregory Heille writes, “In our schools, our students are being invited and formed for a discipleship that opens them to participating in a physical, intellectual, and spiritual world much bigger than themselves” (Heille 2016, 12). Heille continues by quoting the documents of the General Chapter of the Dominican friars from 2010:

Preaching is not simply a function to be performed, a work or a mission; for the Dominican family preaching is a way of life a style of life. It is living in imitation of the apostles that Dominic wanted for both himself and his followers. Our commitment as Dominicans is not only to preaching, but also to live a life which is in itself a preaching, a way of life which preaches” (Heille 2016, 13).

The Dominican charism is often difficult to define, as, for Dominicans it is preaching, but it is a preaching of the good news, which goes far beyond pulpit preaching and is carried out by friars, sisters, laity, cloistered monastics, and others who share in the Dominican ministries. Preaching, as Heille defines it, is a wholistic way of living, studying, and being in the world. This, rather than pulpit preaching, is what drew me and many others to Dominican life. We felt a call to study, to relate what can be found in study, prayer, and the needs of the world. We were drawn to teaching, preaching, writing, social media, art, and other mediums. These continue to keep the Dominican charism alive today.

Sandra Schneiders, IHM, in her text, *Finding the Treasure*, writes the following about charism:

A charism is a grace given for the sake not only of the recipient but also and primarily for the upbuilding of the Church. In the New Testament graces such as preaching, speaking in and interpretation of tongues, healing, administration, and teaching are seen as gifts given to individuals for the sake of community. Questions raised by the conciliar use of the category to talk about the particular character or spirituality, or ministerial option of congregations included whether a charism is necessarily individual or could be given to a whole group and whether a person who received a charism as an individual gift could communicate it to others (as opposed to exercising it for the good of others) (Schneiders 2000, 282).

Schneiders questions whether a charism can be communicated, as it is a gift of the Holy Spirit. However, she later writes of the vocation of religious life as a charism, “It has always been viewed as a response to a vocation from God, no matter how this vocation is mediated by human experience” (Schneiders 2000, 283). Can a charism be communicated? Yes and no. The church needs those who are given the charism by the Holy Spirit and hold the embers of the Holy Spirit’s fire in them. They do not need to be vowed religious, but the support of community helps to keep the charism alive. Then, there are others who are taught the skills needed to live out aspects of the charism, even if it is not their personal gift from God. How do we know that the Holy Spirit is not working through all that are engaged in Dominican institutions of higher education, just by the fact that they were drawn to enroll or serve on staff at those institutions? It is difficult to define where the Holy Spirit is active. Instead, we trust that by continuing to educate around the charism and mission, all those who are connected will take part in the charism of the institution. Providing more opportunities for people to share the gift of the Holy Spirit is beneficial to all.

Statement of the Problem

A comprehensive study of best practices in charism formation among Dominican institutions is needed if the mission is to continue because more lay people now fill key roles within Dominican institutions. This is not to say that lay leaders do not have a calling to the charism of a founding community. In many cases, they do, which is why they are serving at a Dominican institution. By the nature of their calling, however, their formation is different, and the ways in which they live out their calling are different than that of vowed members. Also, as campuses may hire people of different, or no, faith background, finding ways to form people in the Dominican charism, using language and experiences that are accessible, is a necessary part of the Dominican institutions' future in higher education.

Purpose of the Study

Because mission integration is an important focus currently for religious congregations and their founded ministries, many Dominican institutions now have a person responsible for mission integration or passing on the charism within the structures of the institution. Mary Ann Weisenbeck describes mission integration as the

sum of the processes, programs and relationships that serve to enhance our understanding and commitment to the tradition and values from which the healing ministry originated and in which it continues. It is more than programs and celebrations; it is the work of the soul. It translates into day-to-day language and struggles with complex issues and brings light to significant decisions (Settles 2021, 2).

This “soul” work is complex and, although it might look like programs and celebrations, it must be deeper. Religious communities were often founded to address the needs of the times as their main mission. For early Dominicans, the Order of Preachers, their

preaching was a counter to the heretical teachings of the Albigensians. Albigensians looked and sounded like average people of the day, unlike the clerics, who also preached the message of the Gospel but dressed and lived like royalty. The preaching gradually led to founding schools, where preachers would be educated, and, later, other types of institutions. Currently, mission integration is one way in which Dominicans continue to preach in both traditional and non-traditional ways in thousands of ministries worldwide.

The positions of those responsible for mission integration vary from institution to institution, and mission integration cannot be carried by only one individual; it needs to be infused throughout an organization to be successful. A few years ago, the Dominican Charism Initiative, now under the umbrella of the Dominican Sisters Conference (DSC), was created to provide online modules for education across various Dominican institutions. This was one way of unifying charism formation. However, this project was broad enough to be used by students, board members, social workers, etc., so it had to be kept at a basic level. A Dominican College Colloquium, which occurs every two to three years, alternates among universities as a place for scholars to share their work, but it depends on colleges to volunteer sponsorship and coordination. Other programs have included the Dominican College Preaching Conference, which is a six-day conference where students learn about the charism through presentations, service, prayer, and other activities. Similarly, the Fanjeaux summer program for academic credit gives students and college staff an opportunity to learn about Dominican history in Fanjeaux, France. These programs are wonderful but limited in scope to a few students from each college or university each year. This study looks at some of the best practices in Dominican institutions of higher education around charism formation, as well as where there could

be space for increased coordination. For example, some Dominican colleges include the Dominican cross or shield within their university shield. Others have students preach on a regular basis. Some provide courses, formal or informal, on the history and heritage of their founders. Some include celebrations and service opportunities as ways in which the charism is continued. Through surveys, site visits, and other materials, this study notes the most successful ways in which the charism is conveyed and provides a resource to Dominican institutions of higher education.

Research Question

How do Dominican institutions of higher education best form their constituents in the preaching charism?

Hypotheses

I anticipated that universities with Dominican sisters serving in prominent roles, such as university president or campus minister, would have more robust mission integration programs. I also anticipated that the higher number of people working in mission-related work would result in more effective mission integration. Finally, I anticipated that schools with charism/mission integrated at multiple levels, including curriculum, faculty, and staff development, and outward facing centers would have more effective ways of communicating mission. Although it would be easy to assume that larger schools with a higher Catholic population would have the most robust mission-effectiveness programs, I was not sure that school size or demographics would be determining factors. I was curious to discover how Catholic identity at Dominican colleges impacts mission integration. Dominican sisters are by their vows part of the

official structure of the Church. Can the mission be effectively passed on to those who have a different, or no, religious background? Does language surrounding key elements, like the four pillars of Prayer, Study, Community, and Preaching, still have meaning when communicated in ways that involve people who aren't vowed members of the Catholic Church? If so, do they still have the same impact? What if the language is changed, such as the shift from "preaching" to "service" as the fourth pillar? The answers to these questions may not all be answered in the context of this study, but discovering a few key elements about how the charism is best shared in Dominican institutions of higher education may provide a possible path forward.

Dominicans are not the only religious community concerned about their mission continuing. As Maria Cimperman, RSCJ writes:

Programs offering "formation to mission" from a particular charism and spirituality abound in institutions that name themselves Mercy, Franciscan, Salesian, Dominican, and more. This is, in part, a recognition that whereas religious orders once thought their presence would facilitate an understanding of their charism, intentionality is now needed to inculcate the particular charism into an institution with fewer members of the order in a ministry. As individual members as well as congregations looked to the signs of the times and the calls of the charism, some stayed in current ministries, but others joined new ministries or created new ministry opportunities. Congregations, particularly leadership, needed to look at current ministries as well as new ministry calls and discern where congregational members and resources were to go. It was a dynamic and challenging time, with change in all areas of religious life (Cimperman 2020, 195-196).

This shift in paying attention to the signs of the times, which was a call of the Second Vatican Council, meant that sisters within a given congregation were no longer concentrated in only one or two types of ministries, or sites that were historical to the congregation. Instead, they shifted to new areas of ministry, while a few continued in the traditional ministries of the congregation. Lay people, now well-educated Catholic

professionals, also shared in these ministries. However, they did not have the same type of charism formation as sisters, so formation for mission became a new professional field and essential for keeping the charism of religious communities alive in new ways.

Context of the Study

Each Dominican college or university, and its corresponding founding or sponsoring congregation, has a unique history and purpose. However, the parallels between both the religious institutes and academic institutions allow for a cultural framework to be used in analyzing the common language, symbols, and formation processes (Sensing 2011, 18). A grounded theory qualitative study was used to compare how the Dominican institutions of higher education foster mission integration (Corbin 1990, 3-21).

As there are many Dominican institutions, I planned to focus on three or four in different regions of the country. This would permit an in-depth look at how the charism is transmitted within their institutions. In addition, I sent surveys to the individuals responsible for mission integration at all the Dominican institutions of higher education that fall under the Dominican Sisters Conference. This also included some additional sisters in administrative or faculty positions.

In looking at previous studies, Molloy College, which was founded by the Dominican Sisters of Amityville, includes components of the Dominican charism in their mission statement: “Committed to the Dominican ideals of truth, academic excellence and openness to diverse world-views, the college provides a value-centered educational experience which enhances intellectual, ethical, spiritual and social development”

(Donovan, Honigsfeld, and Cohan 2009, 52 [1], 57). In preparation for accreditation, the School of Education at Molloy College did an in-depth study of how the Dominican mission is infused within the Education department. This study articulates key components of an education focused on the Dominican Charism, which can be expanded both in content and to other departments and universities for comparison (Donovan, Honigsfeld and Cohan 2009, 56-65).

Organizations, such as the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) and the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCCU) were founded in the late 1900s to, at least in part, continue the Christian mission, including the values of Christian charity, the common good, and social justice:

Christianity's ethos transcends the intellectual realm and encourages practice and exercises related to moral action, humility, and hospitality. Because of these commitments, the religious traditions of Catholicism and evangelical Christianity charge believers with acting in service to others—embodying their faith tradition and their call from God to strive toward a common good (Mann 2020, 15).

Four models of Catholic institutions have been identified in previous research.

These include:

1. Catholic Immersion: attracting a large majority of Catholic individuals
2. Catholic Persuasion: fostering appreciation and increasing knowledge of Catholicism among all
3. Catholic Diaspora: accepting of religion in general, regardless of practice
4. Catholic Cohort: influencing the formation of Catholics (Mann 2020, 11-12)

Regardless of the model chosen, Catholic institutions are dedicated to a set of values—such as a caring environment, respect for all persons, human connection, and a responsibility for the care and keeping of the community. These values serve to connect programming and curriculum to the Catholic faith and the Catholic intellectual tradition on Catholic university and college campuses (Mann (53) 2009, 11-12).

Dominican institutions of higher education fall into several of these different models, with the first and fourth being the least common. Seemingly, the third model, and occasionally the second, are the approaches taken by Dominican institutions. This is where the colleges and universities founded by Dominican women's congregations differ from the graduate schools, which were founded by men. Graduate theological serve to form people in ministry and, specifically, Catholics, although they do have others in attendance. Like other early missions, Dominican women have served those in need, without religion being the primary qualification of receiving services. In a description of some of the early Catholic schools for girls in the Midwest, they are noted as being appreciated by both Catholics and Protestants for the ways in which they provided not only, "training in academic subjects but taught Old World manners and culture or at least a veneer of them to the daughters of those aspiring to gentility" (Brewer 1987, 16). This was in the late 1800s and early 1900s in frontier towns, when formation of cultured young women was something especially valued. The Dominicans not only taught the upper class, but they often established schools as charitable organizations for those who couldn't afford other opportunities or who faced prejudices of different kinds (Brewer 1987, 29-30). As teacher education became formalized, young religious sisters needed more education, and junior colleges were established. Some would evolve over time into current universities. The early focus of these institutions included spiritual formation and intellectual education for young religious sisters (Brewer 1987, 39-43). Today, spiritual and academic formation remain central to Dominican institutions of higher education, although both have much broader definitions and curricula than in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Similarly, the schools have become co-ed, accredited, and now serve diverse

populations. As we consider Dominican higher education, how do we see the early roots of formation still present today? How have these institutions let go of what is no longer necessary and adapted to the current age?

Overview of Methods

Using a grounded theory qualitative approach, (Corbin 1990) including surveys, interviews, observations, and document review, I examined the practices of how charism formation and mission integration is facilitated at Dominican institutions of higher education.

Significance of Study

A charism, or gift of the Holy Spirit for the world, is part of the mission of the institutions that are founded by religious institutes. Understanding formation processes regarding how to use a charism for the sake of mission is becoming increasingly important as lay people take over roles traditionally held by women religious, who spent years in formation—in addition to academic training—before serving in higher education. How the mission is best interpreted for the current era is important for the sustainability and relevance of the college or university and integral to identity. Quality Catholic education, regarding both academics and development of the human person, is necessary to stay competitive in a time when schools are tuition driven and enrollment numbers are decreasing. Strong values, serving minority populations, and the search for truth, provide a specific way of living out Catholicism in the world, especially when strengthened by a unified identity across Dominican universities. They can provide tools for formation of students and marketing.

Background and Role of the Researcher

Although I am a life-long Catholic, I attended public schools through high school. It was as an undergraduate that I was exposed to Catholic education sponsored by a religious community. I participated in liturgy and service events but was not necessarily someone who was involved in the most Catholic clubs or organizations. That being said, I knew the institution focused on “Teaching, Faith and Service” as their key mission components (University of Portland 2016). This was my first of many experiences in both working in and attending Catholic institutions of higher education. I have attended, taught, and served as a campus minister at universities founded by Dominican congregations. I have also attended diocesan, Holy Cross, Jesuit, Dominican, and Marianist graduate schools and universities. Currently, I serve as a campus minister at a Catholic Center at a large, private, secular university. As a Dominican sister, I am passionate about ensuring that the charism and founding missions of Dominican institutions carries on, even beyond the life of congregations that may naturally die out. I hope to participate in the shaping of how this occurs as a younger Dominican sister. Although I am not currently ministering at a Dominican university, I have a vested interest in their success and also the ability to look at the institutions from a distance. In the case of accreditation, it is important for institutions to look inward with a critical eye and put forth the best of what they have to offer, to remain accredited, receive funding, and provide a holistic, quality education. I hope that my research, as it is independent of organizations or groups that determine the future of the university from the perspective of funding or accreditation, will be welcomed and received by Dominican institutions as a positive collection of best practices as the institutions plan for the future.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study was limited to Dominican institutions of higher education in the US, founded by congregations of Dominican women, whose congregations belong to the Dominican Sisters Conference (DSC). First, this limitation was broad enough to potentially include 13 colleges and universities (i.e., Albertus Magnus College, Aquinas College, Barry University, Caldwell University, Dominican University [Illinois], Dominican College, Dominican University [California], Edgewood College, Molloy College, Mount Saint Mary College, Ohio Dominican University, Saint Thomas Aquinas College, and Siena Heights University) with in-depth attention being given to four. Second, as my own language skills are limited to English fluency, I did not require interpreters. Containing the study within the US allowed for regional differences, such as the Northeast, Midwest, South, or West, but did not include differences in overall educational systems, such as between the US and the United Kingdom, for example. The congregations within the DSC collaborate on many projects as a whole or as sub-groups. These include other mission organizations, such as a pontifical public juridic person (PJP) for Dominican high schools (Morrisey 2011, 68-70), a collaborative novitiate for formation, and an annual meeting for leaders of the congregations. There are natural networks built in among these congregations and a willingness to work together. The DSC includes nearly all the congregations of Dominican women within the US, and all but one of the institutions of higher education sponsored by Dominican women are sponsored by members of the DSC. Sponsoring congregations of institutions have differing levels of influence in the institutions, so the DSC would be a place for conversation, but not necessarily a place to make decisions about the institutions.

However, there are possible ways in which the DSC could support the institutions broadly. There are also a limited number of institutions of higher education sponsored by Dominican men in the US, and two of them are solely graduate schools.

Finally, this study does not include Dominicans, such as myself, who are serving at institutions of higher education not founded by the Dominican Order. I realize that this excludes several key theologians, like Barbara Reid, who was recently named President of Catholic Theological Union, or Mary Catherine Hilbert, a systematic theologian at the University of Notre Dame. Although they are not formally included in the study, their theological work is influential both to me and to Dominicans in the US, as they are often invited to offer lectures at Dominican events, especially at Dominican institutions of higher education, and will be noted as such.

Summary

This project utilized a grounded theory qualitative approach to research, including surveys, site visits, and document review from Dominican colleges and universities that were founded by women's Dominican religious institutes now under the umbrella of Dominican Sisters Conference. The results allowed me to analyse ways to best support mission integration and charism formation, leading to possible best practices for Dominican colleges going forward.

CHAPTER TWO

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Introduction

For Catholic Dominican sisters, the call to a vowed life stems from the inspiration of St. Dominic and the Gospels. Jesus preached and taught, engaged with those on the margins—lifting them up in society—and accompanied a variety of people who struggled in one way or another on their journey. This was the good news, the gospel that needed to be heard. Women, such as Mary Magdalene, Martha, and Mary of Bethany held significant roles in the life and story of Jesus. Their leadership came as a result of their faith in God and their call. St. Dominic, when founding the Order of Preachers, included both men and women. Although the Dominican Order looks significantly different today than it did in 1206, preaching good news where it needs to be heard is still the main call of Dominicans.

Serving the Poor and Marginalized as Gospel Mandate and Key Element of Dominican Life

Dominican women first accompanied St. Dominic as cloistered women in prayer. Over time their call has evolved, although cloistered communities still exist. Like many religious communities, Dominicans were asked to send women to the US in the 1800s. They founded schools, established orphanages, opened hospitals, and carried on various other ministries—typically for immigrants and people in poverty. For many reasons, the specific charism of the religious order meant less than the fact that they were Catholic nuns and there was a need they could serve. Providing works of mercy (Matthew 25:37-40) was the guiding principle for women religious. In the case of my own congregation,

Mother Mary Ann Sammon, the foundress of my Dominican congregation, entered a cloistered community. She brought immigrant orphans into the convent, which was not a standard practice. This led to the establishment of an orphanage for girls to the north of New York City and the founding of a new Dominican congregation for their care. Soon after, she and the other sisters couldn't bear to separate siblings, so the orphanage was expanded to include boys. The children needed food and education, so a farm and school became part of the ministry. As the congregation grew, younger sisters needed to be educated, so a college was founded. The college was expanded to educate other lay women. The women responded to the hungry, thirsty, homeless, stranger in direct service. Especially in the US, women religious made quick adaptations to serve where the needs were the greatest. This is still true today, as women religious have responded to calls to serve at the US-Mexico border, go to places like South Sudan after the war or New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, or provide housing for refugees and women who were trafficked.

The Second Vatican Council, in conjunction with a call for renewal in many different aspects of the Church, called for a renewal of religious life. In the early 1900s, charisms of religious communities had been suppressed to an almost generic version of religious life. Religious communities took seriously this call for renewal. They addressed questions of what to study, how to engage with the world, what to wear, schedules of prayer, and how their founding charism could best be applied to the signs of the times. Congregations' constitutions and directories were updated to reflect these changes. A deepening of baptismal call was the basis for women religious as they discerned how "the

spirit and aims of each founder should be faithfully acknowledged and maintained”
(Flannery [ed.] 1966, 387).

After the Second Vatican Council, women religious were asked to return to their foundational roots. This call to renewal of religious life and returning to the original charism was reflected in the Second Vatican Council Documents and Post-Conciliar Documents:

When your vocation destines you for other tasks in the service of men—pastoral life, missions, teaching, works of charity and so on—is it not above all the intensity of your union with the Lord that will make them fruitful, in proportion to that union "in secret"? In order to be faithful to the teaching of the Council, must not "the members of each community who are seeking God before all else combine contemplation with apostolic love? By the former they cling to God in mind and heart; by the latter they strive to associate themselves with the work of redemption and to spread the kingdom of God.

Only in this way will you be able to reawaken hearts to truth and to divine love in accordance with the charisms of your founders who were raised up by God within His Church. Thus, the Council rightly insists on the obligation of religious to be faithful to the spirit of their founders, to their evangelical intentions and to the example of their sanctity. In this it finds one of the principles for the present renewal and one of the most secure criteria for judging what each institute should undertake. In reality, the charism of the religious life, far from being an impulse born of flesh and blood or one derived from a mentality which conforms itself to the modern world, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, who is always at work within the Church (Pope Paul VI 1971)

For Dominican women, this meant reclaiming, or claiming, preaching as their charism.

Preaching, for Dominican women, is often accomplished through accompaniment.

Gustavo Gutierrez, OP, writes, “To sin is to refuse to love one’s neighbors and, therefore, the Lord himself. Sin—a breach of friendship with God and others—is according to the Bible the ultimate cause of poverty, injustice, and the oppression in which persons live” (Gutierrez 1988, 24). For Dominican women, preaching is often countering sin with the good news of accompaniment. They walk with those experiencing poverty, injustice, and

oppression, and they work to change the situation which holds them in those conditions. Education, especially higher education, is one particular way in which the lives of people experiencing poverty, injustice, or oppression can be lifted and empowered. Dominican women were not the only ones to reclaim the education of those on the margins as their call. As Maria Cimperman, RSCJ writes, Arrupe College of Loyola University Chicago, run by the Jesuits, and Bilingual Undergraduate Studies for Collegiate Advancement at La Salle University, run by the De La Salle Brothers, both focus on educating students in a two-year college specifically so they will be successful in a four-year college. These are just a few examples of religious communities focusing on marginalized communities (Cimperman 2020, 168-169). The Medellin Conference, a meeting of the bishops of Latin America, identified two priorities: the preferential option for the poor and the preferential option for the youth. Dominican higher education places both preferences in clear view, as these colleges and universities often serve a large population of first-generation college students and students of color, regardless of religious background.

Preaching as Naming Grace

Mary Catherine Hilker draws on the theology of Karl Rahner, a leading theologian during the Second Vatican Council. She writes of Rahner, “Using the Incarnation as the key with which to interpret all of reality, Rahner proposes that all reality is structured symbolically—signs of grace are to be found everywhere if one has ‘eyes to see’ ” (Hilker 1997, 32). She continues with Rahner’s argument that “ ‘...grace is *here*. It is present wherever we are. It can always indeed be seen by the eye of faith and be expressed by the word of the message’ ” (Hilker 1997, 32). Rahner takes this seeing

of grace everywhere into the preaching realm as he writes, “ ‘Preaching is the awakening and making explicit of what is already there in the depths of [the person], not by nature but by grace’ ” (Hilkert 1997, 33). Like Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx was extremely influential to the Second Vatican Council. Hilkert draws on his connection of word and action in his theology of preaching:

...the preaching of the gospel can never be done only in words. Jesus announced the reign of God not only in his teaching and preaching but also by inviting sinners and outcasts to the shared intimacy of table. He proclaimed mercy and healing in touching lepers and entering the homes and the lives of the sick and grieving. He spoke of justice and of God’s revisioning of the social order in his relationships with women and Samaritans and the poor. The story of hope in human history is a narrative that must be told ultimately with human lives if it is to be heard as credible. Precisely because the Christian message is a living tradition of grace—the mystery of God-among-us—it must be handed on through the lived experience of the community as well as through the word. Proclamation interprets the life of discipleship, but the community’s shared discipleship embodies that proclamation (Hilkert 1997, 37).

It is this connection between preaching in word and action that shapes Dominican higher education. Whether preaching occurs in the context of liturgy, opening convocations, commencement addresses, poetry slams, or student activism, the word is connected to the deed of education and bringing about the reign of God. Where is God in all of this? That is the preaching, the naming of God’s grace in word and action. This is summed up in the words of Florence Deacon, OSF, as she addressed the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR):

One day I finally got it, I understood what it meant that the Church was the Body of Christ. Jesus Christ’s presence in the world today is made tangible through OUR actions and in the words of one of our saints, Theresa of Avila, ‘today Jesus has no hands but ours, no feet but ours...’ In one Spirit we were all baptized into the body of Christ, and we continue to fulfill his Gospel ministry through faith and action (Deacon 2013, 4).

Hilkert speaks of the Pentecost event as the historical space where the Spirit empowered both men and women disciples to preach. This gift of preaching from the Spirit continues today through our baptism and confirmation. All can name grace, but there are some who are called to preach through the Spirit and who are gifted in this ministry for the sake of the Church (Hilkert 2010 (2), 53-60). This differentiation between naming grace and preaching is important. The Spirit inspires some in a specific way, but all can engage in the naming of God's grace, which allows for the charism to be experienced by more than just those who are vowed religious.

The Authority of Women Religious' Leadership as Gift from God

Women religious have a special role within the Church. As Vatican II reclaimed the importance of the role of the laity, Deacon describes the role of religious thusly:

Embracing the universal call to holiness and the centrality of our baptismal commitment highlighted in the council documents, we [women religious] walked more closely with the whole people of God. The documents called on Catholics to be more involved in the world. It stressed that we are all called to be women and men of the church and of the gospel, but as consecrated religious it becomes our central focus. Catholic sisters gradually understood that we have a mission to proclaim and enact Christ's gospel call both through our ministry in the church and in society (Deacon 2021, 6).

Like all the baptized, women religious are called to live out their faith within the world, using the gifts given to them by God to serve in mission. Catherine of Siena, although she lived hundreds of years prior to the Second Vatican Council, is exemplary of one who used her gifts for mission. Her experience of witnessing suffering, and needing to respond, required Catherine to serve others. Whether it was those sick with the plague, those living in political and ecclesial brokenness due to the situation in the Church and world at the time, or those searching for God, Catherine responded to the suffering with

direct service, sent letters to those who held offices of authority, and served as a spiritual director. Her leadership may not have been within the official structures of the Church, but she affected the structures through her extensive letter writing—including influencing the Pope. Other women have followed in this path through ministry in hospitals, Church, and educational leadership.

Like her contemporaries and elders in the Order, who focus on liberative theologies, Mary Catherine Hilkert connects preaching to the suffering in the world. She names women who have known suffering and speak about it with the authority of Catherine of Siena. She uses Thea Bowman, Maya Angelou, Helen Prejean, Dolores Huerta, Dorothy Day, and Jane Goodall, along with mothers and grandmothers, as just a few examples:

Their authority emerged in part from the undeniable fact that they have known suffering—in their own bodies, in their families and countries, in the religious bodies to which they belong. Women’s courage to speak from their experience of love and of suffering comes from their own bodies and from the often marginal places in the political, social, and ecclesial bodies of which they are an integral, if often unrecognized part. Women know from their experience, as did Catherine of Siena in her multivalent symbol of the “blood of Jesus,” that in a world of sin, love and suffering are intertwined. They know, too, the power of God at work in their lives and families and communities, sustaining them and opening up unexpected possibilities of reconciliation and hope. Both the life and the death that they have experienced are sources of knowledge and grace for the body of Christ and the body politic (Hilkert 2001, 140-141).

Women, through their experiences, can name the grace in the situations of suffering.

Their voices bring a fullness to the preaching of Christ’s work in the world. Their leadership addresses the suffering and responds to it in specific ways.

Women’s leadership often came at a cost to their well-being, with competing demands in their roles as leaders and religious, and their skills came from the gifts of

convent life. When it came to nursing care in early America, women religious were successful as the order and organization of convent life, plus good hygiene skills and regular washing of linens, set up exemplary care. This was seen in several times of war, with the Civil War being notable. Communities allowed the women flexibility from their regular schedules to provide better care for patients as they took in people from both sides of the Civil War. This leadership provided the foundation for future hospitals (Metz 1989, 39-68). The women's gifts and talents, along with creativity and flexibility, gave way to new ministries and places of leadership.

Women religious were also educated, which allowed them to serve as teachers. They were taught religion, as well as other basic subjects, and proper manners (Caruso 2012, 27-28). These were skills elite families also sought for their daughters. However, women religious didn't limit education to just the upper class, although that is where some focused their teaching efforts. They set up schools to educate immigrant children, Catholic children in parishes, Black, and Indigenous children. The call for women religious to found many new schools was based, in part, on an 1884 decision by the US Bishops that a Catholic school should be established at every parish (Caruso 2012, 14). As we know now, there is a complex history in the education of Indigenous children in the US and Canada, but schools were another place where women have held leadership roles at all levels. Women religious were also on the front lines of the Civil Rights movement with Thea Bowman being particularly notable in her invitation to address the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and her part in establishing the National Black Catholic Sisters Conference. She may be one of the most famous women religious, but others also participated in the March on Washington and assisted in various ways. Sr.

Thea Bowman is one of a few African Americans who has been brought forward for the Cause for Canonization. Currently, there are no African American saints (Bowman n.d.).

When it comes to higher education, Sr. Joan Delaplane, a Dominican sister of Adrian, Michigan was the first Catholic president of the North American Academy of Homiletics, serving in 1988 (Academy of Homiletics 2021). Although technically prohibited from preaching in liturgical settings within the Catholic Church, she taught preaching in a seminary which was a remarkable accomplishment. A state-of-the-art preaching lab with recording and streaming devices was named after her at Aquinas Institute of Theology following her retirement. Many people were taught to preach by this leader in the field. Many other Dominican women have used writing as their medium for preaching. Texts such as *A Maryknoll Liturgical Year* (Coode and McNeely 2012), *Taking Up the Cross: New Testament Interpretations Through Latina and Feminist Eyes* (Reid 2007), *Ostriches, Dung Beetles, and Other Spiritual Masters: A Book of Wisdom from the Wild* (McLaughlin 2009), and *Blessings Upon Blessings* (Shonk 2010), are just a few texts that include Scripture reflections by Dominican women.

In more recent history, women religious took leadership in a new direction during the Apostolic Visitation of women religious in the US and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). They networked, found creative ways to respond and speak their truth and, ultimately, received support from lay people throughout the US as their lifestyle, ministry, authenticity, and faithfulness were examined. This is the period in which I entered my congregation. Religious life in general was already at a place of uncertainty, and a Vatican visitation added another layer to that ambiguity. Women who are entering religious life today are in many ways like the early founders—pioneers of a

path that is still unfolding. The leadership needed now is different from what most of our congregational membership was trained for—being principals of schools or administrators in a set model. It requires creativity, flexibility, and collaboration. These same qualities were seen throughout the history of women religious, which is why religious life has continued to evolve and respond to the signs of the times. It is a leadership that is not about power and prestige, but about respect and authenticity.

Religious Life as Consecration for Mission

Nadine Foley, in her 1989 LCWR Presidential Address, discusses the role of consecration in relation to mission. She examines the theology of consecration as first, being set apart from the world, then as it is used in the Gospel of John, joined in God's mission:

We are indeed consecrated, sanctified, as among those who are joined into Jesus and his mission. We are part of the mystery of his ongoing presence and redemptive activity, a reality that draws us to constant reflective prayer. Along with all the baptized we are a missioned people. If we are separated, it is because we are to be separated from the spirit of the world to live in the spirit of Jesus under the impulse of the Holy Spirit (Foley 2014, 45).

Within the Catholic tradition, all baptized are called to participate in the mission of Jesus. How we live out that mission is specific to our vocation. Women religious have a particular role in this missionary activity; this is demonstrated through their vows and ministerial activity. Just as each of the Apostles and disciples went out in different directions, preaching the good news to communities locally and in what is now Asia, Africa, and Europe, religious communities have calls that require different responses and different gifts. The charism of each religious community is a gift to the Church and world

but is not limited to just the religious community, as others may also have those gifts.

Foley continues,

Therein lies our witness: to be visible by the intensity of our unique commitment to the mission of Jesus in vowed communities of ministerial service. We are consecrated for mission in active ministerial communities, and mission is our witness. We are ultimately to be sources of unity and reconciliation in all that we do and so to further the coming of the Reign of God. In that sense, along with all the faithful, we can and must be eschatological witnesses (Foley 2014, 46).

Particularly for women within the context of religious life, Foley states,

We women religious are women, a group within the larger set of women in the church. We have not eschewed our womanhood by entering into a vowed religious life. What we have done is to bring the “feminine,” or “partnership” view of human relations, and its unique consciousness, to the arena of church ministry. And what we most desire is to find the ways to render it truly effective both within the church and in the society wherein we carry on our active ministerial work even at the risk of being labeled tenderhearted (Foley 2014, 49).

Women religious, even as their numbers are declining in the US, still have an important role to play in both church and society. The smaller numbers are not something that should be a concern overall, as they are comparable to the numbers of religious before the “boom” in the mid-1900s, which many sociological studies have examined. Post-war work options, possibilities of education, and an alternative to motherhood as women’s rights came to fruition are all possible causes. Were fewer people called, or were they called to live out their baptismal calling in new ways during and after the Second Vatican Council? The answer doesn’t really matter, but what does is that fewer women religious now means that they must again be intentional about sharing their charism and mission with others, rather than relying on their own sisters to fulfill all ministerial positions. Somehow, the call of women religious is still integral to the mission

of Dominican higher education, even as the people who live out the charism and are served by the mission changes over time.

A Theology of Dominican Education

Jesus was an effective preacher due, in part, to his knowledge of Jewish scriptures. When he was challenged on the law and the teachings of the prophets, he found ways to interpret scripture that were in the service of those in need, rather than focus on a strict literal interpretation. St. Dominic and the early Dominicans used similar skills. They countered the heretical teachings of the Albigensians by not only living simply, which countered the example of some other Church leaders, and by knowing the scriptures and preaching the Gospel. Education became central to the Dominicans, who often served in urban areas, both to ensure Dominicans were educated and that they educated others. Thomas Aquinas and his student Albert the Great are examples of two great scholars—the first in theology and the second in science. Other Dominicans, like Fra Angelico was an expert artist. Even Martin de Porres, a mixed-race brother who was often treated as a second-class citizen, practiced medicine in Peru. Like Jesus and the Apostles, all these men used their knowledge and prayer to better society in their local circumstances.

Throughout history, there have also been women who have used their skills in the service of the Order. However, they have not historically had the same access to education that the male Dominicans have. As Margaret Ormond writes, in comparing Dominican women with Thomas Aquinas, Meister Eckhart, and other Dominican theologians of the past,

With rare exception, however, Dominican women did not receive this kind of encouragement or direction, for a variety of reasons. Down through the centuries there has been some uncertainty about how Dominican women participate in the Order's theological vocation. Regrettably, there was a gender distinction that lasted until well into the middle of the twentieth century (Ormond 2005, 9-10).

Most formal theology was done by men, specifically clergy, before the mid-1900s.

Ormond continues:

I can hear Jesus and Dominic saying: 'How often have I tried to bring together your children, as a hen gathers her young under her wings, but you refused.' (cf. LK 13:14). Providing a bridge over the waters of gender, power and exclusion, this work [of Dominican theology] attempts to cut the distance between God and ourselves, between men and women, and between the rich and the poor (Ormond 2005, 10).

Today, Dominicans of all kinds and from every corner of the world are doing the work of theology. Contextual theology, arising from the experience of ministry, founded in prayer and study of the scriptures, is at the heart of the work that Dominican theologians offer to the Church and universities today. Of course, there are specialists in systematics, ecclesiology, ethics, and every branch of theology as well. Education is part of the mission of Jesus and continues to be part of the mission of Dominicans today—preparing students to use their knowledge for Church and society. The Catholic Dominican Intellectual Tradition is outlined on the international website of the Order of Preachers as follows:

The Constitutions of the Order of Preachers states that "St. Dominic, in founding the Order, was truly innovative; he intimately linked study to the ministry of salvation" (LCO, 76). Thus for 800 years the Dominicans have fiercely devoted themselves to the rigorous study of Sacred Scripture, philosophy, the natural sciences, and theology. Our study, however, does not remain in the realm of arcane speculation. Instead, it is handed on for the salvation of others through our preaching and teaching. For the Dominican, "study is ordered to preaching, and preaching to the salvation of souls" (De Vita Regulari, VIII). Blessed Humbert gives an extensive list praising the usefulness and goodness of study, a list which cannot thoroughly be exhausted here:

–Study “forms the interior man” and gives life to the exterior practices of religious life.

–Study is useful for others since “we are not able to preach, or give counsel, or hear confessions, or sow spiritual truths, unless vigorous study dwells among us.”

–Study allows us to love God more since “the more we know about God, the greater occasion we have for loving and serving Him.”

–Study, especially of the Scriptures, refreshes and comforts the soul of the student (*Ordo Praedicatorum* 2021).

Study is connected to life, prayer, service, and preaching. For Dominicans, it is integral to the charism and connected to the salvation proclaimed by Jesus. It is at the heart of the life of all Dominicans. Now, women religious are some of the most highly educated women in the country. In 2011, the year I entered religious life, one-fourth of all women entering religious communities had a graduate degree and six in ten had a bachelor’s degree (USCCB 2011). Formal academic study is part of the Dominican women’s formation today.

Catholic education at its best is dialogical and involves a praxis of inclusion.

Timothy Radcliffe, the former Master General of the Order of Preachers, wrote of one of his most influential professors:

It [further education] began at Oxford, mainly at Blackfriars but also at the university, where I took a degree in theology. I had the good fortune to study with a Dominican called Cornelius Ernst. His father was Anglo-Dutch and Anglican. His mother was Sri-Lankan and a Buddhist. In his young days in Sri Lanka, he was a communist until he was expelled from the party for his deviant views. He came to Cambridge to study and was a pupil of the philosopher Wittgenstein. He was one of the ‘young Cambridge poets.’ Eventually he found that only Catholicism was big enough to combine his father’s Anglicanism, his mother’s Buddhism, the communism of his youth and the philosophy he had learned to love with Wittgenstein. He found his home in the Church (Radcliffe 2001, 25).

Radcliffe's description of Ernst depicts the depth and breadth of the Catholic intellectual tradition. It is inclusive of history, tradition, art, poetry, philosophy, and it bridges a multiplicity of ideas. Radcliffe continues:

He was a man with an extraordinary breadth of vision and interest, symbolized by the opening words of one lecture, when he announced that he would consider the Prologue of St John's gospel in the light of later poetry of Rimbaud and recent mathematical theory! Not that I understood a word of it! He was not an easy man to understand; his writings are extremely dense. But he combined a deep sense of the Church and its tradition with a real sense of modernity and its questions. With him, I discovered that tradition and creativity need not be opposed (Radcliffe 2001, 26).

Fr. Radcliffe's experience of education is just one story of many. Dominican sisters often taught several subjects. They became master teachers and nurses, scientists, and theologians, depending on their ministry and the education they received, which was often obtained over several summers, and necessary if they were to be effective in their ministries. Women religious became highly educated and shared that knowledge with the students they taught. These women continue to follow in the tradition of Jesus and Dominic—learning, understanding their situation, and applying knowledge from different fields to the situations in which they find themselves.

In the Dominican Intellectual Tradition, education is not just for the sake of consuming knowledge. Educators are not meant to be recognized as the best and the brightest, even if they are that in their field. For Dominicans, knowledge is gained for the sake of being shared. In fact, it is not just knowledge, but wisdom that is sought through contemplation, or a prayerful reflection on information.

Saint Thomas Aquinas, O.P., famously wrote in his *Summa Theologica* that “as it is better to enlighten than merely to shine, so is it better to give to others the fruits of one's contemplation than merely to contemplate” (II-II.188.6c0). This sharing of what has been contemplated is precisely the kind of preaching typified by the

Dominican life. Dominicans are called to a profound life of contemplation in order to engage in contemplative preaching. According to Fr. Antoninus Wall, O.P., Preaching passes on to others the interior perfection of contemplation in the most complete manner since it not only moves the intellect to know the truth, but also the will to an affective and effective love for it.” For the Dominican, this profound ability to move hearts and minds towards the love of God is brought on through a loving and faithful adherence to all the elements of the Dominican life (*Ordo Praedicatorum* “Charism”).

Preaching and teaching are intertwined in their call to contemplate truth and share the wisdom gained from Scripture, as well as many other subjects and knowledge sources. This is the unique contribution that Catholic, and specifically Dominican education, offers to the world. In following Jesus, who similarly knew a lot about the Jewish tradition, as well as trades like fishing, farming, and carpentry, Catholic education integrates basic knowledge with prayerful application. We see this in the ministry of Jesus as he is tempted in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11). He is challenged to perform miracles but reworks the challenges by using his knowledge of Scripture to fight back with wisdom. Similarly, when Jesus and the disciples are questioned about working on the Sabbath, as they pick grains for food and heal people, Jesus draws on the other examples of Scripture when his Jewish ancestors needed food and worked on the Sabbath. Jesus counters the argument about not healing on the Sabbath with the fact that animals must be fed and watered on the Sabbath to survive, which should be an argument for helping humans to survive as well (Luke: 6:1-11; 13:10-17). Knowing the law was useful but integrating that with the knowledge of Scripture enabled Jesus to be wise in complex situations that required pastoral responses.

Dominican Spirituality: A Complex Integration of Four Pillars

Sandra Schneiders, in writing about religious life, describes the complexities of the spiritualities of religious communities:

...Because the charism of ministerial Religious Life has a history almost as long as that of the Church and has been resourced by numerous spiritualities—both generic such as desert or urban, and special such as Benedictine or Redemptorist, both devotional and theological such as Mariam or Eucharistic, or even national and ethnic such as American, French, or Celtic—it should not surprise or dismay Religious communities to discover that their spirituality is a braid of influences rather than a single, totally distinct product of the unitary vision of a single founder or foundress. (Schneiders 2000, 299).

Schneiders may be the most articulate in explaining why it is so difficult for religious communities to define their charism in a simple mission statement, or their spirituality in a phrase. Even among Dominicans, influences based on when and where the congregation was founded impact the congregation's spirituality. The Dominican colleges and universities in this study were all founded by ministerial, as opposed to contemplative, Dominican women. However, the roots of the congregations are varied. Several congregations are part of the "Regensburg Tree." Sisters from a monastery in Regensburg, Germany, were asked to come to the US in the 1800s. From this original US foundation came many US congregations. Other congregations have completely US-based roots and were founded by priests who instructed them in Dominican spirituality. Others have English, Polish, or other European roots. Often serving in Catholic immigrant ghettos, congregations then would often draw from ethnic groups. My own congregation and the Sparkill Dominicans, having established many schools in the Bronx, drew mostly Irish Americans into their congregations. Others pulled from German American, Polish American, or Italian American neighborhoods. Now, sisters tend to be

more diverse, but many still come from immigrant communities. The landscape has changed, and newer sisters are more likely to be Latina or Vietnamese than Irish or German immigrants.

The four pillars of Dominican life: Prayer, Study, Community, and Preaching are integral to Dominican spirituality, and the terms are used internationally and among friars, sisters, and laity. That being said, there are not necessarily universal understandings of the four pillars. Each is influenced by the vocation the Dominican is living. For example, for friars, preaching could refer to pulpit preaching during Mass, whereas for sisters and laity, preaching necessarily needs to include a more expansive definition. Threads of cultural influence also impact how each pillar is lived out. Older sisters may see themselves primarily as teachers or nurses, rather than preachers. Young adults may understand the preaching pillar more as service, as that is easier for educational institutions to communicate than preaching outside of the traditional ministerial sense. Don Goergen, OP, professor at Aquinas Institute of Theology implies that the four pillars aren't inclusive enough of the many threads of Dominican spirituality. He includes truth, friendship, freedom, and integration as additional pillars (Goergen n.d.).

Like Scripture, the Dominican charism is not stagnant; it continues to develop and be interpreted in the current context. One of the great mottos of the Dominican Order comes from St. Thomas Aquinas: "To contemplate truth and to share with others the fruits of this contemplation." The preaching charism of Dominic continued in Aquinas with academic study and teaching. In the early missions to Central and South America, the charism included anti-racism in its earliest format, as Dominicans fought for the

rights of Indigenous people and people of color. Today, this continues to be a focus of many Dominican congregations as they address their own history of participating in racist structures within the US. Care for creation, a focus of Pope Francis, has also been an aspect of the Dominican charism that has grown in recent years. All of this can be tied to preaching, in that it draws from what Good news, or truth, needs to be spoken for the sake of the most vulnerable and marginalized. However, this preaching isn't the same form that Dominic envisioned when he founded the Order of Preachers to address the heresies of his day.

Charism and Mission Today

Having a charism is not new. Returning to the Pentecost moment in the New Testament (Acts 2: 1-12), we see how the Holy Spirit provides gifts to individuals and groups. At that moment, the gift was of understanding languages, so that the story of Jesus could be communicated within Jewish communities. Later, in the Letter to the Corinthians, specific gifts, or charisms, are named and these gifts are not just for the individual, but for the sake of others (1 Corinthians 1: 1-11). In the current *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, charism is defined as follows:

The Holy Spirit is “the principle of every vital and truly saving action in each part of the Body. He works in many ways to build up the whole Body in charity: by God’s Word “which is able to build you up”; by Baptism, through which he forms Christ’s Body; by the sacraments, which give growth and healing to Christ’s members; by “the grace of the apostles, which holds first place among his gifts”; by the virtues, which make us act according to what is good; finally, by the many special graces (called “charisms”) by which he makes the faithful “fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church.”

Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world.

Charisms are to be accepted with gratitude by the person who receives them and by all members of the Church as well (Catechism 1995, 798-800).

Mary Ann Weisenbeck describes the charism of an institution through identifiers:

The following seven indicators make it possible to form criteria by which a charism can be recognized: a dynamic prompting and experience of the Spirit; fidelity in witnessing to some aspect of the Trinitarian Mystery; the evangelical intentions of the founders; the example of the founder's holiness or the pattern of God's wisdom and power exemplified in human experience; a constant renewal and desire to be conformed to Christ; Ecclesial awareness in serving the mission, responding with genuine creativity; and openness to discernment and confirmation by the church (Weisenbeck 2008, 16).

It is these criteria that are most helpful in examining charism formation and mission integration in Dominican institutions of higher education. It includes the gifts given to the foundress and the congregation, the ongoing work of God as community needs change, and the engagement of those who participate in the mission. The definitions provided at the end of this project provide clarity about the specifics of Dominican sisters in the US and the Dominican charism, as defined by the Dominicans at the international level. The order of preachers, more commonly referred to as Dominicans, are named after their founder, St. Dominic. In accord with the official statute in the Catholic Church, they use the letters, "OP," after their names. However, Order of Preachers and Dominicans are interchangeable terms when it comes to referring to members of the order.

Summary

The Dominican charism of preaching, or naming grace, is as important today as it was in the time of St. Dominic. Drawing on the Gospels for examples, Dominican higher

education provides a place for those on the margins to be lifted through education. Through collaboration and the search for truth, done through study and prayer in the context of community, education can be in the service of others and excellence. Over 800 years of the Dominican tradition provide resources for continuing to draw on the charism—the gift of the Holy Spirit to individuals, communities, and institutions—and adapt it to the signs of the times. The call to religious life in the Dominican tradition and the call to serve in a Dominican institution both draw on the Catholic Intellectual Tradition as contemplating truth and sharing the fruits of that contemplation with others. This is the unique theological aspect of a Dominican education.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Various qualitative methods form the basis of this study regarding the professionals responsible for mission integration and promoting the Dominican charism in thirteen Dominican higher education campuses.

Research and Data Collection Methods

Doing qualitative research during a global pandemic has had some atypical limitations, related to personal safety, travel bans, and local and university restrictions. For portions of the past two years, many universities had faculty and staff working from home, with little access to campus and campus life. Some have furloughed or laid off employees as the economics of the pandemic have impacted the university's income.

In the month that I conducted surveys, three people left their positions, one position was still open, and there was a major leadership change at another institution. The pandemic has impacted not only research, but also small Catholic institutions. I had proposed the ideal scenario for researching this project, but there were limitations due to pandemic restrictions and personnel changes. The uncertainty brought about by the pandemic heightened the uncertainty already faced by academic institutions run by women religious.

According to Sensing, "At the heart of D. Min. programs is the intent that projects serve the church, develop ministerial practice, and be applicable to other practitioners in the field" (Sensing 2011, xv). A qualitative approach, including surveys, interviews,

document reviews, and observations provided a robust body of work to analyze for best practices. I relied on experts, Dominican sisters, and leaders in mission in higher education, who shared what they incorporate in mission integration and charism formation. As colleges and universities regularly go through the process of accreditation, the information they provided will prove beneficial for their unique review, as well as to contribute to a body of work that can support the Dominican mission across institutions.

My first step was to create and send a survey to the individual(s) responsible for charism formation and/or mission integration at each of the Dominican colleges and universities that were founded by communities of Dominican women affiliated with the Dominican Sisters Conference (Dominican Sisters Conference 2021). Identifiers (name, position, vowed/lay, educational credentials, ministerial experience, and time at the institution) of those being surveyed are important both to understand the scope of their knowledge and allow for any needed follow up. The survey questions included:

1. What do you see as key components of the Dominican charism?
2. Do you focus charism education around the Four Dominican Pillars? If so, how do you define them?
3. How is the Dominican mission fostered at your institution?
4. How are faculty, staff, board members, or other key stakeholders formed in the Dominican charism and mission?
5. Is the mission focused specifically through a Catholic lens or for a broader audience?
6. How are students taught about the Dominican charism and mission? Are there formal courses related to the mission and Catholic identity? Are there required

courses? Are there curriculum requirements that are integrated into courses? If you have a significant adult student population, are they included in mission education in the same ways or different ways than traditional students?

7. How is Catholic Dominican prayer/spirituality incorporated on campus? Is it optional or included in required events?
8. Please list any specific Dominican celebrations or heritage opportunities that occur on campus.
9. As an institution founded by Dominican women, what do you see as being key components of leadership in the institution? Is there anything noticeably different in the leadership here than in other places you have worked?

The responses to these questions provided a basis for follow-up interviews, which were conducted at four of the original institutions surveyed. Rather than additional questions, participants were asked to provide additional details about their responses. For example, “What is included in courses about the Dominican charism?” and “Should there be additional information provided to students in courses?” or “Tell me more about how you see women’s leadership impacting campus.”

The interviews were conducted as part of four site visits, which included interviews with professionals who had been surveyed, and additional personnel who were recommended by the university contacts. In visiting these Dominican institutions of higher education, representing different congregations and regions, I hoped to gain a sense of how the Dominican charism is communicated in campus signs, symbols, and other aspects of campus life. The following checklist was used during campus visits:

1. Are there vowed Dominicans ministering on campus?

2. Is there a motherhouse or convent adjacent to campus? If so, is there a relationship between the campus and the sisters' residence?
3. Does the university logo include Dominican symbols (shield, cross, etc.)? Does the mascot or motto of the university include Dominican symbols or phrases?
4. Is there a Chapel on campus and does it include any Dominican art?
5. Are there statues and artwork throughout campus of Dominican saints or that represent the founding congregation?
6. Are there Dominican mottos or names for campus buildings?
7. Does the campus layout facilitate Catholic Dominican life? (Is the campus ministry office or other offices responsible for promoting the charism easily accessible?)

Although symbols and visuals in and of themselves don't convey the charism, in connection with narrative and other informative experiences, they are a reminder of the school's heritage.

Finally, document review is an important way to understand charism formation and mission. For this, I reviewed websites, admissions materials, student handbooks, and other related collateral identified as being specifically about the charism and mission of each of the four universities chosen for site visits.

Given the nature of charism formation and mission integration processes, I expected that there would be little, if any, information shared that is confidential. Unlike formation for religious life—which includes psychological examinations, regular meetings with formation directors and the leadership of the congregation, and spiritual direction—formation within a ministry setting tends to be an open process meant to be

widely shared and engaged. Public lectures and symbols, online processes, courses, and other information is typically public. Also, as I interviewed the individuals responsible for promoting the charism, rather than students or other employees, I expected that the information shared would be public. Individuals provided permission to use their names in connection with any quotes. Similarly, in campus observations, photographing some areas of campus was helpful as evidence of the charism on campus. All university guidelines regarding photographing students or employees were followed.

Surveys were sent to those identified as being professionals responsible for mission at each of the 13 Dominican colleges and universities. In some cases, this was the vice president for mission, the chancellor, a person who is specially appointed for mission, or the campus minister. The fact that many different positions are responsible for charism formation and mission education made this a challenging process. Depending upon the position, information that was gleaned about students, faculty, and overall university ideals differed based on the role of the individual responding. Similarly, including both lay and vowed religious or ordained ministers within the same college or university provided different perspectives. The number of personnel directly responsible for mission at a university ranged from one to ten. I did not include college presidents, development directors, admissions recruiters, or others in student life, as mission—as it pertains to charism promotion—is not their primary role. Also, limits of scope were important, both for the purpose of keeping the project manageable and for consistency between universities. In total, 41 surveys were sent out and responses were received from 13 individuals, representing 10 of the 13 colleges and universities. It may be noteworthy that one school I did not receive a response from had one person responsible for mission; that

person had left, and the position had not been filled at the time of the survey. An interim person, who had another full-time position, was covering mission work. Similarly, during the time the survey was open, several people were in the process of leaving their positions, some of whom went on to serve at other Dominican institutions.

Setting

The initial surveys were conducted electronically. Follow-up interviews and site visits to campuses were conducted on four campuses in three regions of the country—the Midwest, the Northeast, and the South. Two campuses were chosen in the Northeast as one is rural and the other is suburban, sharing a campus with a Motherhouse, which none of the other college site visits included.

Data Collection

For the initial survey, an introductory email was sent with the IRB Exempt Informed Consent Form attached. Embedded in the email was a direct link to a Google form for the survey. The emails were sent from my Seattle University email directly to each participant's academic email address. The results of the Google form are on the highest level of security; that is, they are not shared with anyone who does not have my personal login information. Although identifiers were requested (name, title, years at the university, educational and ministerial background, and vocation as lay, ordained, or religious), they were not required to submit the survey, so individuals could have left this information out for anonymity purposes. With that, each participant voluntarily included all their personal identifiers. Due to technical issues, one person sent their responses via email, rather than through the form.

Site visits included interviews with both people included in the initial survey and other professionals who could provide insights into the ways in which the mission is communicated. Three site visits were held in person. One was held virtually through a series of video conferences and the sharing of electronic materials and campus photos.

Data Analysis

Following the initial surveys, responses were coded for common responses and frequency, as well as themes. Some responses were repetitive and were only coded once per respondent. During site visits, notes were taken by hand or typed, then framed in a narrative report. Photos of campuses were taken to record specific art and objects that reflect mission (Corbin 1990).

Summary of Procedures

As an exempt research project, the respondents provided consent through their survey responses and email consent to site visit interviews. No vulnerable populations were included in the study, although minors or those who could be considered vulnerable may have been present on campus. Photos were only taken in public spaces and no photos of individuals will be shared in the project or related presentations.

Ethical Considerations

Only those professionals, i.e., paid staff, who volunteered were surveyed or interviewed as part of the process. Responses were made anonymous, as much as possible, in the written report.

Summary

The people who are carrying on the tradition of mission integration and charism formation were integral to this study. Through surveys and interviews, as well as hosting site visits and providing inside knowledge about institutions, they shared the ways in which the mission is alive today, challenges for their specific institution, and hopes for future collaboration.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

The ways in which Dominican institutions of higher education form their constituents in the charism through mission integration is key to keeping the foundational spirit of the institution alive as fewer sisters are available to serve in the institutions. Approaches include orientations, courses, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, service, religious practices, art, symbols, and other visuals on campus. The following analysis includes data from the initial survey, which was sent to those responsible for mission at thirteen Dominican colleges and universities. Following the survey results are narratives from four site visits representing Dominican colleges and universities in three regions, urban and rural settings, and with lay or religious leadership at the top levels. These snapshots provide additional details, as well as commonalities and differences among the ways in which Dominican institutions integrate their mission on the campuses. The narratives also note reasons why specific approaches are taken, whether it is from directives of administration, responses to student and faculty need, or resources that are available.

Data Descriptions, Analyses, Results

First, some demographics of the respondents may be helpful to set the context, which includes responses to the introductory questions of the survey. As mentioned earlier, thirteen people responded, representing ten of the thirteen Dominican colleges and universities. Of the respondents, five are in the Midwest, six in the Northeast, and

two in the South. Five of the respondents are vowed Dominicans, six are lay people and two identify as “other.” “Other” accounts for those who are ordained, but not Dominican, or affiliation with other religious communities. As expected in an institution of higher education, the respondents are well educated with five having doctoral degrees, seven having master’s degrees, and one having a bachelor’s degree. Most have theology or religious studies as one of their degrees or significant religious formation through either preparation for vows or ordination. As to relevant ministerial or work experience, five had previously been campus ministers, six served in other Dominican institutions, two in congregational leadership, three in other religious sponsored institutions, six as teachers or professors, four in parishes, one as a spiritual director, two in post-grad service years (one was a Dominican volunteer and another was a volunteer in a similar program with a different religious community), and one worked in social work. The variety of related ministerial work reflects both how religious women were assigned to ministries over time and how younger adults have followed their calling to ministry through different paths. The following graphs illustrate the respondents’ geographic locations, vocations, highest degrees earned, and previous work experience.

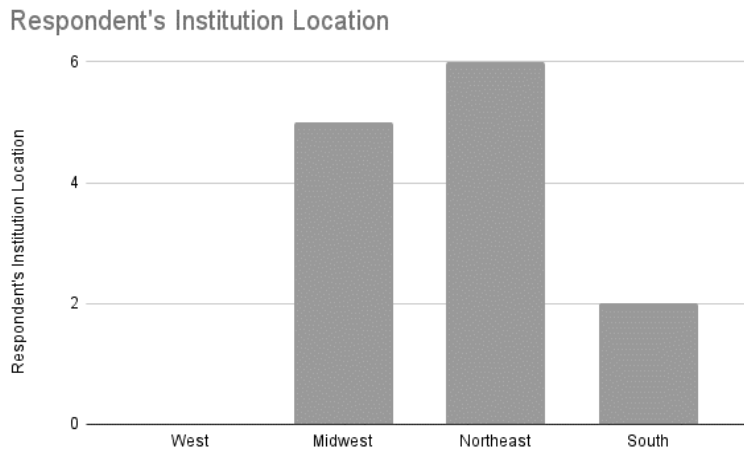


Figure 1. Geographic location of respondents, representing ten of the thirteen Dominican institutions.

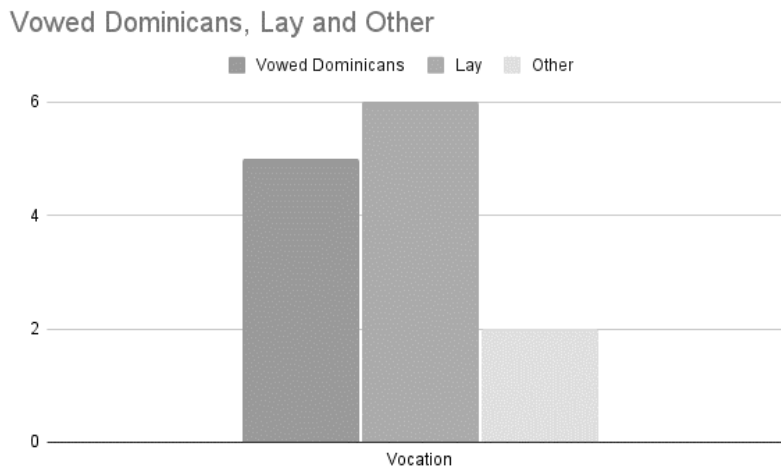


Figure 2. The vocation of respondents. "Other" includes those who are vowed in other communities or ordained, but not Dominican.

Respondent Education

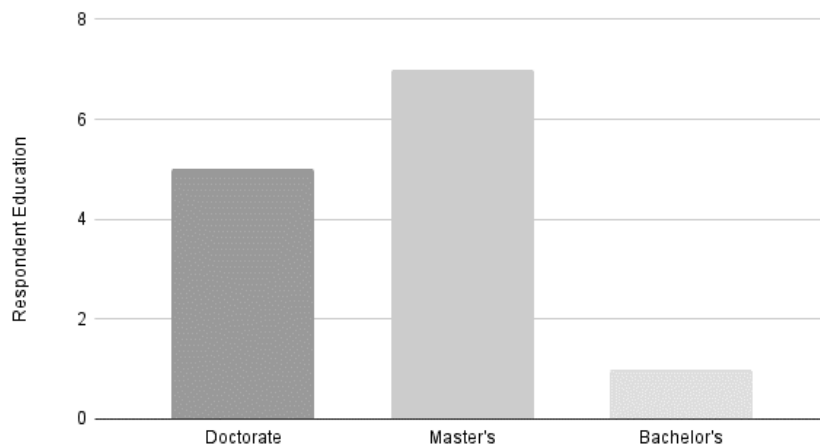


Figure 3. The highest degree earned by each respondent.

Relevant Previous Work Experience vs.

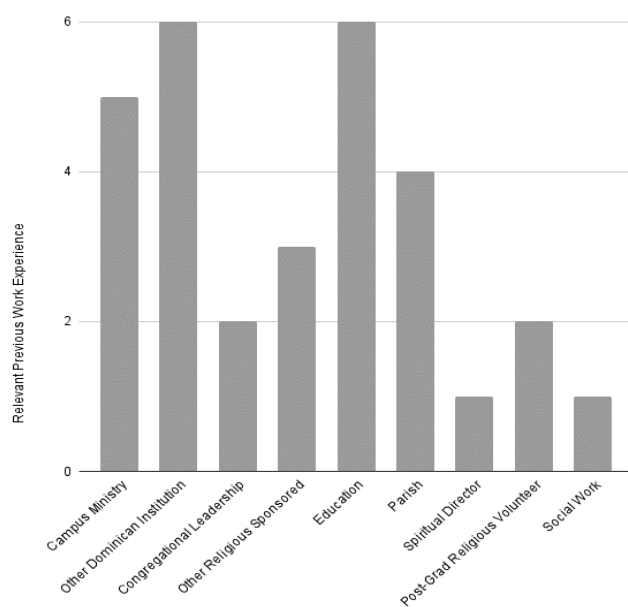


Figure 4. Related previous ministry or work experiences of respondents currently serving in mission positions. Multiple responses from respondents are included, accounting for a total of more than thirteen.

Survey Response Results

In response to the first survey question, “What do you see as key components of the Dominican charism?” many commonalities emerged. In my own formation, I have typically understood “Prayer, Study, Community, and Preaching” as the four Dominican pillars. These were all named in the survey responses, although sometimes using slightly different terms. In addition, specific Dominican mottos, such as “Truth” or “Contemplation and Action” or “To Bless, To Praise, To Preach” are fairly well known. Similarly, the role of service and social justice has a long history in the Dominican Order and were the reason for many of the foundations of Dominican women’s congregations in the US. It is unsurprising that these themes appear throughout the responses, albeit sometimes with different wording. Some other themes appeared as outliers, but they were also connected to the common themes named above.

As would be expected at higher education institutions, ten responses included “Study.” I was surprised that it wasn’t included in all the responses; however, a later question about the four pillars makes it clear that study is important to the definition of the four Dominican pillars across the board. In addition to study, “truth” or “pursuit of truth” was mentioned five times. As one of the Dominican mottos, truth has a specific role in the charism, so it is not surprising that it is identified as an element separate from study. “*Disputatio*” and “discussion of issues” were included in three responses. Both are connected to study and the search for truth, but again are specific Dominican ways of speaking about debate and learning. Similar to the “Socratic method,” “*Disputatio*” might be considered the Dominican method of engagement used with those who think differently from oneself.

Similarly, as one of the four pillars, “community” was mentioned ten times, and other terms, such as “neighbors,” “presence in the world,” and “relationship” were each mentioned once. It is not surprising that community was an element that almost all participants identified. Unlike other elements, it crosses religious borders, which also seems to be important to how the mission is carried out at Dominican institutions.

Eight responses included “preaching” while seven responses included “service” and three included “social justice.” I am including these together, because in the question about the Four pillars, preaching is often substituted with service. A common understanding of preaching is a minister standing at a pulpit. For Dominicans, this is one of many ways in which people preach and another is “preaching with our lives,” which is how most non-ordained Dominicans preach on a daily basis, and which includes service and social justice. Preaching the Gospel includes bringing hope and good news to the marginalized and those in need. For students, faculty, and staff at Dominican institutions it may look more like volunteering than traditional pulpit preaching.

Full development of the “human person,” “dignity of all,” “promotion of the arts,” and “Catholic Social Teaching,” were all single responses. I see these as connected to community and preaching, as the first two are related to how community is fostered and the latter two are related to the process and content of preaching.

Responses to the second question, regarding focusing charism education around the four Dominican pillars, still beg the question, “How exactly do Dominicans name the four Dominican pillars?” Although all the respondents recognized their importance, total agreement was not reached on how the four pillars are expressed. Prayer, study, community, and service are the way in which the four pillars are most commonly defined.

However, sometimes, service is replaced with the more traditional pillar of preaching. Prayer is sometimes replaced with spirituality, contemplation, or reflection, to be more inclusive of a student body that may or may not be Catholic or religious. One school listed four pillars that are like the Dominican pillars but do not match the more common language other schools are using: “Educate the Mind, Develop the Self, Serve the Community, Inspire Change.” More often, schools add other elements to the four pillars, such as truth, justice, compassion, community, and partnership, which are specific values of a sponsoring congregation. How the four Dominican pillars are used also varies from school to school. One institution assigns each class a pillar in their first year. Others incorporate them in campus ministry, student life programs, educational programs, or the relationship between coursework and service learning. Although most respondents listed the four pillars, some described how they are intertwined and part of an intersectional praxis. For example, one institution centers their mission around community, which is then connected to service, spirituality, and study. For them, community is the central pillar. Another institution holds study as the central mission of the college, where community, service, and spiritual life intersect. A third notes that contemplative prayer and study are interconnected. Community supports these and service flows from them. Although there are four pillars, the many ways in which they are understood provides for a complexity in articulating a similar mission across the institutions.

In response to the next several survey questions, data has been aggregated into themes, as respondents’ answers did not always clearly fit into one question or another. To begin with, how the mission is incorporated into campus life differs greatly between campuses and there seems to be some correlation between the number of staff members

responsible for mission and the approaches to mission education. The campuses with an administrator responsible for mission, a campus ministry staff, and a center tend to have curricular requirements, co-curricular activities, formation for staff and faculty, campus celebrations, and academic opportunities for those outside of the educational institution. The campuses that only have one or two people responsible for mission tend to focus on one or two areas, such as campus celebrations and co-curricular activities. Several institutions have required courses that are, at least in part, focused on forming students in the Dominican tradition. The four pillars are part of this framework but required theology courses, history courses, or other related curriculum may also include information about the Dominican mission and charism. Displaying Dominican art on campus was noted by several respondents as being important for formation. Similarly, service requirements, whether for the whole student body, whole campus, or specific groups, such as athletes, was also a noted commonality among many campuses.

At least two people expressed concern about the lack of sisters on campus and the future of the mission. They indicated that mission was reflected by the sisters, and as their numbers on campus decreased, the focus on mission seemed to waver as well. Some of the sisters who responded indicated that formation of lay people was key to the future mission. I am interested to know if the intentional focus on forming lay people is happening on the campuses where there is concern about a future lack of sisters and if that seems to be a reasonable solution. If not, what more is needed? The site visits provided some insights into this.

The responses to questions about heritage, prayer, and mission at Dominican institutions of higher education, show clear connections between each institution and

their Catholic foundational roots. Founder's Day or Week, as well as celebrations that are tied to Dominican saints are universally noted as important campus celebrations. These celebrations vary in how they are expressed, but lectures on topics related to mission, as well as opportunities to learn about the people who founded the congregation, seem to be a component for most campuses. Similarly, service opportunities, Mass of the Holy Spirit, Baccalaureate Mass, and common meals for celebration days are threads that tie the universities together in the way their mission is expressed. At a few institutions, these celebrations are also a specific opportunity for students to hear from vowed Dominicans in workshops, lectures, addresses, or preaching at liturgies. Finally, candlelight vigils, bonfires, and the blessing of a Christmas creche are ways of connecting heritage celebrations to spirituality and the Catholic tradition.

With a core connection to the Catholic and Dominican heritage, there is also a strong sensitivity to the diversity and background of students on campus. Even though these institutions were founded in the Catholic, Dominican tradition, there is openness to and respect for a plurality of religious backgrounds, including those without any religious affiliation. Some respondents lamented the lack of Catholic prayer and spirituality, in that they have been re-envisioned into self-reflection and lost in the core identity of the institution and Dominican values. Others expressed gratitude for the ways in which spirituality, rather than prayer, has opened the charism to be applicable to more students. Almost universally, the Catholic identity has been shaped to be inclusive of a primarily non-Catholic student body. Elements of the Catholic tradition, such as social justice, spirituality, and care for students on the margins, especially first-generation students who

come from ethnic backgrounds that may be Catholic, are primary ways of demonstrating the Catholic identity on campus.

Prayer, or reflection, seems to be universally incorporated into significant large events on campus such as convocation and graduation. However, it is primarily considered optional outside of a few events that are required for all students. One campus has an expectation that a prayer be included at the beginning of each class. That requirement is not reflected by other respondents from other campuses. Campus ministry was noted as the office that is most often responsible for providing prayer opportunities for students with prayer services and Mass, as well as other occasions such as adoration and reflection on service. Some campuses offer Mass multiple times per week, while one campus has primarily Liturgy of the Word services, due to the lack of priests being available to celebrate. A couple of respondents noted that it is primarily faculty and alumni that attend Mass on campus. Another campus includes student preaching on a regular basis, especially for cultural celebrations like Day of the Dead and the Feast of St. Martin de Porres. Some respondents wish that prayer and spirituality were encouraged on a more regular basis and incorporated into more student events on campus. Others appreciate the diversity of prayer opportunities that reflect the students in attendance.

Curricular requirements vary drastically among the different Dominican colleges and universities. Three universities have no required courses that are directly related to mission, theology, philosophy, or religious studies. On the other end of the spectrum, one university has four courses, part of the core curriculum, which are specifically about the Dominican mission. Most institutions fall somewhere in between, with a few required courses, either in religious studies, philosophy, or theology, or in their first-year

experience courses. In those courses, there is still variety pertaining to whether or how the Catholic and Dominican mission is included. At some institutions, students may take any philosophy or theology course, which may not relate to the mission of the institution.

In response to question four, formation for faculty, staff, and board members, answers varied greatly. A few campuses have multi-year orientation programs and ongoing formation. Others rely on general materials that everyone on campus receives. A few campuses assume that the charism will just be “caught” by being on campus. This last answer was listed as both a positive, in that the charism is thought to be very present on one campus, and as a negative, in that the charism is thought to be barely present on another campus. Again, most campuses fall somewhere in between, with in-service training, one-on-one mentoring, faculty seminars or retreats, and orientation materials as ways in which faculty and staff are given opportunities to learn more about the charism and mission. The following table highlights the participants’ responses regarding course requirements related to mission.

Table 1. Survey responses by college/university of required or optional mission-related aspects in orientation or academic courses.

College/University	Required Orientation incl Mission and Charism	Required theology, philosophy, and religious studies courses	Required other course (first-year experience etc.)	Optional courses
Albertus	Yes	Yes. Some options are Catholic, others are not	Yes, first-year course	
Barry				Optional courses only, no requirements
Caldwell	Yes	Yes		Optional courses that tie into mission
Dominican College	Yes			
Dominican University		Yes. Some options are specific to Catholic and Dominican tradition		Optional courses that tie into mission
Edgewood			No current courses required that relate to mission, but core curriculum is in review and should include a required course in the future.	
Mt. St. Mary's	Yes			Optional courses that tie into mission
Molloy		Yes, some options are specific to the Catholic and Dominican tradition.	Yes, first year course	
Ohio Dominican			Yes, first year course includes mission	
Siena Heights			Four required courses that directly tie into mission, one for each year in the core requirements	

In response to question ten, assessment of charism or mission education is similarly diverse and a challenge noted by several respondents. Higher Learning Commission self-assessment, tools by other accreditation bodies, and the NSSE Catholic module are formal tools used by several campuses. Similarly, course evaluations, program evaluations, evaluation tools from sponsoring communities, surveys, and numbers of participants at mission-related events and service activities were mentioned as ways in which campuses evaluate mission. The pandemic influenced the accuracy of participant counts, as classes went online and events were restricted. Respondents from two campuses mentioned a specific team of people who are responsible for assessing mission effectiveness on campus. One respondent said there was no formal assessment, but the campus size allowed for informal assessments to gauge whether the mission was understood in the campus culture. Two respondents were unsure of assessments on their campus, based on their positions, and two respondents left the answer to this question blank. Consistency between colleges and universities founded by the same congregation is lacking. Where one might have a very strong charism and mission formation program, another may have little to none. Similarly, campuses that were founded by the same congregation may have very different student profiles, be of different size, and rely on sisters or friars as their key mission promoters on campus.

Responses to question nine included collaboration, being relational, interdepartmental conversation, and community focus as key components of leadership at Dominican institutions. Community included the university community, local community, and global connections. One respondent mentioned that unlike other institutions, the focus is not on prestige, but on working together for the betterment of

society and student success. Another mentioned that having a Catholic woman as president was key as they were looking for new leadership for the institution. Several respondents also indicated that leadership is focused on mission, as a contrast to other secular organizations, where it may be focused on personal or financial success. Providing opportunities for students to develop leadership skills was also noted as a key element of Dominican institutions founded by women. Similarly, focusing on diversity—in actuality, not just in conversations—and serving first-generation students were mentioned as important. Two respondents indicated there weren't many differences between their campus and other institutions.

Site Visits

Following the survey, four site visits were conducted. Three sites were initially chosen based on variation on geographic location and variation in numbers of staff members serving in mission-related positions. A fourth site visit was included, as the other three campuses did not have sisters in high-level administrative positions and did not share a campus with a founding congregation's motherhouse. Primarily, site visit interviews were conducted with survey respondents. They also invited others on campus with insights into mission, based on their positions within the university, to be included in the conversations. These additional respondents shared information that would be public, but they shared it through the lens of their position. For example, an admissions counselor provided demographics of students and explained how the admissions office communicates the mission to high school students being recruited. According to *U.S. News and World Reports*, the tuition of the four colleges and universities selected for site

visits have comparable tuition and fees, ranging from the lowest of \$30,000 at Barry University to \$36,132 at Mount St. Mary. Of the four schools, Dominican College has the smallest undergraduate population at 1,310, followed by Mount St. Mary at 1,781, Dominican University at 2,166 and Barry University at 3,532 (U.S. News and World Report 2020). The names of respondents are not included except when their responses are in a public place, such as a university website.

Site Visit #1: Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois

As you arrive on the Dominican University campus, through the main gates, you come to a circle with classic grey stone buildings and well-manicured lawns. In late November, when I arrived, the ivy coating the buildings provided red and orange hues and a large nativity set was on the left, in preparation for Advent, which would begin the following weekend. The campus is small, but spacious. A traditional cloister walk connects several buildings: the original convent, which housed sisters, and one of the main academic halls, both named after sisters in the community. Just shy of 100 years old, the campus has been a fixture in the neighborhood. According to staff members, it was intentionally built outside of downtown Chicago so that students could have a place of beauty in which to study and be inspired.

The Dominican University shield, which draws upon the black and white shield and fleur-de-lis cross of the Dominican Order, has additional flowers. The words “caritas” and “veritas” are also included in the shield and visible on signs marking the entrance to buildings and immediately upon entry into Lewis Hall. Veritas, or truth, is one of the Dominican mottos. Although caritas is not charity, or service as it is translated

at Dominican, it is one of the ways in which the pillar of preaching is interpreted. As you enter Lewis Hall, a room on the right contains pictures of all the former University presidents. One wall is complete with pictures of sisters, many in habit. Across from that is a wall that has just one image, that of the first lay president. She and the current president are both women, which was noted as a priority when they were hiring at Dominican. The Board of Trustees is also 50 percent women and the student body, like many schools, has more women than men. Holding an official federal designation as a Hispanic-serving Institution, Dominican's student population is 60 percent Latino, primarily drawing from the Chicago area. More than one staff member mentioned that the fact that Dominican's campus is beautiful, safe, and Catholic, provides reassurance for parents or grandparents who are worried about their children, often coming from neighborhoods that are not particularly safe.

The heart of campus is structured to reflect the four Dominican pillars. The original library is connected to the Chapel, visually creating the connection between study and prayer. Just below those two rooms are the dining hall and an exit from the building, where community and service to the world are engaged. This "heart" of campus keeps the mission central physically, even if constituents don't realize why those four elements and spaces are connected and central to campus life. The mission office is also in this central location and, although campus ministry was recently moved to another location, it is still accessible and now includes space for students to "hang out," offices for staff members, and some program space for students of different faiths.

The athletic teams, known as "The Stars," are named for the star that is part of the iconography of St. Dominic. The rose motif from the shield is reflected in tiles seen

throughout the campus and in artwork by sisters, which had previously been in ministry sites that have since closed and now cover large spaces in hallways, the library, and the dining hall. Mosaics and copies of European Masters are particularly striking. The shield is embedded in the base of the spiral staircase in the library and in the floors of other buildings. A larger-than-life statue of the founders of the Sinsinawa Dominicans, Fr. Samuel Mazzuchelli, a sister, and a student, and a wall listing the names of all the sisters who have served at Dominican keep the connection to the sisters present.

The specific mission of Dominican University, service and truth, is embodied both internally and externally. Dominican women in the US have served minority populations throughout history. Their preaching has often been as direct service to those on the margins, whether recent Italian or Irish immigrants, women who did not have many educational or health care options, Black and Latino/a populations, and others as the needs changed. This is the preaching that is happening at Dominican University—educating students on the margins—providing good news and hope through possibility and a future. Banners and framed images on campus reflect recent graduates and what they are currently doing, depicting images of diversity and success. The focus on human flourishing is evident in the admissions materials, images on campus, and the support provided for students, especially first-generation students on campus. In her welcome letter on the website, Vice President for Mission and Planning, Claire Noonan, quotes the founder of the Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters, Fr. Mazzuchelli: “ ‘Make school as much like home as possible’ ” (Noonan n.d.). She continues, “So we hope you will come to feel at home in this Dominican family with a storied tradition, global reach and urgent contemporary mission” (Noonan n.d.). Also included is the mission statement of the

University: “As a Sinsinawa Dominican sponsored institution, Dominican University prepares students to pursue truth, give compassionate service, and participate in the creation of a more just and humane world” (Noonan n.d.). In many ways, this letter captures, in just a few paragraphs, the many facets of the Dominican charism and how it is lived out in the mission of Dominican University.

Although the Sinsinawa Motherhouse, more commonly known as “The Mound,” is 180 miles away, the connection has been an important one for mission integration. Constituents at all levels, from students through the Board of Trustees, have gone on retreat or participated in service at The Mound. Seeing the original places, walking the grounds, and interacting with the sisters who reside there help to form participants in the Dominican charism and, specifically, the Sinsinawa Dominican mission and history. An interesting nuance to this is the connection between the Brennan School of Business, which includes a “gateway” introductory business course, and the Sinsinawa Dominicans at The Mound. Students visit The Mound to learn about charism, values, and how to bring values into their leadership in the world. They then reflect on their own values and how they will implement them in a business setting. A question for the future may be around the viability of this formative experience. As many religious communities right-size properties and spaces to the current needs of the congregations, will the connections to Motherhouses still be available in the future? If not, are there alternative experiences that can allow for the history and mission through experiential learning and interaction with sisters to be engaged?

Structurally, Dominican University has a two-tiered board with an intermediate group. The General Council of the Sinsinawa Dominicans is the first tier. The second tier

is a corporate board, with lay trustees who have differing skills and knowledge. A recent addition is the Sponsors Council, set up by the Sinsinawa Dominicans, which acts as an intermediary between the general council and the corporate board. These structures ensure female leadership at all levels. The Vice President for Mission and Planning works with these groups in the integration of mission and promotion of the charism on campus. In addition to the Vice president for Mission and Planning, two centers on campus are specifically related to mission.

All potential faculty members are interviewed in relation to the mission of the university, not to see if they are Catholic or religious, but to understand if they can carry out the mission in their role. One formal program specifically related to mission is the annual symposium on the motto of the university. Participants comment on and interpret the motto in relation to their work. The motto, rather than the four Dominican pillars, is the language commonly used on campus.

The St. Catherine of Siena Center offers lectures and discussions with a specifically Catholic bent. The Center offers ways to engage both the on-campus community and a much wider community via live-stream and Zoom presentations. Prophetic Catholic figures are frequently brought in with the support of upper administration and an advisory board. The board includes faculty and members of the community. The Center collaborates with organizations that have similar theological interests, such as Old St. Patrick's Church in downtown Chicago, with a large young adult population and a commitment to social justice. Like other staff members, the Siena Center staff struggle with and hopes to reflect the heritage of the university and the diversity of the student body.. One role of the Siena Center is to engage with other faculty

members. Two aspects of the mission, which are particular to the curriculum, include “creating a more just and humane world” and “a pedagogy of grace.” Quotes from St. Catherine, St. Thomas Aquinas, or others are often included in syllabi, and the connection between study and the search for truth are important. A faculty member suggested that the saints are often a way in which students can engage the Dominican mission. Although the saints are people who inspire and offer a way of looking at the world differently, they also can be examined critically to recognize their blind spots.

The second center, the Mary Nona McGreal OP Center for Dominican Historical Studies is also housed on Dominican University’s campus. Sr. McGreal, the first Center director, was a former president of the university and historian of Dominicans in the US. The current director is a historian of American religious history. The Center’s staff continues the work of recording Dominican history and sees the Center as a place for students in the graduate program on Information Studies (archives) to have hands-on experience. In addition to research about Dominicans, the Center is involved in the Sister Story Project, an oral history project that involves several student researchers who are cataloging the stories. A challenge with the historical studies of women religious in the US is that there has been no central place—or way—of recording information; each congregation has used a different method to record their history. The Center staff are also involved in other archiving projects, particularly asking questions about the international ethics of making data public and accessible to all. More locally, the McGreal Center is also involved in a “Sacred Spaces” project, where they are digitally preserving the architectural spaces of churches in the Chicago area and of Dominican spaces nationally. The project has 360-degree tours of spaces, personal narrative, and historical facts tell the

story of churches and other places of mission as they are closed, sold, or repurposed for other uses. These projects that involve students learning skills through internships, learning about Catholic and Dominican history through research, and presenting that information digitally may be models for curriculum and praxis integration—like that of the Business School leadership course—that could be replicated on other campuses.

In conversations with staff members, a few questions arose. Although there are many Catholic students on campus (50 percent of the student body), participation in liturgy is very low. Many students are commuters and are on campus only for classes. They have off-campus jobs, which they must keep, to pay for tuition or living expenses. Others, who live on campus, go home on the weekends for similar reasons. How might liturgies fit into the lives of these students? They attend for special events, such as Día de los Muertos, but not on a regular basis. What might shift to enhance this aspect of the mission?

Among the Dominican colleges and universities, an informal network of people is responsible for mission. They meet on a regular basis virtually. What happens when a person leaves their position? Currently, there are several schools with people responsible for mission transitioning into or out of their positions, and a few schools have openings that may or may not be filled, seemingly due to financial constraints. The mission personnel are responsible for the Dominican Colloquium, a professional conference held every other year. Similarly, the Fanjeaux study program, which is open to members of all the Dominican colleges, is facilitated by the mission coordinators. Even with the connections, there is not a formal association. This is a hope for the future that, like

among the Dominican high schools, there could be a formal agreement, coordination of initiatives, and a paid staff to facilitate the connections.

Site Visit #2: Barry University, Miami Shores, Florida

There is nothing more appealing than a trip to Florida when you are shoveling eight inches of snow off your car in Connecticut. The 80-degree weather, a campus that is half-way between Fort Lauderdale and Miami, palm trees lining the streets and warm breezes blowing through campus sound like a welcome retreat from winter. Authentic Caribbean and Latin American food at carts and nearby shopping areas all set the stage for a research trip that doubles as a vacation. However, the emergence of the Omicron variant of COVID, high rates of infections and campus quarantines meant different plans had to be created. Meetings were quickly switched to Zoom and, although I have been to the campus a few times in the past for other occasions, one of my contacts was able to send visuals of the Dominican iconography on campus and staff members described the campus layout in detail, as well as how mission is integrated on different levels.

The main entrance of Barry University opens to a large grassy mall, lined with palm trees. The main path leads directly to the Chapel, which is also next to the library and the original student union building. The Chapel and campus ministry offices were the central part of the original campus. Although buildings have been renamed, you can still see the etchings of the original Latin names or saint names on the cornerstones. A student union, built in the late 2000s, shifted the focus of campus, as it includes a gym, the main dining hall, and other student-focused activities. In recent years, an effort has been made to renew the use of the old student union, bringing student-centered offices back to the

main part of campus and facilitating two main foci on campus for student life. Two main statues, dedicated to the legacy of the Dominicans on campus can be seen. The grassy mall has a statue of St. Dominic, dedicated to the Dominican friars on campus; it is set in a walkway of stones marking a Dominican cross. Benches on either side allow for contemplation. Dominic is carrying a rosary and clearly in movement. The statue is very similar to one at the Dominican priory in St. Louis. It was noted that the rosary is slightly odd, as the legends of Mary giving Dominic the Rosary are referencing his praying the psalms, not the current version (Brown 2020). Despite the historical issues, the connection to prayer and preaching makes this statue a symbol of mission in action. The other statue, one that is a duplicate of the statue at the Adrian Dominican Sisters' Motherhouse in Michigan, is of Mary, Bearer of the Word. Although a much older statue, it has similar movement carved into the details. Mary is on her way to visit Elizabeth, a woman of faith impelled by faith to go and preach the good news. The statue of Mary has a small plaque indicating its dedication to the Dominican sisters who have served on campus.

Barry University was named for Bishop Patrick Barry. His sister was the Mother General of the Adrian Dominican Sisters at the time of the university's foundation in the 1940s. A third sibling who assisted with the founding was Msgr. Barry, and their other brother, a lay man and lawyer, is considered the fourth founder. Barry's shield is a combination of the Barry family shield, with the original shamrocks from their Irish heritage replaced with books, and the Dominican shield with the cross embedded in it. Founder's Day, now a week-long celebration, is celebrated on the Feast of St. Albert, a great Dominican scientist, and the birthday of Bishop Barry. The week-long celebration

includes lectures, service, fun events, and competitive games, with a working title of “Community Fest.”

The campus has a few buildings still named after religious. The swimming pool is named Penafort after Raymond of Penafort. The building that was named Dominic now has a plaza named Dominic in front of it. The chapel is the Cor Jesu or “Heart of Jesus” Chapel and features an iconographic cross with Jesus and four sisters. The cross was designed by the current Chaplain, Fr. Cristobal Torres.

For much of Barry University’s history, the student body has been diverse. Typically, it has a large international population, although numbers have decreased in recent years due to President Trump’s policies and COVID. As Barry is a Division II school for athletics, students from Europe, Central, and South America come to play sports. Also, the proximity to the Caribbean allows for students to come from places like the Bahamas. As one person said, it is a 45-minute flight, so families will visit campus and go shopping for the day, then fly home. A large international population also resides in Florida, including refugees from the Haitian earthquake. Other natural disasters in the Caribbean have meant families relocate to the state. Fifty percent of students are from Florida and fifty percent are from other parts of the US or other countries. Many come from the Northeast. A quip for admissions is that “We study where you vacation.” The weather and proximity to beaches is a draw for high school students in New York, Boston, and other areas who have parents or grandparents who winter in Florida. Barry University has a large population of first-generation students of whom seventy percent are eligible for Pell grants. As one admissions counselor mentioned, there is a need to have the right balance of students who can pay tuition and those that need assistance.

Many students, whether or not they identify as Catholic, come from Catholic high schools or the Cristo Rey system, where students have work internships one day a week to cover their high school tuition. Like other Dominican schools, this inclusion and focus on students who have a need for assistance is connected to the original mission of the university.

Interestingly, one of the competitor schools for recruitment is Ave Maria University, a theologically and culturally conservative school. An important aspect of mission is to explain how Barry is Catholic, while breaking down stereotypes about what that means in an educational setting. For example, theology classes are required, but many options will fulfill the requirements, including learning about other religious traditions. Mass is offered, but so are other prayer opportunities; students can make their faith experience what they want it to be. For those coming from Catholic schools, which typically require students to attend Mass as part of their high school experience, the freedom to attend or not is important to their growth. For many, the fact that a chapel space is open and Mass is offered is a comfort, even if they don't regularly attend. Promoting Catholicism as including friendliness, warmth, and hospitality is an important aspect of campus life.

Barry University currently has its first lay and male president. The former president, an Adrian Dominican Sister, has recently been given another position on campus, which will assist with promoting the heritage of the sisters. She is one of two Adrian Dominicans serving on campus. The other Dominican sister is from another congregation. The Chaplain is a Dominican friar, and two other friars serve in the theology department. The former president, as well as others, have set up offices and

programs to promote the charism and mission. This has involved several changes in reporting structures between campus ministry, student affairs, and mission. Under the current model, there is a Division of Mission and Student Engagement. The vice president oversees the Mission Office, Residence Life, Student Health, and other student services, and Campus Ministry is embedded in the Mission Office. A consultant's study several years ago was the impetus for separating the spiritual and core values of mission. They also suggested not to lead with the school's Catholic identity. This impacted mission on all levels, as those responsible for promoting the mission often must "go through the back door" to promote the Dominican charism and mission. Although there is a love for the diversity of students at Barry, there were questions as to whether it is possible to separate the spiritual from the mission; if so, is it helpful? It seems a point of contention about how Catholic Barry should be as they go forward.

All faculty and staff attend a 30-minute session on the university's mission, primarily focused on the history of the Adrian Dominican Sisters. These sessions are offered monthly for new hires. Beyond that, there are optional sessions that faculty and staff may attend. These are offered over lunch or as half-day sessions to discuss things like *disputatio*, social justice, the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, and other topics related to the Dominican mission. The sessions have a formal curriculum and are taught by faculty and staff with expertise. All of this is part of the Leading the Legacy Program. The Adrian Dominicans founded another university, Siena Heights, which is adjacent to the motherhouse in Michigan. They have a similar program. It was mentioned that the formation program at Siena Heights is more academic, and the program at Barry is focused more on community building. As the relational aspect is important to mission

integration, much of the program has been put on hold during the pandemic, with the hope of restarting later this spring.

“Learn, Reflect and Serve,” Barry University’s motto, is the mission focus. This version of the Dominican pillars is lived out in community, representing the fourth pillar. Those that are involved in charism formation continue to ask the question about the mission, “What is relevant now?” This ongoing work is done with individual staff members and the Mission Integration Council, which was established by the previous president in 2009. The Council includes staff responsible for promoting the mission, as well as others who are appointed to serve. Those involved see their role as being at the macro level asking questions such as the following: Where is the university aligned with our values? How does our mission offer a ‘value added’ component to the university, especially regarding retention? How do we strategically align our mission to Catholic higher education? How do we engage staff and students in the mission in a practical way?

The Mission Integration Council, rather than the Board of Trustees of the university, has the most influence over mission integration. Dominican sisters who serve on the board, ensure that a connection to the founding congregation is preserved.

A current challenge is the question about whether to mandate mission integration programs for students or make them optional. Some courses include Dominican aspects. One example is a course in liturgy that requires students to attend a Mass in the Chapel. Orientation programs have included sessions on mission and charism off and on. However, there are places where academic rituals and religious rituals are blended. An example of this is the academic processions which take place as part of the Mass of the

Holy Spirit and a Rose and Candle Ceremony that is included as part of Baccalaureate Mass. These types of collaboration seem to have support at all levels.

On the national level, respondents spoke of the importance of the annual ACCU meeting for the Dominican College Presidents, especially as more lay presidents are leading Dominican schools. At that meeting, those who are involved in mission also meet. They have ongoing monthly conference calls to connect as well. The Dominican College Colloquium and the Dominican College Preaching Conference are two other national programs mentioned as regular events that Barry faculty, staff, and students participate in. Although a previous participant spoke very highly of the Fanjeaux, France, Summer Study Program, Barry University leaders have made the decision to no longer participate. The expense and limited participation make the cost not worth the impact on campus. The Charism Initiative Modules, an online program created to educate about the charism, were offered, but no one has participated. One respondent noted that the format “looks like cyber security modules” that are required and are not enticing. Respondents are grateful that the sisters are looking ahead to the future and having conversations about how to share Dominican resources, especially as fewer sisters serve on campus. One question arises from this reality: “Does formation become less about the Adrian Dominicans and more about Dominicans in general?” Sisters are collaborating in so many areas and it wouldn’t be surprising if this becomes another area for collaboration. A hope for the future in mission is that the Human Resources department, in collaboration with the sisters, is offering a program for faculty and staff to learn about the mission, then discern whether to become a Dominican Associate of Adrian, Michigan. Associates have

a formal connection with the sisters, outside of working at the university; they currently meet weekly via Zoom to discuss mission.

Site Visit #3: Mount Saint Mary College, Newburgh, NY

In the New York Tri-State Area, there are six Dominican colleges and universities: Molloy College on Long Island; Caldwell University in New Jersey; Albertus Magnus College in Connecticut; Dominican College of Blauvelt and St. Thomas Aquinas College in Rockland County, New York; and Mount Saint Mary's College in Orange County, New York. All are small colleges, geographically close to each other, but traffic and the barriers such as bridges and tunnels, all with expensive tolls, sometimes make the schools seem worlds apart. For sisters in my community, mostly having grown up in the Bronx, our founded college, Dominican College of Blauvelt, was "upstate" at 20 miles north of Yankee Stadium. Mount St. Mary's is truly upstate from New York City. In Connecticut, Albertus Magnus College is part of New England, rather than the Mid-Atlantic states, although people do commute between New Haven and New York City for work and frequently for entertainment. The founding congregations have different influences; several come with roots in Regensburg, while others have English roots, and a few are connected to communities that now form a union of several congregations.

I chose to visit Mount St. Mary College, in part because it is one of two Dominican colleges I haven't visited in the past and the only one in the New York region where I haven't spent time. On a cold winter day, I crossed the Hudson River at the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge and quickly arrived on campus. Overlooking the Hudson, one

can see the tidal flow 70 miles north of the Statue of Liberty, where the Hudson ends in New York Harbor. The river is partially frozen over, with ice coating the banks. Blocks of ice are floating in the open waters. The campus is small and easily walkable with one entrance. Built on a hill, views of the Hudson are possible from almost every vantage point. In Hudson Hall, the Student Center, the first space that is visible and well-marked is the Campus Ministry office. Students are in the space at a reception desk and generally just hanging out. Other student workers are covering a desk across the hallway from the Campus Ministry office. The Student Lounge, a classroom space, activity space, and offices are contained within the larger Student Center. Campus Ministry is visibly central to campus and the pictures on the walls of the Chaplain's office demonstrate that it is also central to what happens on campus. In addition to Campus Ministry, there is a Catholic and Dominican Institute (CDI). The CDI Director has an office in the same building, the "Villa," as do the university president and admissions office. The "Villa," was the original college building for the first twelve sisters to attend. Both the Chaplain and the CDI Director teach in addition to their work to promote mission, heritage, and identity. The current CDI Director's role is split half-time as Director and half-time as a faculty member. Although the Chaplain and CDI Director often work together, they see their roles as two-fold, with Campus Ministry being student facing and the CDI as the academic side of mission. They also describe the roles as the head and heart of the mission and indicate that both are needed to respond to the whole person. They are responding to their own reflection question, "How do you make mission a lived reality on campus?" and find that mission is a lived reality at Mount St. Mary.

Education around mission begins with mandatory student orientation sessions on the four pillars and a candle-light prayer service. In these sessions, students are encouraged to spend time in reflection, no matter what their religion is. It is presumed that around eighty percent of students attending Mount St. Mary are Catholic, yet of those only about five percent practice their faith on a regular basis. Even given that statement, one participant asked, “What does it even really mean to practice our faith in these times?” As an aside, it seems that the tradition of attending Mass weekly is no longer the bar for being a “practicing Catholic” that it once was, at least among young adults. Even the most engaged students may participate in Campus Ministry events weekly, but not attend Mass with the same frequency. This matches national trends. According to CARA data, in 2015, 23.4 percent of Catholics attended Mass weekly and 49.5 percent attended Mass monthly or more frequently. This last percentage includes the weekly attendees. 33.7 percent of Catholics say they have a strong religious affiliation (CARA 2015). Along with required orientation for new students, Resident Assistants (RAs) participate twice a year in a training that includes a session on mission. The most recent training was held in early January 2022 in the Chapel. RAs are provided with a history of Dominic and Aquinas and given links between the four Dominican pillars, which show how they are responding to those pillars through their role on campus as student leaders. The pillar of service is meant to be very visible on campus; for example, an annual toy drive sponsored by Campus Ministry resulted in 600 toys for children being donated during the Christmas season.

As for the work of the CDI, an important aspect of mission is bringing in speakers who can address topics of academic interest through a Catholic lens. The CDI director

works closely with the Thomistic Institute and different academic departments to bring speakers who will relate to a specific program. Additionally, the CDI co-sponsors a summer philosophy workshop with the Thomistic Institute and the University of Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture. The Thomistic Institute is part of the Pontifical Faculty of the Dominican House of Studies, sponsored by the Eastern Province of Dominican Men in the US. Although this workshop is not for the students at Mount St. Mary, it brings in graduate students and presenters from around the world.

The collaborative events best highlight the mission integration on campus, as well as its connection to the founding congregation of sisters. Founder's Day, which has recently allowed expansion to Founder's Week, is held during October. The founding Dominican congregation was the Sisters of the Holy Rosary. They have since formed a new congregation with two other congregations and are the Dominican Sisters of Hope. A few sisters live on campus, but this may be the last year that Dominican sisters are teaching on campus. Sisters from other New York congregations also served as faculty but have since retired. Founder's Week is held around the time of the Feast of the Holy Rosary. That time is also helpful in celebrating the heritage of the original sisters with an Oktoberfest, as a nod to the German heritage of the congregation. Sisters are invited to the events of the week, especially to keep the connection to the congregation alive. There is a lecture, a reception for students and a cocktail reception for faculty, sisters, and staff to mingle. It was noted that although the sisters are very different in personalities and interests, it is evident that they like to get together, and the campus events serve as reunions for them as well. The Dominican Sisters of Hope no longer have a Motherhouse in the traditional sense. Their sisters are spread out and their offices are in Mariandale,

which is more well known as a retreat center. This is something that those working in mission capitalize on—bringing students and others to Mariandale for retreats as a connection to the sisters. They recognize that Mariandale is a space for reflection with beautiful grounds just across the Hudson River.

In addition to Founder’s Week, there are two other week-long celebrations, one being Spirit of the Mount Week. In many ways, it reflects typical Spirit Weeks on college campuses with intramural competitions, highlighting of athletics, and other celebratory activities. A significant connection with the mission of the College, which is uniquely Catholic and Dominican, is the opening celebration. Beginning with Mass and, again, reflections on the four pillars as lived out on campus, it is a reminder of what they are celebrating. The candle used at Orientation is then brought from the Chapel to light a huge bonfire, which is associated with the image of Dominic and the dog and torch symbols. Including ritual in academic or festive activities seems to be one of the most effective ways of communicating the charism to students. For those particularly responsible for communicating the mission, the opening celebration is about trying to integrate religious reality as part of the day-to-day activities and, even though it is particularly Catholic, it isn’t limited to those who are Catholic—everyone is welcome. This is clearly communicated as the first message on the Campus Ministry web page with an invitation to Catholics, those from other faiths, and those with no religious background to engage. Sometimes small rituals like blessing each of the athletic teams at the beginning of their seasons become very important. It is a reminder to students to pray to God, not to win, but that everyone works to the best of their ability. These rituals remind everyone that God is a part of their life—even in athletics.

A specific program that integrates the head and heart, run out of the CDI office, is the Dominican Scholars of Hope. This is a completely voluntary program for students who want to be more intentional about living out the four Dominican pillars. They meet weekly, beginning with prayer, and share a discussion on the pillars. Often, the discussions are focused on the liturgical year. The students also work on a research project and have three reflection exercises in addition to community service and reflections. By the end of the year, they complete a portfolio and participate in a dinner, awards ceremony, and blessing, and receive a certificate. This is separate from the Honors Program, which is specifically academic and listed on transcripts. The Dominican Scholars of Hope is open to students of all faiths and embraces the whole person in delving into the religious life of the campus.

A distinction at Mount St. Mary is that the two people primarily responsible for mission are both male and were formed outside of the Dominican world, although both have had Dominican influences either in childhood or more recently. This is an anomaly among Dominican colleges now, but possibly a sign of the future. Other colleges have been more intentional about keeping a sister, or a women formed by Dominicans, in the mission position; this creates a different feel than when there are no sisters on campus. It is possibly because of this fact that leaders at Mount St. Mary have had to find ways to articulate the mission themselves in ways that make sense to diverse constituents.

An interesting difference between Mount St. Mary and other Dominican colleges is the specific role of Catholic and Jewish relations. The Student Center used to be a Jewish Community Center, and a Jewish family is a major donor to campus. Tiles remain by an entryway that include the Star of David and the Jesse Tree. The library, named after

the family, is beneath the main Chapel on campus, which has the traditional choir-to-choir stalls in the front third and pews for the back two-thirds of the Chapel. There are mosaics of St. Dominic and St. Thomas Aquinas in the front of the Chapel, along with a statue of St. Dominic being presented with the Rosary by Mary, who is holding the infant Jesus in her arms. Stained glass windows portray scenes from Scripture. A high altar, behind the main altar, includes additional saints, Jesus on a crucifix, the tabernacle, a carving of The Last Supper, and the shield of the Dominican sisters. The Aquinas building is a short walk away and contains a small oratory with stained glass, a crucifix, and altar.. The oratory also houses statues of Dominic and other saints, which are hidden in the recesses. A statue of St. Joseph is located outdoors between Aquinas Hall and Guzman Hall—both nods to Dominican saints in their names. These spaces provide places for students to explore spirituality in their own way. As a respondent mentioned, it is important to keep the identity visible. Mount St. Mary is Catholic and that should not be denied. Also, it is a place to demonstrate that there are many different forms of Catholicism and that Catholic and Dominican life, especially in academic endeavors, all point to the search for truth.

Site Visit #4: Dominican College, Blauvelt, New York

The drive to Dominican College, which shares a property with my own Motherhouse and St. Dominic's Home, is one I could probably do in my sleep as I have driven it so many times. The route takes an hour and a half to four hours, depending on the time and day, and winds through the hills of Connecticut or along the Interstate 95 corridor before crossing the Hudson into Rockland County. The Dominican College

campus is split lengthwise by Western Highway. On either side, there are ponds, iced over throughout the winter. The north side of the campus makes students ask, “Why is there a cemetery in the middle of campus?” as the original college buildings, including what was the novitiate for many of the sisters, share grounds with the Motherhouse and St. Dominic’s Home. Statues of Dominic and Catherine guard the path leading to the cemetery and are on the path that students travel between the parking lot and Rosary Hall, whose façade includes a cross and an image of Mary presenting St. Dominic with the Rosary. The first classroom building and athletic fields are also on those grounds. Across the street, new dorms, a renovated science building, gym, and dining hall are all LEED-certified green buildings. An older dorm and a few other campus buildings, as well as two houses with sisters living in them are near the entrances to this part of campus. A few blocks up Western Highway is the main administration building, with offices for the president, chancellor, and Financial Aid. Another building with classrooms, as well as Campus Ministry and Student Activities, seem modest in design compared to the other more traditional-looking brick college buildings. These two buildings were once an elementary school and owned by the Town of Orangetown.

Welcome mats located at each building’s entrance include Dominican College Chargers, the school mascot, and “reduce, reuse, recycle,” highlighting the environmental focus of the college. The college shield is a combination of the Dominican Shield and Dominican Star/Cross in black and white on a bright red background. Banners throughout campus include the shield, the focus of “Excellence, Leadership, Service,” and the words “Challenging the Mind, Celebrating the Spirit.” Each of the buildings is named after either a Dominican Saint, one of the sisters, or a former Cardinal. Even one of the more

recent additions, an outdoor meditation space, is named after a Dominican Priest who had served in campus ministry prior to his early death.

Dominican College has a very familial culture. Students and faculty, as well as their personal and family histories, are known by administrators. Conversations and wishes for prayers on the anniversary of a death were exchanged almost casually in the hallway, as both parties knew exactly who the other was talking about.

Close relationships between departments allow for quick responses to needs and questions. The longevity of the four remaining sisters serving on campus means they know, and are known by, the student body. One sister, the campus ministry director, may be more of a mascot than the actual mascot and is compared to Sr. Jean, now famous for being the cheerleading nun at Loyola Chicago. Three of the sisters have served at the college for thirty or more years and are in their late 70s and early 80s. They know there is a need to prepare for their transition, but their hearts are still with the students in the college, making it difficult to consider retirement. The Campus Ministry office is just inside the doors of Casey Hall. Art by a former Dominican Sister of Amityville, portraying Dominic and Catherine and the Bridge in Siena; other art that was gifted by students; and an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe fill the walls of two small spaces—an office and a lounge. The college Chapel is in Rosary Hall, on another part of campus. The campus minister doesn't need a large office, as she is always bouncing around campus and intentionally spends the breaks between classes in the hallway, greeting students and being a substitute grandmother figure to them.

Cooke Hall—where the President's Office and Chancellor's Office, as well as Human Resources, Financial Aid, the Registrar, and other administrative offices are

located—is a humble building. Turning right, one arrives at the president’s and chancellor’s offices, with sisters holding both positions. A conference room separates their offices and has pictures of the president with students, faculty, staff, local leaders, and guest speakers covering the walls. The longevity of the sisters’ tenure is evident just in the images. Both the president and the chancellor have also served in congregational leadership, during one of the few breaks in their time at the college. When the college president was elected to congregational leadership, the chancellor stepped in as president of the college. After her term as president of the congregation, the first sister returned to her role as college president. Most of the president’s cabinet and board are Catholic, although it isn’t a requirement, and several sisters are still serving on the board.

Although her title is Chancellor, the sister in this role is really the person leading mission initiatives for the university. Working closely with the President, who is also a sister, she is in the top decision-makers circle and is integral to implementing the mission, vision, and strategic goals of the college. A major initiative each year is Founder’s Week. Like it is at other Dominican institutions, Founder’s Week at Dominican College is an opportunity to connect to the school’s Dominican heritage in a variety of ways. The week begins with a lecture on a Dominican saint and how their life relates to students. Sisters or other local theologians tend to be the speakers for this presentation. Other activities are held mid-week, with Friday as a “Preaching in Action” day. This final weekday is a very light day for classes on campus. Students, faculty, and staff are all encouraged to participate in volunteer service. Founder’s Week leads up to the Blauvelt Festival, a historical fundraiser for the sisters, where students help to run outdoor carnival-style booths, alongside sisters, vendors, and other volunteers. As sisters age and are no longer

physically able to do the required work, student volunteers are critical to the success of the fundraisers.

Many of the students on campus are Catholic, at least in culture, with a high percentage being Hispanic or African Americans coming from the local area or New York City boroughs. Faculty are diverse in their religious background but have a basic understanding of the Catholic heritage. As one respondent indicated, there is “freedom to be who they are *and* keep the spirit alive.” Dominican College is listed as, “in the Catholic tradition,” which may make it more accessible to those who aren’t specifically looking for a religious school. Collaborative programs like the Fanjeaux study program and the College Preaching Conference are supported by the college. This year, the Dominican College Colloquium will be held virtually, although faculty would be encouraged to attend in normal circumstances.

Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Nursing, and other health sciences are the largest and most well-known programs at Dominican, including degrees at the doctoral level. Other science programs are also well respected. One respondent said that they hear from local health care centers that they will always hire a Dominican College student and know they will be excellent. With three doctoral degrees, Dominican College is in the process of applying to become a university. This would be a tremendous change for them, especially as they also celebrate their 70th anniversary in this upcoming year. Dominican College of Blauvelt would then become the third Dominican University, making it more in line with the other two and giving strength to both the US and Global Dominican University system. As a respondent said, students know they are graduating from a Dominican college and as these colleges and universities expand, especially with

the name “Dominican” in their title, there is a sense of unity, companionship, and sharing joint goals—with “seeking truth” as the top goal.

Dominican College may be one of the few Dominican institutions where the charism is still just “caught” from the sisters, although there are also specific programs that facilitate charism formation. A Dominican Scholars program, which began this year, allows four students to work with sisters in the Motherhouse, attend the Preaching in Action conference, assist with leading Dominican Young Adults. They meet every week with the campus minister to reflect on their experience and are embedded in Dominican life. They are beginning to use the modules from the Dominican Charism Initiative but have not yet decided how many they will use. The students’ reflections are included in the Winter 2022 edition of Blauvelt Connections, the newsletter of the Dominican Sisters of Blauvelt, who have begun sponsoring the program this year as part of their legacy. However, collaboration between students and sisters has been ongoing with student interns serving in the development and communications offices, as well as assisting with physical therapy, occupational therapy, and other programs for elderly sisters in the Motherhouse. Sisters have assisted with student retreats and provided service opportunities at their ministries. Additionally, many sisters have regularly attended lectures, concerts, and sporting events at the college and students have been invited to lunch or ice cream with the sisters during Catholic Sisters Week in early March. The pandemic put holds on many of these programs being held in person, but some have been transitioned to Zoom.

One respondent referred to a video put together several years ago that included an English football (soccer) player who became a Dominican friar. That video was very

relatable for the students at Dominican. With 18 NCAA sports and many international students coming to Dominican as student athletes, seeing a religious who is an athlete is relevant to their lives.

A new student orientation, which is required for all, includes a campus scavenger hunt. As they visit different buildings, some academic in nature, students also learn about the history of the college, which was founded to educate sisters, and the Motherhouse. A sister on the college staff tells the story of Mother Mary Ann Sammon, the foundress of the congregation. She also introduces the painting of St. Dominic raising a child to life, which hung in the original house on the property and now hangs in the Motherhouse. The image helped Mother Mary Ann know that Blauvelt was the place to found an orphanage. Students can also relate to the foundress' love of children, specifically of immigrant children, as many are children of immigrants themselves and about half of the student body are first-generation college students.

One of the dreams for the future of Dominican institutions is to have a large national gathering around the topic of the four pillars. It would need to have lots of life, but large gatherings tend to generate energy around the charism. One respondent reflected on a previous experience in Rome with the San Egidio community where young adults lived on their own, worked in professional jobs, but came together twice a week for prayer, a meal, and outreach to the poor. Whether it is a one-time national gathering or something local, there is a passion in these types of large gatherings which could reignite the charism.

One respondent reflected on the nature of Dominican institutions and Dominican College, in particular. Notable was the fact that people need to know the mission and be

aware of God's presence so they can seek the truth. She remarked that we are aware of our history, coming from Jewish roots, and noted that Jesus did something new. She continued with Dominic, who followed in the footsteps of Jesus and, continuing in the spirit of adaptation, founded an Order. She also noted that there is always a need to find new ways of being religious. It doesn't discount the other ways, but "stays rooted in the past and visions the future while seeking truth through it all. We can't think we know it all." She went on to comment that the past several years have been remarkable as African Americans and Asian Americans claim their spaces in new ways. There is a growing common knowledge and respect among a diverse student body.

Surprises from the Results and Further Questions

Having served at a Dominican college early in my campus ministry career, I was grateful to the respondents for their transparency and honesty about the different aspects of mission integration that challenge them. I was surprised by the lack of support some found from their administration regarding mandatory charism formation at some level for students, whether in orientation, required courses, or prayer at gatherings. Although Dominican institutions serve a wide variety of students, typically, it is understood that they will have some formation about the values of the institution, whether religious or secular, as part of attendance. At Yale University, mandatory meetings, as well as opening convocations, set the stage for what is expected of students attending a college with the mission of "Lux et Veritas" (Light and Truth). When attending a college in the Catholic Dominican tradition, it is important for students to understand the values that are connected to their academic trajectory. I wonder if Dominican schools' need for high

enrollment, as tuition-driven institutions, has meant they have deemphasized the Catholic and Dominican tradition to make the schools more welcoming.. Would stronger emphasis on the Dominican charism and Catholic tradition make it appealing to parents and students or would it turn them away? Does it draw a specific type of Catholic student, which may not be the intended constituents of the institution? Consider, for example, Dominican University in River Forest. With many Catholic universities in the Chicago area, would emphasis on the Catholic and Dominican tradition place them in competition with schools that are more elite, when they are intentionally serving Hispanic students, many of whom are first generation? Similar questions could be asked of the other colleges, as one person from Barry responded that they must differentiate themselves from Ave Maria, another local Catholic school, which is much more conservative in practices.

I haven't personally attended the ACCU but was grateful to hear that the additional day on which Dominican mission officers and presidents met was so nourishing. Similarly, in a time where we hear about the necessity of online meetings, including the negative impacts, it was wonderful to hear how the normalizing of platforms such as Zoom have allowed mission officers to meet more frequently. There is clearly a strong bond between them and, from what they shared, among presidents of Dominican colleges, which has resulted in the recent shifts of meeting modes. In addition, the Dominican Higher Education Colloquium seems to be a place of hope for strengthening the common mission of Dominican colleges and universities in the future. In this semi-professional conference, where academic papers are presented, but in a way that is related to the Dominican mission, the intersectionality of mission and academics

may be a true witness of how effective charism formation is on a campus. I wonder if engaging students in the papers and presentations could add another layer to what is already working well.

I was disappointed to learn of the varying responses regarding the current national formation programs: Fanjeaux Study Program, the Dominican College Preaching Conference, and the Dominican Charism Initiative. Finances, language, and meeting current needs of students, faculty, and staff, as well as impacts from the pandemic, were all named as areas of concern. Unfortunately, what one respondent named as ineffective, another respondent at a different school named as incredibly important, so there is not a clear path forward to say if certain programs should be maintained, cut, or re-envisioned.

A question that I still hold is, “Where do we go from here?” Would the Dominican Sisters Conference (DSC), whose members founded the colleges and universities in this study, be open to a conversation with leadership of the congregation, college presidents, and those serving in mission positions? Would college administrators be open to this same type of conversation? What would this look like? Who would facilitate or host? How much input would be welcome from each constituent? With different models of influence between congregations, boards, and institutions of higher education, there may not be a single way to operate nationally, but some of the suggestions put forward by the mission officers may have financial and personnel support of the congregations or the DSC. Such a gathering could also provide feedback to the DSC on charism or mission initiatives they are supporting or may wish to develop for the future.

As someone who has not had to work through the intricacies of agreements between different colleges and universities, I know that cross-registration contracts could be difficult. However, I was delighted to find that is something some mission officers are hoping for as they look to the future. In some ways, I am surprised that they haven't already been formed between schools in geographic proximity or between schools founded by the same congregation.

Finally, I wonder if focusing on creating relevant media, like the video of the English football player becoming Dominican, would be a worthwhile project for mission integration in the future. Knowing the diversity of Dominicans, a few short video testimonies might have a great impact, especially if they can be related to the four pillars, the search for truth, or care for those on the margins. Would the story of a fashion designer who became a Dominican grab the attention of undergraduates? Would a Dominican medical student inspire a generation of pre-med, nursing, or physical and occupational therapists? As Dominicans, we might need to become more creative about how we preach to millennial and Generation Z students, who use TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat as their forms of learning and communication. We might also find ways to ensure the work of contemporary Dominican academics is used throughout Dominican higher education with a preference for including texts by Dominican authors over others if the content is appropriate. Future research might investigate contemporary authors who are writing books on the Dominican charism that could be used in an introductory orientation class—something that is approachable for lay people and stretches them to begin thinking critically about their Dominican academic life.

Critical Areas for Best Practices

It is clear that many approaches to mission integration are used at Dominican colleges and universities. As for best practices, three areas seem critical: (1) formation of faculty and staff, (2) integration of the Dominican charism into the academic life of students, and (3) providing opportunities for the wider community to have ongoing formation regarding the mission.

As faculty and staff are the most stable community within an academic setting, often serving for many years, it is important for them to understand and integrate the Dominican mission into their work and teaching. This does not mean all should be teaching about theology or preaching. However, understanding how their work is connected to the Dominican charism, whether it is including social analysis, service learning, or spirituality and prayer into their classes, or using language around the Dominican pillars to engage students in co-curricular activities, faculty and staff provide ongoing formation through their work. For this to happen, faculty and staff must also be formed, which is one reason the people responsible for mission integration are important. These may be some of the most important hires as fewer sisters are available to serve on campuses. Most of those currently serving in this role are Catholic, but there are a few who are not. Sometimes that is an intentional choice by the institution to foster a diverse campus ministry staff, or to hire a person internally and with a long history with a particular university. A few serving in campus ministry or mission roles are sisters, and the Dominican institutions will need to be very intentional about transitioning to lay people that understand mission as the older sisters retire from their positions. One of the keys seems to be having more than one person responsible for mission, so that in any

transition there are people who understand the history and mission and provide continuity.

The second critical area for mission effectiveness seems to be integration of the Dominican charism into the academic life of students. Again, this is done in several different ways, but having some aspects as mandatory may be the key to ensuring that all students grasp the mission. Whether required orientation or orientation courses, academic convocations that have speakers related to mission, days set aside for service, or Baccalaureate Mass connected to academic processions, the integration of academics and mission brings it to the forefront of student life. Similarly, finding ways for student life to integrate the Dominican charism through student activities, campus ministry, or diversity offices, can enhance the Dominican mission, reinforcing aspects of the four Dominican pillars. I include academic life as critical and student life as secondary, not to devalue student life, but because the academic life has more structure and is seen as central to the mission of all academic institutions. Student life is critical to the formation of the whole person, but I know that certain populations, especially non-traditional students, spend less time on campus and engaging in co-curricular activities, so academic integration of mission ensures all students are formed in the charism.

The third key area is ongoing formation for alumni and for the wider academic or local community. A question that could be asked is, “What does it matter that a Dominican college or university exists?” This is answered through the benefits a community gains by having a Dominican institution in the neighborhood. How does community service or service learning engage local non-profits as partners with the university in the tie to mission? Do lectures and presentations allow alumni and the local

community to ask critical questions about their faith and professions? Is the Dominican institution providing a positive influence in the neighborhood through how students engage their neighbors off-campus? Does the university help to improve a neighborhood by providing education for local students who may not otherwise have the opportunity to attend college, as Dominican institutions provide financial, social, and academic support? The answer to these questions appears to be a strong assent, as the mission effectiveness of a Dominican college or university provides ongoing connections and relationships even beyond the time students are on campus. Although these connections may not be the central mission of the academic institution, they are certainly a way that Dominican institutions are preaching good news.

Recognizing the areas where students, faculty, staff, and the wider community are becoming Dominican, through service, the search for truth, and integration of service and vocational questions is the naming of grace in Dominican institutions of higher education.

Summary

Initial surveys, including responses from thirteen individuals from ten of the Dominican institutions, provided basic data around demographics of individuals, courses, and co-curricular opportunities for mission integration. Additional conversations held during site visits provided visual evidence of mission integration on the physical campuses, additional nuances around education for mission, and strengths and weaknesses that were not addressed in the surveys. Additionally, these provided

opportunities for respondents to share hopes for the future on their campus as well as nationally and, in some cases, internationally.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

From my own experience of Dominican life and having served in ministry in higher education for 13 years, I wondered what has been working and what would carry the mission and charism of Dominican institutions forward as fewer sisters are serving in key positions. After examining websites, conducting surveys, and site visits, I have found some areas of common agreement about effectiveness in mission, some recommendations for the future, as well as further questions that could be examined.

Conclusions from the study

This may be the most obvious conclusion, but it is important to have more than one person in a key position be responsible for charism formation and mission integration. Staff transitions, which are common in campus ministry, one of the areas for promoting mission, as well as upper administration, which may also change with a new president, can result in major shifts regarding mission if there are gaps in staffing or new people who are both learning and promoting the mission at the same time. If there are offices that focus on charism formation and mission at several levels—with administration, faculty and staff, and students, as well as other key stakeholders—then transitions have less of an impact on mission effectiveness.

If possible, institutions should find ways to maintain engagement between the members of the Dominican institutions and the religious congregations that founded them. This may take the form of creating volunteer opportunities with the sisters in their

other ministries, visits to motherhouses or local convents, or having sisters from the congregation give presentations or lectures on a regular basis. If possible, encourage younger sisters to receive the necessary degrees and credentials to be able to serve in Dominican institutions, as the relational aspect of mission is incredibly important. Sisters may serve on boards of the Dominican institutions, but that connection is often limited to a few administrators. As study is one of the four pillars of the Dominican charism, which is emphasized at Dominican institutions of higher education, it would be helpful to promote that aspect through formal study among younger Dominican women. This is an area where there may be a disconnect between the formation Dominican men receive as they prepare for ordination and the formation that women receive in preparation for vows. Although Dominican women are highly educated, they are not necessarily prepared to serve in higher education. This could be an area of growth for the future. Encouraging women to receive advanced degrees in theology would be helpful, as that is one area where the charism can be emphasized given the nature of the topic.

The meeting of Dominican college and university presidents and mission officers which takes place at the Association of Catholic Colleges' and Universities' annual meeting was noted by the mission officers as a key component of collaboration. The mission officers shared that those new to the position or those who are new as presidents could learn much and form critical relationships during their time together. A benefit of the pandemic is that as meeting modes shifted from in-person to online, the mission officers also began meeting monthly via Zoom. The regular contact allows for real-time sharing of best practices and ideas between campuses.

A major endeavor for the future of Dominican colleges and universities will be to find ways to connect with vowed Dominicans as congregations shrink or disappear completely. I assume there will always be vowed Dominican women in the US, as the Dominican Order is 800 years old. However, the landscape of religious life is changing, bringing in more women who are immigrants from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In the future, will the US be “mission territory” for Dominican congregations based in other countries? If so, how might we form structures that will formalize the relationships between vowed Dominican women in a broader sense and the institutions that were set up by very specific congregations?

One possibility would be to formalize a national structure that includes vowed Dominican women who are able to connect to campuses. This could also include Dominican women who are serving as faculty at colleges not sponsored by Dominicans. Is the Dominican Sisters Conference the natural place for such collaboration? Possibly. Similarly, formalizing an agreement between the Dominican colleges and universities surrounding mission could also provide another possible way to move forward. Such an agreement could include hiring a coordinator; establishing cross-registration of courses between Dominican colleges and universities; and designating space to house some of the current programs, such as the Fanjeaux study program, or other future programs that could be developed to serve all the Dominican colleges. This type of agreement could also provide a means to evaluate programs and how they serve individuals or the colleges as a whole; additionally, it could promote assessments on mission integration and charism formation in the university settings as well as through collaborative programs.

The possibility of formal agreements regarding cross-registration between Dominican schools was mentioned by a respondent from Barry University, which has the sister school of Siena Heights. Such an agreement could be complicated, requiring tuition, room and board, and academic coordination between schools. I wonder if this would be a better conversation at the national level. What schools offer summer or winter term programs that might allow for a student to enroll short term? What schools have strong theology or other mission related courses that students from other colleges could benefit from? Are there similar academic expectations between Dominican institutions that would make it feasible for students to cross register? How might finances be shared for students enrolling in a different Dominican college short term? All of these and many other questions would need to be answered, but they could provide a way to strengthen a national Dominican college and university identity and provide students with a chance to learn more about Dominican life. Other charism families, such as the Jesuits, Holy Cross, or Mercy colleges may have agreements that could be used as a template for such an agreement. Additionally, adding a summer course, or set of courses, at one institution that students from multiple campuses could enroll in might be a financially and mission driven way to focus on charism formation for the future.

There is already a relationship between several congregations in the US and congregations in Africa. This came from a meeting of Dominican Sisters International within the last two decades and resulted in African Dominican sisters coming to the US to study at Dominican colleges and universities. It also was an opportunity for US Dominican women to travel to Africa to educate women in their own setting, while learning more about the African sisters. Although the Dominican Charism Initiative

began as a collaboration between sisters in Africa and the US, it doesn't seem to be effective as a formation tool at the university level. I wonder if a different way to strengthen these relationships would be to grow the collaboration through inviting more Dominican sisters from Africa to study in the US. A possible reciprocal program would be for US faculty, staff, and students to travel to Africa to work with sisters there during academic breaks to learn about culture, education, public health, poverty, economics, or other relevant topics. This would enhance the relationships for both US and African sisters and provide an additional academic component to the relationship with the Dominican universities.

In addition to the Association of Catholic College and Universities meetings, the Dominican Higher Education Colloquium is recognized as an important gathering by those responsible for mission. Part academic conference, with papers presented by faculty members; part formation, with keynotes by notable Dominican scholars; and part social, the Colloquium provides an opportunity for faculty, staff, and administrators to learn from each other and vowed Dominicans about the Dominican mission and how it can be integrated into scholarship. As different campuses take turns hosting the Colloquium, it is comparatively inexpensive for participants. Some colleges provide funds to send faculty to the Colloquium, which ensures participation. The hosting campus has most responsibility in coordinating the conference, but the fact that it is held every other year and rotates campuses helps to make it feasible. I wonder if this is something that could be expanded, by including graduate and upper-level undergraduate student tracks in the future. Could reimagining some of the existing programs for students make a model like this work for students, faculty, and staff? Would something like the Ignatian Family

Teach-In serve as a model for how to include the different constituents in a shared bi-annual conference? Or would having both students and faculty be too overwhelming for a campus? Perhaps the best solution is a combined conference that has one or two overlapping days but also separate time and topics for each group. The collaboration that takes place in the Colloquium is a trademark of Dominican leadership and provides ways for large groups of people to hear from Dominican scholars, even if they don't have any on their campus. It was mentioned that hosting the Colloquium does take an extensive amount of staff time for the staff at the hosting institution. This may be an area where a national coordinator could assist in taking the burden off staff that are often holding two roles on campus already or are stretched because of the time needed to do their current ministry.

The four Dominican pillars, although articulated in multiple ways based on the campus and the search for truth, were emphasized on the different campuses as the way of focusing mission. Other aspects of the Dominican tradition, language specific to a founding congregation, or additional values were also included on most campuses as well. I wonder if a conversation at the College Colloquium or among the mission officers and presidents at the ACCU could result in an agreement on language that could be used across the campuses in the future. Nuances could still be expressed, based on the campus, but common language could help in marketing Dominican schools, in a sense of shared identity, and in unifying what it means to be a graduate of a Dominican institution of higher education. For example, is there one word that could be inclusive of prayer, spirituality, and reflection, all of which are used to articulate one of the four pillars? Or is there a way to articulate preaching as service or ministry, or vice versa, so that the final

pillar could be defined in one way? Community seems to be easy enough to convey as is. The same is true of study. It is the pillars of prayer and preaching that become less clear than the other two pillars from one campus to another.

Including areas of Dominican life in many aspects of campus life is key to continuing the charism. Relationships with vowed Dominican sisters, whether on campus or through co-curricular experiences, provide living examples of the charism through relationships and stories. Visual reminders, such as the campus shield or logo, statues, and names of buildings provide teaching opportunities for students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders that may be new to Dominican life. Including information about these symbols and other artwork, and institutionalizing them in formal orientation programs, curriculum, and celebrations, reminds students of the foundational charism and mission of the institution.

Areas of research for further study

Additional research could be done with a wider spectrum of constituents to measure effectiveness of charism formation and mission integration. Qualitative studies of knowledge about the Dominican charism at intake and at exit for students could be helpful. Similarly, a survey of alumni of Dominican institutions might provide insights into what of the charism is meaningful after their educational experience and how they do or don't relate the Dominican charism to their life. Similar studies could also be conducted with faculty and staff. However, qualitative studies, like those conducted here, could also be used with current students, faculty, and staff. This would expand the scope

of research beyond those who are integral in promoting mission and provide a less biased study.

A study of all the national programs related to Dominican higher education including the Dominican Charism Initiative, the College Preaching Conference, Dominican Young Adults, Fanjeaux Study Program, and Dominican College Colloquium would be helpful moving forward, so that schools or sponsoring congregations that need to make financial decisions about where to fund charism formation and mission education could make choices. This may be difficult, as some programs seem very effective for one school but not for another. Whether it is choosing which programs to sustain, or which programs may need some revitalization or rethinking, based on content or cost, there could be a strengthening of shared programs among the institutions.

This study could also be replicated with other charism groups (i.e., Mercy, Holy Cross) to see if similar challenges and gifts arise regarding the similarities and differences in their schools. By going beyond the Dominican institutions, there may be aspects of shared charisms or religious sponsored institutions, in general, that could provide for best practices across Catholic institutions of higher education.

Another area of further study would be to apply this research to other religious educational institutions. The questions from the initial survey could be adapted from Dominican language to language about Jesuits, Benedictines, Mercy Sisters, or other charisms. For example, rather than using the Four pillars of Dominican life as a marker for charism, “Seeing God in All Things” could be used as a marker for the Jesuits. Similarly, the site visit markers could easily be transitioned to use with other Catholic, religious-sponsored institutions. As many Catholic schools face similar challenges with

identity, funding, and recruitment, comparing results among schools of different charism families could provide a foundation for strengthening Catholic institutions of higher education more universally. Similarly, although this survey was specific to higher education, many of the questions could be used in other sponsored ministries to assess mission integration. The Leadership Conference of Women Religious or the Conference of Major Superiors of Men could be a place in which to have additional conversations about mission integration from the standpoint of leaders of congregations, as mission integration naturally includes collaboration between institutes of religious life and the institutions they founded.

Contributions of the study to the practice of ministerial leadership

The collaborative atmosphere of Dominican colleges, providing spaces for first-generation and minority students, openness to diversity while maintaining strong values, and care for students is a strength among the Dominican colleges and universities. These elements should be emphasized going forward, along with the hiring practices that emphasize mission. Drawing on the pioneering of women religious as leaders when the schools were first established, women leaders continue serve as role models to current students. An asset to mission integration is to continue to have sisters in key positions or intentionally hire women as presidents and vice presidents. Similarly, the focus on the Four pillars of Dominican life provides a balance to academics that other institutions may not emphasize, in that study is a key element but not the only aspect of education that is important. This happens through preaching or service, that is, keeping a focus beyond oneself; community, recognizing the connections within the institution and outside of the

institution; and prayer, reflection, or spirituality—which all recognize that there is a God. Elements of liberative theologies continue to shine through the mission of Dominican institutions as they reflect God’s love for those on the margins and provide social change to empower them.

Students at Dominican institutions may be Catholic, of other denominations or religions, or have no religious beliefs, but grace is still recognized and named in the ways in which they engage the world. Faculty, staff, and administrators are key in facilitating this recognition of grace—seeing the good in students and helping them to grow into professional and compassionate young adults who seek truth in all they do. The quest for truth is something that will continually be a need for the world, as it was in the time of Dominic and continues to be today. Wisdom, the combination of knowledge, understanding and, in the Christian sense, compassion and conscience, is really what is needed for graduates of Dominican institutions to be successful in the world. St. Dominic’s wisdom led him to insist on educating his band of preachers, giving them the tools to counteract the heretics who sounded convincing but could not provide sound theological arguments. The women who founded the Dominican colleges and universities used their wisdom to educate not only women religious, but also lay women and others on the margins. The longevity of the Dominican Order and of Dominican institutions of higher education is a testimony to their success in terms of charism—a gift used for the sake of the world—mission, and addressing of practical needs.

Summary

As a Dominican sister, I understand that the future of Dominican higher education and keeping the charism alive is important for the sake of the Church and the world, and it will require strategies on individual campuses. Strengthening the national-level programs and bonds that are already in place will enhance these local strategies. Creativity, continued care for the marginalized, cooperation over competition, the four Dominican pillars, and the seeking of truth are trademarks of Dominican higher education; they not only set Dominican schools apart, but also mark what a critical service they provide.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Dominican Charism: The gifts(s) of the Holy Spirit given to the Dominican Order, and the Church, which are the basis of their mission and ministry. The primary charism of the Dominicans, or Order of Preachers, is preaching, but it also includes the other three of the four Dominican pillars (prayer, study, and community), truth, contemplation and action, and other elements (Worcester 2017; *Ordo Praedicatorum* 2022).

Mission Integration: The process by which the Dominican charism is shared with constituents in an institution. Constituents may include administrators, students, faculty, alumni, and others (Conference of Mercy Higher Education n.d.). “Charism formation” and “mission integration” may be used interchangeably, as different key stakeholders use both terms depending on their roles.

Sister: A member of an apostolic or mendicant active religious community.

Alternatively, a nun may be a member of a cloistered contemplative community. The terms “nun” and “sister” are often used interchangeably even by those who are members of the different types of communities, and all members typically use the title of “sister” (Scalia 2016).

Friar: The male equivalent of a sister in a men’s religious community. Dominicans and Franciscans both use this term. “Friar” may refer to ordained priests or non-ordained brothers within the community (Scalia, 2020).

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APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

October 4, 2021

Sr. Jennifer Schaaf
School of Theology and Ministry
Seattle University

Dear Sr. Schaaf,

I'm following up on my Sept. 28, 2022, email indicating exemption status for your study **Charism Formation in Dominican Institutions of Higher Education**, which meets exemption criteria from IRB review in compliance with **45CFR46.104(d)**:

- 2) Research that includes only interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if (i) the investigator records information in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained (directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects); (ii) any disclosure of the data outside the research would not reasonably place subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or damage the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or (iii) the investigator records information in such a manner that the participant's identity can readily be ascertained, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review.

Note that a letter of exemption does **not** mean IRB "approval." *Do not include statements for publication or otherwise that the SU IRB has "reviewed and approved" this study*; rather, say the SU IRB has "determined the study to be exempt from IRB review in accordance with federal regulation criteria." Please retain this letter with your study files.

If your project alters in nature or scope, contact the IRB right away. If you have any questions, I'm happy to assist.

Best wishes,



Andrea McDowell, PhD
IRB Administrator

cc: Dr. Erica Martin, Faculty Adviser

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TITLE: Charism Formation in Dominican Institutions of Higher Education

INVESTIGATOR: Sr. Jennifer E. Schaaf, OP, D.Min. Candidate, School of Theology and Ministry, 614-738-5498

ADVISOR: (if applicable) Dr. Donalson, Director of Doctor of Ministry, School of Theology and Ministry, 206-296-6357

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate the ways in which your institution promotes the Dominican charism. You will be asked to complete an online survey which will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Some participants will be contacted for a follow-up site visit to their campus and an interview asking for additional details for the answers provided on their survey.

SOURCE OF SUPPORT: This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in ministry at Seattle University.

RISKS: There are no known risks associated with this study.

BENEFITS: The results of this study will provide a comprehensive look at best practices in mission integration and charism formation at Dominican colleges and universities, which will hopefully provide a useful resource for participants.

INCENTIVES: You will receive no gifts/incentives for this study. Participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Participants names, educational and ministerial background and title will be collected. All research materials and consent forms will be stored in password protected electronic forms and in hard copy in a private home. Only the researcher will have access to the data. Human subjects research regulations require that data be kept for a minimum of three (3) years. When the research study ends, any identifying information will be removed from the data, or it will be destroyed. All of the information you provide will be kept confidential.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: Your participation in this study is *voluntary*. You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. Your withdrawal will not influence any other services to which you may be otherwise entitled.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request. Sr. Jennifer Schaaf, OP, 614-738-5498, jschaaf@seattleu.edu. The summary of data will be available approximately by February 1, 2022.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being asked of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason, without penalty. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any concerns about my participation in this study, I may call Sr. Jennifer E. Schaaf who is asking me to participate, at 614-738-5498. If I have any concerns that my rights are being violated, I may contact Dr. Michael Spinetta, Chair of the Seattle University Institutional Review Board at (206) 296-2585.

Participant's Signature

Date

Investigator's Signature

Date

CONSENT TO USE IDENTIFYING INFORMATION:

I give my permission for my name, title, institution, educational background, ministerial background, and direct quotes to be used in any presentations, publications, or other public dissemination of the research findings of this study.

Participant's Signature

Date

APPENDIX C
SURVEY

Dominican Higher Education Mission Integration Survey

Name

Name of college/university where you serve

Position/Title

Are you a vowed Dominican or a lay person?

Vowed Dominican

Lay

Other:

Please list your educational background (i.e. Ph.D. Educational Psychology, M.A. History)

Please list any prior related ministerial experience (i.e. taught in a Dominican high school, worked in a religious sponsored hospital, served in campus ministry at another college).

How many years have you been at your institution?

How many years have you been doing work related to mission integration at your institution?

What do you see as key components of the Dominican charism?

Do you focus charism education around the Four Dominican Pillars? If so, how do you define them?

How is the Dominican mission fostered at your institution?

How are faculty, staff, board members or other key stakeholders formed in the Dominican charism and mission?

Is the mission focused specifically through a Catholic lens or for a broader audience?

Please add any details you think might be helpful in clarifying the approach used. How are students taught about the Dominican charism and mission? Are there formal courses related to the mission and Catholic identity? If so, are they required? Are there curriculum requirements that are integrated into courses? If you have a significant adult student population, are they included in mission education in the same ways or different ways than traditional students?

How is Catholic Dominican prayer/spirituality incorporated on campus? Is it optional or included in required events?

Please list any specific Dominican celebrations or heritage opportunities that occur on campus.

As an institution founded by Dominican women, what do you see as being key components of leadership in the institution? Is there anything noticeably different in the leadership here than in other places you have worked?

How do you assess charism or mission education? What have you found to be most effective regarding specific programs, events or systems? How do your assessments shape your work?

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