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## Leading Change: A Phenomenological Study of Collaboration for Mission at Marianist Universities

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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Doctorate of Education Program

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Leading Change: A Phenomenological Study of Collaboration for Mission at  
Marianist Universities

Jessica González Uhlig  
Concordia University–Portland  
College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in  
Transformational Leadership

Audrey Rabas, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

George Lisjak, Ed.D., Content Specialist

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Concordia University–Portland

2019

## **Abstract**

Using transformational leadership theory as a foundational framework, this qualitative phenomenological study explored the ways lay and religious leaders at three Catholic and Marianist universities in Hawaii, Ohio, and Texas, live out, strategize, and sustain mission and identity through intentional collaboration. The problem addressed was that due to membership declining within the religious congregation in these Catholic institutions of higher education, leadership roles for strategizing for mission have shifted from vowed religious members of the congregations to lay professionals. Semistructured interviews were conducted with professional lay staff and faculty, lay executive administrators, and members of the Marianist order. The research questions pertained to how universities manifest intentional collaboration among lay executive leaders, decision makers, and their religious counterparts to create a culture of commitment to sustain and promote mission and identity and to how formation efforts can be effective in preparing lay leaders to sustain mission and identity and create avenues for promoting the religious founding charism and spirit. Data were analyzed using the Van Kaam Method. The results indicate high commitment to the mission and identity of the universities from the lay professionals and a sense of shared ownership on behalf of the religious brothers. However, there is also a perception that lay administration should be intentional regarding institutionalizing mission as the number of religious brothers declines.

*Keywords:* Catholic, Marianist, lay leader, charism, mission, identity, change

## **Dedication**

To all daughters, girlfriends, nieces, wives, mothers, single mothers, women out there who were faced with adversity throughout life, verbally, emotionally or physically mistreated, judged and meant to feel guilty for making decisions that were the best thing to do at the time, and for having dreams, desires to challenge cultural bias and status quo, and have educational and professional goals. Let this labor of hard work and lots of love for mission-driven education, remind us all to never, ever give up. ¡Sí, se puede!

And to Abuelo Eddie . . .

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To members of the Marianist family, religious and lay, who have watered the ground of my soul with faith, love, friendship and challenging motivation, especially Sr. Nicole Trahan, Maggie Atkinson, Kelly Long, Dr. Steve Neiheisel, and most recently, Bro. Allen Pacquing, Also, to Linda Hayes, the best supervisor I have ever had, and the Marianist mission, for giving me the flexibility to multi-task and complete assignments from the office. I am forever grateful. To Dr. George Lisjak, not only as a Marianist educator, but as my content specialist and an incredibly valuable member of my committee. Thank you, George!

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Finally, I want to thank Fr. William Joseph Chaminade. At times of darkness, war, exile and hate, he found inspiration through education. Fr. Chaminade believed that through educating young minds, the world can change for the sake and good of others. That inspiration and belief is what carries Marianist universities today. Two months shy of celebrating the 200th anniversary of Marianist education, I am blessed to have completed this study and hope it serves as a resource for Marianist educators at all levels.



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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Introduction to the Problem**

For many years, vowed religious men and women represented and nurtured charism, mission, and identity in Catholic colleges and universities in their roles as brothers, priests, and sisters. According to Pharr (2017), Vatican II resulted in a call for the laity to increasingly share in the mission of the Church through use of their God-given gifts and talents. To believe and support Catholic higher education today is to fully embrace what Vatican II represented: to give light to an invitation for the laity to take a more significant role within the leadership of the Church and its educational institutions at all levels (Pharr, 2017). However, the tradition of having Catholic higher education institutions led by religious men and women faces leadership challenges and change. The declining number of religious men and women in executive and decision-making leadership positions led to transitions in leadership to lay professionals (Rizzi, 2018). While equally or more qualified lay faculty and executive staff was hired over the years, questions arise regarding who is responsible for nurturing and sustaining the faith traditions, values, and characteristics, which make Catholic colleges and universities distinctive.

Developing new lay staff and faculty to own mission and identity is important in today's Catholic higher education. According to Smith and Adams (2008), university boards are encouraged to shift towards more executive styles of leadership and decision-making. This shift does not imply members of the clerical order who founded Catholic universities are no longer relevant. On the contrary, creating new avenues for collaboration with religious members of a university community and their lay professional peers may encourage new leadership to establish new methods to nurture the institution's mission and identity.

This chapter includes important historical context to create a point of reference leading to the current situation in Catholic higher education. Specifically, as a researcher, I will present how three universities founded by the same religious congregation have “read the signs of the times” (Society of Mary, 1996, p. 1) and began strategic conversations to sustain and advance the meaning of mission and identity when there are fewer members of the religious order on each campus.

### **Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem**

Understanding the problem Catholic colleges and university leaders face in shifting to a lay leadership model is reflected in the statistical decline in vowed religious throughout the United States. Membership and reported vocations in religious congregations have significantly decreased, resulting in fewer members taking on higher education leadership roles (Pharr, 2017). In 1965, the number of ordained priests and sisters was 238,586, and, by 2016, the number had decreased to 84,363 (CARA, 2017).

For the 2017–2018 academic year, the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) reported that, in the 1,274,162 Catholic elementary/middle schools and 561,214 secondary schools, the full-time professional staff was made up of 97.4% laity (74.8% women and 22.6% men) and 2.6% religious/clergy (1.6% sisters, 0.5% brothers, and 0.5% clergy). Administrators and boards in Catholic colleges and universities have seen declining numbers of priests and women religious in leadership positions, therefore needing to undergo their own transformation in all aspects of leadership (Pharr, 2017). Bradley (2015) reported, in the summer 2015 update from the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU), that the number of lay presidents in Catholic institutions increased. In 2000, 111 religious brothers, sisters, and priests held executive leadership roles, while 84 lay professionals held the positions of president in what



had been traditionally clergy-led Catholic universities (Bradley, 2015). By 2014, the ACCU reported the number of lay presidents increased to 126, leaving the top leadership roles to 70 members of religious orders. Overall, the percentage of lay executive leadership increased by over half by 2015 (ACCU, 2015).

According to Galligan-Stierle (2015), Catholic colleges and universities within multicultural societies are in the midst of profound change. It is important to create models of formation to develop the leaders who will preserve the institutional identity of Catholic education. The predominance of laity and the diminishing presence of religious leaders has been a concern for educators seeking to enhance and nurture mission and identity of Catholic institutions of higher education (Galligan-Stierle, 2015). In response, the formation of the laity, along with their intentional and committed collaboration with the religious who still have a presence on Catholic campuses can contribute to the sustainability of a school's mission. The conceptual framework of need expressed by those in Catholic higher education concerned with losing the essence of a campus Catholic identity allowed this study to explore the collaborative relationships between the religious and the lay leaders within their roles and responsibilities to sustain mission and identity.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem addressed in this study centers on a continued need for assessing the mission and identity that make a Catholic college or university Catholic. It is also necessary to consider and investigate who will be tasked with the responsibility of maintaining mission and identity as distinctive features of the culture of these universities. With the number of historically clergy-led institutions shifting to a lay leadership model, the proper sustaining of the mission and identity is questionable.

## **Purpose of the Study**

Reflecting on the concerns voiced by leaders in Catholic higher education as the proportion of lay leaders increased (ACCU, 2015), this study focused on how lay and religious leaders at three Catholic and Marianist universities faced declining numbers of brothers and priests in administrative roles. In addition, as researcher, I aimed to examine ways to develop lay professionals committed to the mission who will assume key leadership positions. An important precursor to this study is the need for better understanding of terminology, codes, and characteristics, which touch all aspects of the university (Gardner, 2006) as well as how they can inspire daily work across campus. An appreciation for “encoding the characteristics of the mission in all parts of the university hierarchy” (Gardner, 2006, p. 222) can inspire this work.

Through this study, I wanted to explore the effects of intentional collaboration between lay and religious leaders as well as the openness of the religious congregation to share the charism, values, and traditions, as they allow necessary strategies to embed mission and identity into all aspects of campus life. The Association of Marianist Universities (2013) in its guiding document for Marianist universities, the *Characteristics of Marianist Administration*, highlight that “all are welcome for the purpose of the mission because the mission is for all” (p. 7), which invites different members of the university community to support and represent the mission in their everyday activities on campus. Researching intentional collaboration between religious and lay leaders to address the need for sustaining mission and identity in Catholic colleges and universities may be beneficial to the greater mission-driven and faith-centered educational community. According to LeBeau and Ward (2009), there is a need to redesign and reorganize a campus culture by structuring more collaboration and engagement.

## Research Questions

The study involved conducting a phenomenological examination to learn how the mutual commitment of religious and lay leaders to mission and identity manifests itself through intentional collaboration, conversations, immersions, and reflection (Moustakas, 1994) to keep religious and faith charism alive. Through interviews of religious members of the Marianist communities at three universities as well as lay executive and decision-making leaders who have expressed a commitment to Catholic and Marianist traditions, the intent was to answer the following research questions:

- How are university leaders manifesting intentional collaboration between lay executive leaders, or decision makers, and their religious counterparts, in order to create a culture of commitment to sustain and promote mission and identity?
  - How is collaboration between lay executive leaders and their religious peers intentionally strategized to weave into the thread of the campus culture the essence of the Catholic and Marianist charism?
- How can formation efforts be effective in preparing lay leaders in three Catholic and Marianist universities to sustain mission and identity, and create avenues for promoting the religious founding charism and spirit as they perform their jobs on a day to day basis, while making a positive impact on their respective campuses?
  - In what ways can the university mission and identity be preserved and sustained by lay leaders and decision makers when there are fewer or no religious members of the congregation in active ministry roles on each campus?

## **Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study**

This research may support intentional collaboration among lay executive leaders and the vowed religious to develop leaders who can maintain educational philosophies with a true commitment to the institution's values, mission, and identity. According to Filteau (2010), there is growing concern within religious orders who founded the majority of U.S. Catholic colleges and universities about how the mission and charism of the institutions will be carried on when there are not enough qualified leaders, faculty, and staff within the order to represent the faith tradition. A sense of urgency has been elevated for university congregations to consider findings ways to create consistency in context by embedding the charism in current university life (Sanders, 2010). Therefore, new methods and mechanisms must be created to allow new leadership to merge different expressions of Catholic identity into modern-day diverse campuses (Rizzi, 2018), which include a larger number of lay professional faculty and staff.

The relevance of this study reflects current trends in organizational leadership needs for transformation and innovation. Jyoti and Bhau (2016) reported on the correlation of positive change implementation by transformational leaders, resulting in positive, committed, and loyal work environment and personal and professional satisfaction within higher education institutions.

The significance of this study is that it may provide important data supporting the need for intentional collaboration between lay executive leaders and their religious counterparts as mission implementation officers. Other colleges and universities facing the challenges of shifting to lay leadership models may benefit from what is discovered, considering the needs for the development of mission-driven leaders who will strategize how mission will drive

institutional discernment processes and procedures (Smith & Davies, 2016) towards preserving mission and identity.

### **Definition of Terms**

To provide clarity when using terms directly related to insight from previous research, following are terms and phrases commonly used throughout this study. They are listed in alphabetical order with a description of the intended meanings as they relate to the study.

*Brother:* Members of the Society of Mary (Marianists) as used in this study, refers to all male members of the religious order as brothers; some brothers choose to enter the priesthood (Society of Mary, 1996).

*Catholic and Marianist:* Term expressing the interconnectedness between the Catholic and Marianist dimensions of the university's tradition, including educating for formation of faith, family spirit, service, justice and peace and for adaptation and change (Association of Marianist Universities [AMU], 2018).

*Catholic higher education:* Refers to all colleges and universities connected with the educational tradition of the Catholic Church as spaces where engaging and challenging conversations take place in support of many disciplines as well as to professional schools interconnected to Catholic mission and identity (Heft, 2012).

*Charism:* Within Catholic religious orders and congregations, this term is usually defined as a distinctive experience of the Holy Spirit, or the divine, and a spiritual gift to the Church and the world. Each Catholic religious congregation has a distinctive charism. The Marianist charism usually references a feeling or mode of being, in prayer and in ministry, with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as a model of discipleship for our community (Giardino, 2011).

*Lay:* Within context of the Catholic Church, persons who are not religiously professed sisters, brothers, or priests. The lay faithful collaborate, celebrate, and share in the educational mission of the Catholic Church (Pharr, 2017).

*Leader:* Any person who exercises leadership in formal and/or informal capacities across any level, function, or role within the organization. University leaders can effect change in a positive way while serving a campus in different roles (Gardner, 2006).

*Leadership:* This term is broadly defined in this study as “the exercise of influence for the common good of the group or community” (Giardino, 2011, p. 120).

*Lived experience:* This phrase refers to “our immediate, pre-reflective consciousness of life” (van Manen, 1990, p. 35), which is the central focus in phenomenology. It is the present, continuous experience of phenomena.

*Marianist:* Marianists, as used in this study, refers to people who belong to any of the three branches of the Marianist Family: the Society of Mary, a religious order of brothers and priests; the Daughters of Mary Immaculate; and Marianist laypersons. The term is also used to refer to affiliated institutions, universities, schools, parishes, and other educational and social ministries (Society of Mary, 1996).

*Mission and identity:* This phrase contains two distinct but interrelated terms that express the fundamental nature of an organization. Mission refers to a reason for existence, answering the question “why we exist,” and identity refers to core characteristics of “who we are.” Catholic universities carry out their mission “in communion with the Church through each religious order’s distinctive identity” (AMU, 2018) intentionally inviting others to believe in it.

*Priest:* Term used to describe those members of the Society of Mary (Marianist) order who, while already being religious brothers, choose to enter the Seminary to be ordained as a priest (Society of Mary, 1996).

*Sisters:* Term used to describe the female members of the religious congregation part of the Marianist family, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, also known as the Marianist Sisters (Society of Mary, 1996).

*Society of Mary:* Society of Mary applies to two different Catholic religious orders: Marianists and Marists. For the purposes of this study, Society of Mary was used only in reference to Marianist brothers and priests.

*Tradition:* Merriam-Webster dictionary (Tradition, 2018) defines tradition as an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior (such as a religious practice or a social custom). In the context of Catholic higher education, the Catholic tradition is often manifested on colleges and university campuses as ways to learn and live out Christian vision and goals, reflections of faith and a commitment to service to those marginalized (ACCU, 2018).

*Vowed:* Term used to describe the consecrated men and women who have committed their lives to God and become permanent members of the religious orders, the Society of Mary, and Daughters of Mary Immaculate, as part of the Marianist Family (Society of Mary, 1996).

### **Assumptions, Delimitations and Limitations**

This study includes several assumptions. According to Creswell (2007), there are philosophical assumptions in qualitative research. Rhetorical assumptions refer to the language of research and, as a qualitative researcher, I made a conscious effort to communicate using a relatively informal and narrative style, specifically during data collection. For example,

presenting the interview questions asking, “tell me your story.” There is an assumption that all participants represented the intended population. They spoke of job responsibilities, based on what category of the population they represented. Additional assumptions include the honesty of each participant as they engaged in answering the questions during the interviews, as well as their intended desire to participate in this study focusing collaboration for mission. Participants seemed interested and enthusiastic about sharing their experience directly related to the research.

Delimitations are characteristics or choices, which helped design the research (Wiersma, 2000). This study was limited to lay and religious faculty and staff at three Catholic and Marianist universities. To provide a framework, the study addressed Catholic higher education and leadership, specifically how Catholic colleges and universities shift to lay leadership models from historically religious ones. Three Catholic and Marianist universities began the shift in leadership from vowed religious leaders to lay professional faculty and staff and provided an adequate sample to support the phenomenology of practice of shared experiences (van Manen, 2014) by exploring how lay and religious members of the community collaborate to sustain mission and identity. Lay professional faculty and staff all have significant experience and exposure to aspects in Marianist universities administration, teaching, and ministry.

Limitations can be seen as flaws that may hinder the study and its validity. As primary research instrument, I refrained from influencing any element of the study and from hindering data collection and analysis. The setting of a Marianist environment of higher learning adds richness to a common shared experience influencing how a phenomenon evolves (van Manen, 2014). However, a limitation was that, at the time of this study, there were only three Catholic and Marianist universities. Therefore, locations were limited to Hawaii, Ohio, and Texas. In addition, there were limitations to finding enough participants with roles, and specific



responsibilities for data collection. For example, the sample consists of a low number of vowed religious remaining in acting roles on each campus in comparison to lay professional leaders. Nevertheless, each university has a number of male vowed members active in a variety of roles from executive leadership to ministry and teaching. While findings from this study could be applicable to similar populations, the number of participants, their experience, and point of view, limit the scope of the study.

## **Summary**

There is rich and significant insight into how Catholic universities sustain their faith and mission-centered identity during times of change in leadership. Beginning with the complexity of imminent change facing today's Catholic religious order, college and university presidents, leadership councils and boards are urged to consider new methods of communication, collaboration and adaptation (Reynolds & Wallace, 2016). The declining number of religious men and women in ministry has an impact on colleges and universities founded and administered historically by religious congregations, so lay professional faculty and staff are now needed in roles previously held by brothers and priests at three universities founded by the Marianists. The research was designed to be applicable to other contexts, situations, times, and populations to discover new ways by which religious orders can build synergy and strategy for the future, not jeopardize their charism, mission and identity.

This introduction includes the purpose of this study of how the Marianists, representing mission and identity of their founded institutions, share this educational tradition with lay colleagues to nurture and sustain its essence. Creating new ways to share the charism with lay stakeholders like new leaders formed in the Marianist way can influence the Catholic mission and identity of the university (AMU, 2018). Definitions of terms are included to provide insight

into specific terminology used in Marianist educational settings as well as by the religious congregation. Furthermore, as in all studies, limitations and issues that may affect relevancy and a rationale for the study and its need are stated as well as supported to justify its significance.

In conclusion, passionate educators who believe in the need for the preservation of the core Catholic mission and identity values and traditions in Catholic institutions should find this study valuable. According to Carney (2010), leaders in Catholic college campuses have a responsibility to share their identity and mission with those people committed to the spirit, mission, and heritage of their founding congregations. Through this study, as a researcher, I discovered new and ways to engage in collaborative and transformative strategies to sustain mission and identity for years to come as lay professionals say yes to represent their religious colleagues, brothers and sisters in mission.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The future of Catholic colleges and universities is in the hands of lay professionals. According to Winters (2017), several Catholic institutions of higher education, such as the University of Notre Dame and Boston College, adopted a largely lay board to advise executive leaders, but they have not lost their Catholic identity. Many Catholic institutions at all levels face the decline in the number of religious women and men, most of whom carried out their apostolate by teaching. These teachers also held key leadership positions such as president, provost, and vice president for human resources. For many years, members of the clergy or a university's founding religious order planned, strategized, and implemented all operations to allow the institution to flourish. They also represented the charism of their order, educational spirituality, and the institutional mission. Zech (2016) stated these factors force leadership to look at strategies and future planning, and it is time to search for new models for delivering the education for which Catholic colleges and universities are known.

According to the ACCU, extensive formation on how leaders in Catholic institutions share, manifest, and nurture faith and values from institutional mission is necessary. Conversation and cooperation between an institution's founding religious order and lay leadership will enable intentional formation to explore ways to sustain mission and identity. Galligan-Stierle and Casale (2010) reported three themes of Pope Francis' papacy—encounter, accompany, and dialogue—apply to the mission of Catholic higher education and this call from the Pope to engage invites for a necessary paradigm shift. Leaders in Catholic colleges and universities must gather in community and dialogue in partnership for support of what makes the institutions distinctively Catholic.

This chapter highlights research on the current situation at faith-based colleges and universities when roles in executive councils shift from vowed religious men and women to lay professional faculty and staff. According to Hochschild (2017), to sustain a Catholic university's mission, lay leaders should encourage dialogue to address ways to model an integrated understanding of the institutional mission as well as how to help others grow in faith and spirituality

The importance of this topic and its significance emerges from a need to preserve the commitment by lay leaders to foster and sustain the ideals of the mission of Catholic universities, specifically Marianist universities. Like other universities in the position of assessing strategies to sustain mission and identity with a mostly lay leadership council, Marianist universities must collectively support, promote, and advance Marianist higher education. According to the AMU, the Association of Marianist Universities, there is intentionality in existence to facilitate an “environment to sustain cooperation and the exchange of experience and information among members of the educational campus communities” (The Marianists, 2018, para. 2), both lay and religious. The research supporting the study of how Catholic and Marianist universities face challenges to enhance mission and identity mentioned in this chapter, presenting themes of hiring for mission, mission-centered strategic planning, and a need for adaptation and change to develop lay leaders. The literature review also suggests formation efforts can be effective in preparing lay leadership in to sustain mission and identity. Furthermore, the literature review invites for the further inquiry into why lay leaders would have a responsibility or desire to be motivated by the religious founding charism and spirit as they perform their jobs on a daily basis as well as how these lay faculty and staff leaders effect positive change on campus through a mission and identity lens.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Because of a decrease in the number of people entering a religious order, Catholic colleges and universities have to look at the number of brothers, sisters, and priests working at their institutions. There is a concern that the Catholic mission, identity, and essence will be lost. According to McInerney (2012), hiring practices are often not addressed in the Catholic higher education community, and some of these institutions, while called or categorized as Catholic, stand on the verge of losing their real identity due to the lack of intentional hiring for mission and formation for lay professionals.

My interest in and passion for this topic are due to having participated in the conversation on ways to address the decreasing number of religious life members of the community who were both in the classroom and in administrative positions. I was selected to help create a systemic training and formation program for lay faculty and staff supporting mission and identity at a Catholic and Marianist institution. Gardner (2006) showed the current state of administration in Catholic colleges and universities by stating, “the impact of increases in lay leadership in Catholic higher education is an issue of considerable debate” (p. 218).

This topic of research aids in assessing the future of what makes a Catholic college or university Catholic: its mission and identity. It has been challenging for many institutional leaders to manage the transition in leadership from a governing board or religiously appointed individuals to nonreligious lay professional leaders. Research shows a need to focus on understanding the nuances and codes within the mission in all parts of the university hierarchy, as, according to Gardner (2006), aspects of the mission were perceived to strengthen its permeation through a college campus. The current trend of more lay professionals qualified and interested in working in Catholic colleges and universities allows for an examination of

collaboration with mission and identity officers or remaining members of the religious order on campuses. Providing intentional collaboration through teaching and training lay leaders may lead new lay leaders to help build a community of faith around a vision of the religious community and the Church, which can be shared, lived, and experienced by all.

Spending almost 15 years on campus and seeing the transformation and growing pains the university was going through when the first lay president was appointed, allowed me to witness the challenges and blessings that came. I saw the development of systemic educational, or formation, opportunities for lay faculty and staff to learn, grasp, and fully understand the educational philosophy. Experiencing these programs enabled myself and others to speak and articulate with confidence the institutional mission and identity. With the support and collaboration of the religious members on campus, lay leadership development will help create and nourish a community of learners, intentionally committed to current trends, technologies and knowledge sharing tools for effective teaching (Earl, 2005). These resources available to lay professionals will enable growth and development, while leading a Catholic institution with mission and identity in the forefront.

Some may say that lay educators will not be as effective as vowed religious persons in being acceptable representatives of the religious charism. However, “the great strength of Catholic schools is their autonomy, the ability to craft creative responses to meet current needs” (Holter & Frabutt, 2012, p. 254). Openness for collaboration invites those lay faculty and staff members to appreciate the essence of the university at a deeper, more personal, and even spiritual level. The job one has, when looked through the lens of formation, can become so much more than simply a job. Belmonte and Cranston (2009) proposed it is essential for the religious faith and essence to be fully integrated into the daily life and activity of the school.

Successful programming of lay leadership then suggests formal formation opportunities should be encouraged and available. Researchers report lay leaders in Catholic institutions express a lack of formal preparation and experience in managerial and administrative aspects of their role, while transitioning into formal leadership positions. According to Belmonte and Cranston (2009), there must be thorough connectedness with the religious communities ministering in the school, while establishing collaborative ways, seen as essential to rising lay Catholic leadership.

There are three Catholic and Marianist universities, and all have lay presidents and a mostly lay professional administrative staff. Over the past 15 years, the number of lay presidents in Catholic colleges and universities has increased (Bradley, 2015). Leaders in Catholic and Marianist universities are acting and being transformational, given their commitment for mission and identity. According to the AMU (2014), faculty and staff come together as a community of faith, knowledge and love in a common search for the truth to work together with a deep sense of mission. While the number of staff and faculty members of the religious declines, these transformational leaders can enable others to make positive change on campus through collaborative and intentional ways to nurture the essence of what it means to be a Catholic and Marianist institution. Lay faculty and staff formation is a systemic response to the urgency and need to sustain Catholic mission and identity (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009).

**Topical research.** Extensive searches to create a literature review included findings of topics mostly focused on collaboration, both on and off college campuses. Other themes were transformational leadership and the formation of lay faculty and staff to face Catholic educational leadership and administration without vowed religious members. Liou and Hermanns (2017) suggested weaving concepts and skills related to structures and cultures in an educational institution can enable all members of a school community to live “experiences in

order to meet outcomes around equity and excellence and transformative leadership” (p. 669), leading to equal sharing and appreciation of the mission and identity.

Findings on the topic of institutionalizing mission and identity include the challenges brought from the need to keep the moral center of an institution untouched. Heft (2012) cautioned there is an assumption that mission belongs only to campus ministry and the theology department at Catholic colleges and universities. As those in leadership positions in Marianist institutions have realized, other Catholic colleges and universities face the same challenges of how to maintain mission and identity as a vibrant presence on campus. Smith and Davies (2016) shared that heads of Dominican institutions are having the necessary conversations regarding how to best preach the essence of the Dominican charism. This was done to allow those who support the mission, could manifest it in many ways on college campuses “from teaching in a classroom, to university-sponsored programs and events, and the individual actions and behaviors of community members” (p. 48), echoing the desires of the Marianists. At the heart of the priorities for many Catholic institutions, essential elements were the development of mission-driven leaders. In addition, a need to provide spaces for intentional discernment processes, which can be implemented into strategic plans or vision statements as programs, retreats and resources available for lay faculty and staff to study and learn more about the educational mission of the institution (Smith & Davies, 2016).

Milner and Ferrari (2010) have shown that mission statements define the institution’s purpose, distinctiveness, and future. Mission also drives an institution’s operations, which is tailored towards “moving an organization forward in achieving future goals” (p. 258). The institution’s mission invites faculty and staff to focus the energy and needs for balance between operational and educational goals, and mission advancement (Milner & Ferrari, 2010). When the



essence of the mission is embraced by lay faculty and staff with the collaboration and mentorship of mission officers, it is embraced by employees' strategic planning, "marketing, and public dissimulation of the unique characteristics of the institution, and the future visions for growth and enhancement" (p. 259), which is what makes the institution distinctive. Religious orders are aware of the need to "seek ways to ensure that the spirit and vision of the order will not only be preserved but will be a vibrant experience on each of our campuses" (Carney, 2010, p. 102), leading to the need for formative programming and intentionality in cross-campus collaboration for mission advancement. According to Boyle (2010), a lack of systemic collaboration affects Catholic institutions' mission and identity.

Overall, research shows Catholic colleges and universities want to hold true to their mission and identity as foundational roots for educating for the common good and need to "engage lay faculty and staff in reflection and dialogue regarding their role" as Catholic higher education leaders (Smith & Davies, 2016, p. 50). The attempt to establish formal avenues for reflection and dialogue strives to build a foundation for sustainability of mission. According to Fleming (2014), the Marianist charism seeks to illuminate culture by faith and to help those embracing it see the signs and graces of God at work in the aspirations and accomplishments within a campus community.

**Theoretical framework.** Jyoti and Bhau (2016) described a leader as the central presence in encouraging employees to learn, reach their full potential, and break through boundaries. Leaders often have to face and embrace change in institutional culture, decisions, and strategies. Transformational leadership theory provides a framework where organizations shine by embracing how to manage change, as it allows for shaping behaviors (Jyoti & Bhau, 2016). Researchers have shown that transformational leaders motivate followers to achieve their

true potential and to perform beyond expectations. According to Spahr (2015), transformational leaders focus on change to implement change to improve the system and assess what works. In addition, transformational leaders have a keen ability to find what must change, while being strategic enough to maximize their teams' strengths, capability, and capacity.

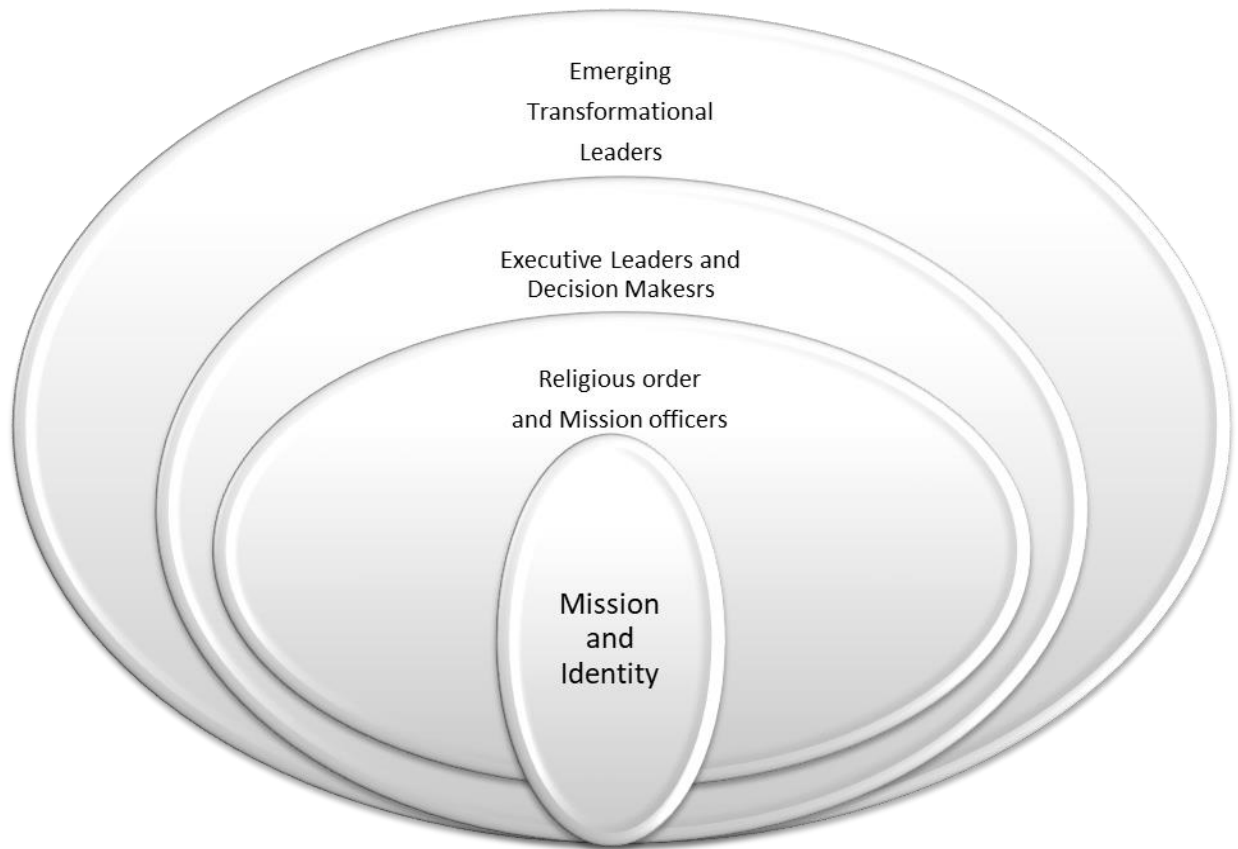
Transformational leadership development is a concept that leaders in Catholic college and universities need to consider adapting to promote the university's mission and identity, to inspire committed lay faculty and staff, to stay true to the history, while relevant to today. A call for change comes from the fact that fewer vowed members of the clergy hold leadership positions. The ACCU reported that approximately 40% of the 200 U.S.-based Catholic colleges and universities have religious men and women in top executive positions (Gadoua, 2017). While qualified lay professionals were placed in many of those roles, a more intentional and systemic formation program, in collaboration with the mission officers, and remaining religious leaders, can assist in enhancing best practices to sustain mission and identity.

According to Liou and Hermanns (2017), working collaboratively can establish a framework of transformative leadership development for aspiring educators and administrators. Using transformational leadership theory as a framework for the study intended, the goal is to highlight university executive administrators and decision makers and their commitment to collaborate with religious members of the campus community who serve as mission officers. This collaboration will lead to the motivation, inspiration and support for positive change (Cherry, 2018) in the formation of emerging transformational lay leaders who want to grow in understanding the mission and charism of the institution, therefore addressing the research questions. One can study how collaboration is weaved into the institutional culture and explore

ideas or themes that may stem forward to develop programming to nurture and encourage transformational leadership formation.

By looking at how executive leaders and decision makers at Catholic and Marianist institutions collaborate, one can learn more about strategies for sustaining Catholic and Marianist identity on campus. This partnership and collaboration may help shape and develop transformational leaders, who can be emotionally intelligent, energetic, and passionate towards the mission and see their roles on campus from a different perspective. Through collaborating with the religious members, emerging transformational leaders will continue to be committed to “helping the organization achieve its goals [and] to helping group members fulfill their potential” (Cherry, 2018 p. 4).

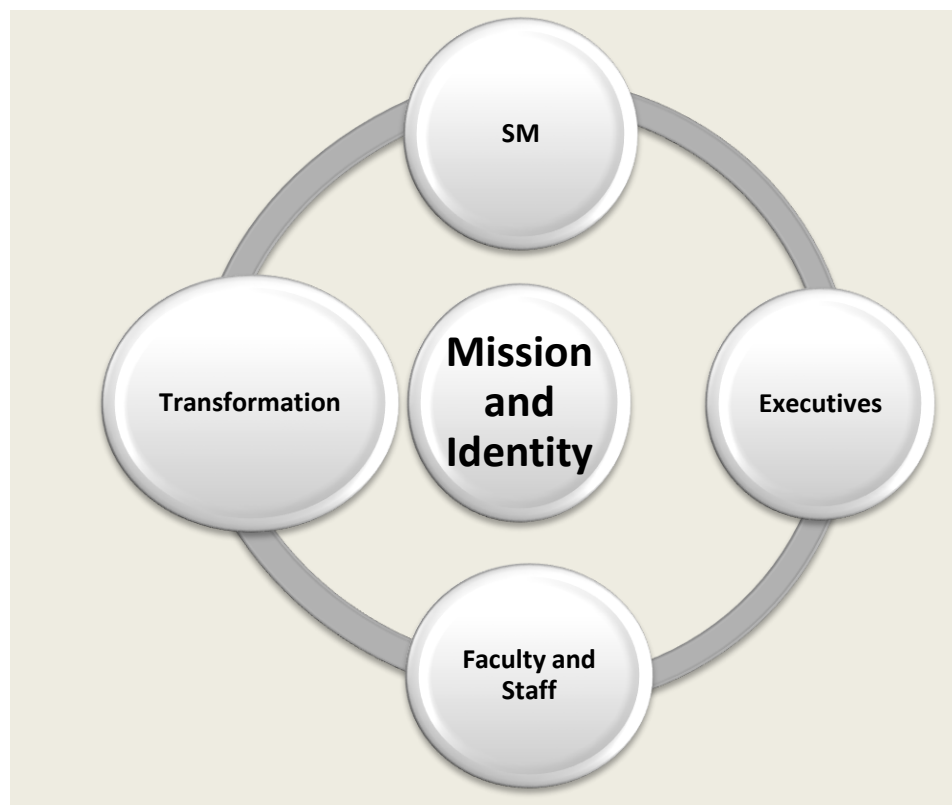
Transformational leader development, which is inspired, formed, and supported by collaborative efforts between decision makers and mission offices, will challenge cultural changes brought about by the decreasing number of vowed religious. Rooted in mission and religious identity, the essence of the institution’s charisma, or charism, must permeate through levels of hierarchy and organizational silos. It must overlap throughout the relationships among religious and mission officers, executive leaders and decision makers and ultimately inspiring the formation of emerging transformational leaders. Figure 1 shows the overlapping relationships while keeping mission and identity at the center and stretching to touch all. The presence of a transformational leader, centered in mission for positive change, is a predictor of satisfaction and commitment within a work environment (Jyoti & Bhau, 2016).



*Figure 1.* Overlapping relationships rooted in mission and identity.

Stemming from the center circle is the primary representative of the charism, the members of a religious order, and behind those come the executives and decision makers. These leaders are the key stewards of what it means to lead a Catholic and Marianist higher educational institution, providing all that a 4-year university can provide, while staying true to the foundational mission and identity. According to Cherry (2018), improved job satisfaction and overall well-being in a group setting can be nurtured by those committed to learning and sharing the joy of the charism as faculty, staff and administrators, which the outer circle represents. This is particularly significant as a community ready to face change confidently due to the sharing and already formed commitment of those that came before them.

Figure 2, the Cycle of Inspiration, provides a different perspective by showing mission and identity at the center, surrounded by the Marianists. Moving clockwise, next are the executives and decision makers who lead the faculty and staff in support of transformative formation. The development of transformational leaders within the cycle continues without stopping, representing the SM, or Society of Mary, and the essence of their spiritual, ethical, and educational presence on campus. One circle feeds the next. It is to be everlasting, as long as each area continues to feed and be nourished and supported by each other.



*Figure 2. Cycle of inspiration.*

Catholic colleges and universities need more faith-filled committed lay professionals to take on the responsibility of sharing the gift that is the identity of the school. As Morey and Piderit (2006) described, a group of committed faculty carries the Catholic character of these

institutions; staff who seek to train, form, and share with others the values of the charism and the mission leavens within the institution. According to Deary (2018), there is an awareness of the need to form, educate, and train lay faculty and staff to uphold, live, and sustain the values, mission, and identity of the universities. Embracing this change, three Catholic, Marianist universities transitioned to lay executive presidential and leadership councils. The need for ongoing collaboration between lay presidents and executive leaders and mission officers, or vowed religious, to develop the transformational leaders who will lead universities while sustaining mission and identity speaks to adapting to change (Deary, 2018).

### **Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature**

A review of research literature provides an evidence-base that grounds the dissertation within the field of study (Concordia University Office of Doctoral Studies, 2017), in addition to inviting analytical and descriptive reception on behalf of the reader. This section includes present literature on the current state of Catholic higher education lay leadership development, needs for intentional collaboration and ongoing communication to develop the transformational leaders of tomorrow. This section will also provide examples of themes found within the results.

The Catholic Church lacks men and women committing to religious life compared to the last 50 years. This lack affects Catholic educational institutions founded with faith and mission-driven values, educational philosophies and styles stemming from the charism of religious orders. The Association of Marianist Universities' website (2019) provides information that promotes the charism used to inspire and promote mission historically represented on each Marianist university by the members of the Society of Mary. Currently, the makeup of leaders and decision makers shifted from a mostly clerical administration to lay professionals due to a need for transition to lay leadership happening at a national level (Pharr, 2017). Recent studies

have shown that Christ-centered institutions will need to engage deep collaboration and partnership between all levels of institutional leadership (Reynolds & Wallace, 2016).

Administrators are aware of the current challenge of sustaining mission and Catholic identity as the number of religious members declines, and have taken strides to collaborate among executive leadership, mission officers, and representatives of the values and beliefs on which the university was founded.

This is a time for transformation, and through intentional collaborative strategies, for transformational leaders among the lay professional faculty and staff is then developed to be the carriers of the mission and identity. Researchers found a sense of optimism, which stems from a mission and purpose in mission-centered institutions. According to Reynolds and Wallace (2016), this optimism is rooted in the hope that institutions will remain Christ-centered and “governed through a clear identity and purpose” (p. 111), elevating the importance of keeping mission at the center of all decision making. This section will present a review of the literature and research available supporting this topic. However, limited research examines the partnership and collaboration among executive leaders, presidents and decision makers, considered lay professionals, and mission and identity officers like the vowed religious to develop transformational leaders who keep mission and core values as main sources of inspiration and drive.

**New times call for new measures.** Understanding the positive effect of lay leadership development as a main source to sustain the Catholic mission and identity, university administrators have to consider new methods of leadership formation (Gardner, 2006). Gardner (2006) made a case for the current state of administration in Catholic colleges and universities by stating, “the impact of increases in lay leadership in Catholic higher education is an issue of

considerable debate” (p. 218). The qualitative study used a sample of 12 faculty, staff, and board of trustee members, for interviews addressing questions to understand the character of the Catholic university and the challenges faced by lay leaders involved during the transition to predominantly lay leadership (Gardner, 2006). It has been challenging for many institutions to face the transition while “managing the transition in leadership from governance by religiously appointed individuals to lay leadership” (p. 219) because of mutual insecurities such as preparedness and understanding of the historical context of the educational philosophy, and what makes that philosophy distinctive.

Gardner (2006) claims there are implications on the transition from vowed religious brothers, priests or sisters to lay leadership in Catholic colleges, but the change could, in fact, enhance and strengthen campus culture. Catholic and Marianist universities experienced struggles to embrace lay leadership and a future while there is commitment by both religious and lay leaders to find collaborative ways to move forward. Findings show the implied effectiveness of lay leaders through their ongoing commitment to institutional mission to represent the traditions vowed religious educators established. Results indicated the transition to lay leadership would be smooth regardless of the fear of secularization and an overall positive response towards lay leadership supporting the livelihood of Catholic colleges and universities (Gardner, 2006). In addition, there are opponents of this change to lay leadership due to fearing the Catholic institutions’ mission and identity will be damaged, without the intentional implementation of Catholic values and practices. For this reason, communication and collaboration from an internal point of view must be a priority. All stakeholders of the organizations, especially internally, must embrace this change, help leadership in challenging times, and understand and support ethical decision making from the new leadership.



In recent years, colleges and universities adopted the word “engagement” to describe how involved entities are within the campus culture. A study conducted at Indiana University–Purdue University Fort Wayne (n.d.) resulted in highlighting an engaged campus as one that is consciously committed to reinvigorating the democratic spirit and community engagement in all aspects of campus life: students, faculty, staff, and the institution itself. Franz, Childers, and Sanderlin (2012) reported through focus groups, implications and practical issues related to engagement. Results included encouraging a new paradigm, creating new methods for faculty to extend their periphery, and accepting invitations to engage in different ways outside of traditional teaching and scholarship. According to Franz et al. (2012), despite strategic emphasis on engagement, for a strong university-wide engagement agenda to be sustained as an integral part of the daily life of the university, faculty members need to see benefit to their own professional development as well as benefits to students, the university, and the community.

New ways of looking at the current state of mission-driven institutions suggest a bottom-up leadership and strategies approach will foster an environment for new and creative solutions, multiple perspectives, and engagement of all stakeholders across campus. Lester and Kezar (2012) examined how grassroots leadership teams can foster engagement and motivate and articulate solutions given challenges in sustaining mission advancement, campus culture, and overall strategic planning. Using interviews from a case study conducted at five higher education campuses, they explored sense-making and problem solving across different initiatives. According to Lester and Kezar (2012), colleges and universities face increasingly complex problems that require new and creative solutions, multiple perspectives, and engagement of individuals across the institution. The suggestion to consider bottom-up change and leadership development through grassroots efforts is a different way to assist traditional

leaders for adaptation and change. This study supports the need to encourage new and fresh perspectives to view and examine how openness and creativity can promote engagement (Lester & Kezar, 2012).

**Trust in leadership leads to collaboration.** Grant and Sumanth (2009) suggested that, in mission-driven organizations, “prosocially motivated employees are more likely to perform effectively when trust cues enhance their perceptions of leadership” (p. 927). In any mission-driven organization, it is significantly important to have managerial trust, motivation, and support. Grant and Sumanth (2009) conducted a study to test hypotheses of the correlation between manager trustworthiness and task significance, prosocial motivation, and performance. Empowerment and ownership for work resulted from the study based on how the manager used events, tasks, and other projects to create a collaborative environment. The findings show a statistically significant interaction between prosocial motivation and manager trustworthiness as a predictor of performance. In other words, a supervisor or manager trusted the employees with information, responsibility, and motivation, which resulted in positive work environments.

In a college or university setting, staff, faculty and students, should have a positive feel for its leadership. In Catholic colleges and universities, when changes in direction, vision, and strategic planning are proposed, the campus community must buy in. Results supported ongoing need for creating a work environment within a team, and for a leader to provide a sense of being approachable, strengthening the relationship between motivation and performance (Grant & Sumanth, 2009). This need for approachable and trusting leaders, as they relate to employees, echoes the goal for creating a trusting environment between lay leaders and their vowed religious counterparts, or former counterparts, as they develop ways to develop transformational leaders on campus.

Not only will a sense of trust create and support a culture of collaboration and motivation between staff, faculty, and administrators, it can have a positive effect on student life.

According to Estanek (2008), collaboration among faculty, campus ministers, and student affairs professionals is essential to address students' overall cognitive, psychosocial, and spiritual development. Programming to promote mission and identity is developed through intentional collaboration, rooted in the Catholic mission of the institution. In addition, Estanek (2008) also reported that the traditional Catholic concept of formation speaks to the heart of transformational learning, inviting for a more holistic perspective and approach. Areas of the universities like student affairs provide platforms for collaboration and conversation that complement the institution's mission through enhanced student living and learning development (Estanek, 2008).

When intentionality and commitment to mission and leadership development are genuine, trust leads to collaboration. Fine, Gordon, and Israel (2008) studied a rare but fruitful partnership where establishing trust refocused priorities towards collaboration addressing needs for leadership development. Their qualitative inquiry determined the best way to collaborate in a holistic approach to create a leadership program for Jewish school leaders. The authors show a conceptual model design and collaboration between Jewish schools and Loyola University of Chicago, embracing new ways of developing leadership certificate programs taking into consideration cultural and religious assumptions and presumed barriers. A collaborative partnership based on trust and openness to work with nontraditional resources (Fine et al., 2008), resulted in strategic alignment for leadership training in Jewish schools. Therefore, a commitment to exploring collaborative efforts, even when found in nontraditional sources, should always be a consideration in the case of Catholic colleges and universities facing paradigm shifts when transitioning from clerical to lay leadership.

**Strategic planning.** When examining change affecting any faith-based institution of higher learning, Henck (2011) declared, there is a need for leadership of Christian colleges to embrace a period of significant change and dual accountability to higher education accreditation and to faith communities. Therefore, Christian, and other mission-driven colleges and universities “walk a tightrope between these two entities, their expectations, and their values” (Henck, 2011, p. 196), which holds true for the balancing act that is effective leadership with mission and identity as a driving force. Universities must be compelled to face difficult realities, embracing the need for strategies for enrollment management, new demographics, aligned with lay professional leadership development, while keeping the mission and faith-based foundation at the center of decision-making. According to Henck (2011), a major challenge in faith-based colleges is impending presidential and other leadership vacancies not diminishing areas such as enrollment management, and decreased economic stability. As stated, evidence for integration’s intentionality to permeate all aspects of a campus culture creates a need for a guiding coalition to develop a vision and strategy accounting for the need be faithful to the religious mission. Henck (2011) also stated it is integral, and important, to be open to be called to preserve and promulgate traditional theological values and practices, which invites for the development of systematic formation programs for leadership development.

Mission and identity of a Catholic institution support its distinctiveness. A true understanding of the foundational mission and core values inspires and invites constructive strategies in planning. According to James and Estanek (2012), creating venues for conversation will help create spaces for reflection, strategic planning, and professional development as they all relate to mission and identity. To assess intentional building of mission capacity, a survey used by James and Estanek (2012) was sent to presidents and senior student affairs officers at Catholic

colleges and universities in the United States and Canada, gathering data on how intentional workshops, seminars, and conversations were created using the Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs as a guide. The principles-inspired programming supported the desire to increase presence of mission and identity across campus. Results included the usage of the principles proved to facilitate conversations in strategic planning, and professional development.

Thorough assessment and planning assist educational leaders in facing challenges in implementing strategies. Liou and Hermanns (2017) explored an educational leadership program designed to provide aspiring school leaders with the conceptual knowledge, dispositions, and skills necessary to transform their schools in ways that directly addressed needs, such as increasing diverse student populations and a concern of lacking collaboration. Using a narrative inquiry approach Liou and Hermanns (2017) examined how the program faculty prepared aspiring school leaders to meet impending challenges, especially demographics. Results included a realization that, when groups of stakeholders, work collaboratively to establish new frameworks of transformative leadership to develop aspiring principals, administrators and emerging leaders, there is substantial progress in supporting students, and other areas and stakeholders across campus (Liou & Hermanns, 2017). With Catholic colleges and universities facing the same changes and shifts in demographics within leadership, new frameworks, perspectives, and methods must be considered as emerging leaders are developed.

Mission-centered leadership development encourages community building and strengthens relationships. Belmonte and Cranston (2009) studied Catholic school leaders and reported how these leaders and their roles directly affect the Catholic character of schools by nurturing faith development practices, activities and scholarship. Including at Catholic high schools, lay principals continue to be “community gatekeepers, assuming responsibility for

fostering the faith development of the school community” (p. 300), while promoting and encouraging moral and ethical development of all stakeholders, especially teachers and staff. According to Belmonte and Cranston (2009), lay leaders, when given the right tools for formation and training, are the ideal developers of the school’s Catholic faith philosophy.

Given the decline in the number of vowed religious members with time, there are implications within the university communities regarding how their distinctive missions are carried on. Carney (2010) researched and reported on the gathering of multiple Mercy institutions initiated by the Sisters of Mercy due to the need to merge congregations across the United States. The study describes how the congregation chose to reimagine how it relates to the 16 Mercy colleges and universities to preserve and strengthen its charism in its ministry of higher education as well as on individual campuses. To address questions and potential concern of commitment to the mission, a lay governing board was created stressing that each college and university had the option to design an affiliation agreement describing its particular relationship to the Conference for Mercy Higher Education (Carney, 2010). Much like other religious orders responsible for the mission and identity of colleges and universities, leadership at Mercy institutions realized there was a need to create a sponsorship model that both assures fidelity to the Catholic/Mercy mission and values and strengthens the institutions individually and collectively. According to Carney (2010), leaders, decision makers and mission officers in Catholic institutions can intentionally collaborate to develop effective programming and the necessary rooted in “collaboratively mission integration work” (Carney, 2010, p. 110). Exemplary work stemmed from mission-centered work like such as that at Mercy institutions can motivate others to be transformational leaders on their campuses.

Mission-driven higher education leaders must nurture the courage to look at looming changes to re-invent traditional methods and strategically plan to be more innovative and creative to meet challenges. Hulme, Groom, and Heltzel (2016), studied current challenges facing faith-based colleges and universities, specifically the changes in technology, demographics, and traditional learning platforms and the instability these impending challenges create. These challenges provide motivation for Christian colleges to adapt strategic planning opportunities to remain viable and ultimately to thrive. Hulme et al. (2016) reported leaders must confront organizational assumptions and adaptive challenges with courage. According to Hulme et al. (2016), courage is necessary to manage the risk and keep the organization focused on its essential mission and plan for adaptive problem solving which allows organizations to explore uncertainty with a curious, discovery-oriented mindset and a willingness to be open to these challenges and assumptions. Change is inevitable and faith-based institutional leadership must face it, assess challenges, and explore creative avenues to strive and produce Christian leaders for society. Hulme et al. (2016) invite for intentional, mission and valued-centered preparation and strategic planning to take place, while creatively supporting preparedness. Time and thoughtfully crafted processes need to be considered in conversations on leadership development, which is necessary for Catholic colleges and universities to prioritize as the transition from religious to lay leadership continues.

**Hiring for mission.** As the former provost and vice president for academic affairs at the University of Dayton, Fr. James L. Heft, S.M., Ph.D., researched and presented his findings regarding institutionalizing Catholic identity in one of the Catholic, Marianist universities. Findings included noting challenges as the notion of faculty in general often reduce the mission to being fair and kind to students and being good colleagues; “certainly desirable qualities but

not adequate for the task at hand” (p. 186) as well as hiring. When hiring faculty at a Catholic institution, there seems to be a belief that puts mission-related hiring either in second place or in competition with other priorities. A result was the development and establishment of a retreat about hiring, which proved effective, and established a premise where faculty members were willing to consider being required to attend. According to Heft (2012), “top down reinforcement, needless to say, supported our bottom up” (p. 186) approach. Heft (2012) also reported that undeniable support from upper administration, and major stakeholders, created avenues to program and develop initiatives proven successful to institutionalize mission and identity when hiring. While hiring faculty for the purposes of sustaining the mission in the teaching, learning and scholarship, on a Catholic college campus, it is important to note that staff hiring and formation is central (Heft, 2012). The overall goal should be to hire and orient both faculty and staff to support the mission and identity. All branches of a university community should be provided with onboarding tools that will lead to formation of the transformational leaders who will be committed to the mission, ensuring the university lives up to its foundational purpose.

Rizzi (2018) reported how important documents in Catholic university history, like *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (1990) and the “Land O’Lakes Statement” (1967), underscore the basic tension between universities’ identities as Catholic institutions, faithful to their Church and the need to differentiate themselves from secular institutions. His study shows there can be proposed mechanisms within Catholic colleges and universities to classify different expressions of Catholic identity, but to remember that each is no more or less legitimate than the others “in the same way that a Texas rodeo and a New England clam bake are both equally authentic expressions of American identity” (p. 189). The focus of the study invites institutions to take a



close look at how the Catholic mission and identity is manifested on campus. This is a need, today, as more Catholic colleges and universities look for ways to creatively sustain mission and identity, and measure their commitment to the core values of the institution that make them distinctive. Results support establishing methods of keeping inventory of classification and often the need to quantify the best ways to strengthen mission and identity. This task often falls on lay professional staff and administrators hired with the need to buy-in and feel committed to the mission and vision of the institution when invited to be a voice for the Catholic essence of the institution.

While studying how Catholic Jesuit colleges and universities pursue ways enhanced mission and identity, Currie (2011) found Jesuit colleges and universities have made dramatic strides in the past 40 years in academic and institutional quality, professionalism, and lay leadership. The commitment to develop lay leadership led to developing new strategies to hire faculty and staff specifically through a mission-centered lens. Currie's (2011) study showed hiring for mission initiatives are sensitive to campus culture, helping to recruit women and men who are both fully qualified and committed to the identity and mission of the institution regardless of the area of the university they minister. In addition, programs to acquaint boards of trustees with their responsibility for identity and mission were developed to train board members on the significance of their role as volunteer representatives of the institution. Furthermore, extensive and effective orientation programs for new faculty and staff were included in hiring practices, facilitated by mission officers, or lay faculty and staff intentionally focused on mission.

Religious congregations realize hiring for mission is crucial for sustainability of tradition. Sanders (2010) studied the charisms, or essence, of religious orders that sponsor educational

ministries, highlighting a need in both religious congregations and the Church for planning for development of leaders who will understand, respect, and cherish the role that charisms play in Catholic higher education. Evidence shows how as “constancy of orientation,” charisms are stabilizing forces for religious congregations as they define and shape each congregation’s mission. According to Sanders (2010), ministries shaped by these institutionalized charisms focus the mission on activities. Additional findings from Sander’s study of charism as a defining asset for hiring carriers of the mission include the challenges religious congregations face in preserving and transmitting charisms in the ministry of higher education. Time and a declining number of religious vocations support the need to promote charisms, which shape the mission and guide the ministerial decisions of religious congregations as well as help to create a “family flavor, or style, within the religious congregation, which is expressed in ministries undertaken, as on a college campus” (Sanders, 2010, p. 7). Keeping in mind how to develop leaders committed to the charism of the religious congregation on a college campus, these new leaders must be hired with the trust that the religious charism is understood and disseminated across disciplines or divisions. Sanders (2010) also proposes that Catholic sponsored colleges leverage on the life, spirit, and grace of the charisms, as “core spiritual forces and reference points that the Holy Spirit provides to stabilize and to change sponsored ministries such as Catholic colleges and universities” (p. 9) as a new generation of lay leaders are shaped.

**Leadership development and training.** According to Northouse (2013), leadership “is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 5), and governing boards at Catholic colleges and universities are finding and forming individuals who will lead their institutional mission. Boyle’s (2010) report on developing and sustaining leaders for Catholic schools, in collaboration with higher education counterparts

suggests the need to identify the research to build the training programs necessary for the promotion of mission and identity. Leadership training in Catholic education would positively affect initiatives in overall academic excellence, shared governance, and most important, Catholic identity. Training and “ongoing professional development support” (Boyle, 2010, p. 100) for faculty, staff and those who show a committed interests in preserving mission and identity, was identified, and sanctioned by executive decision makers.

A study by Galligan-Stierle and Casale (2010) focused on developing collaborative relationships between governing boards at a diocese and colleges and universities. Recommendations included the recognition of tremendous opportunities for “cross training, for mutual resourcing” (p. 91), in addition to sharing events that would be relevant and beneficial to enhance professional development. In-depth training includes ways to incorporate Catholic Social Teaching into the curriculum, cross-campus collaborative activities, and events promoting leadership development and spiritual growth. According to Galligan-Stierle and Casale (2010), university leadership that connects with the local Church and community creates avenues of opportunities for networking, professional development for stakeholders that endures beyond graduation for students and transcends school spirit and mission.

Leaders, especially presidents and other members of the executive council must be energetic and charismatic to inspire the campus community as well as be the transformational leaders who motivate others to stay committed to the institution. Webb’s (2009) study on employee satisfaction focused on executive leadership competencies. According to Webb (2009) results show the correlation between leadership behaviors and job satisfaction were significant in reducing absenteeism and employee turnover. Findings also supported an awareness of the benefit of leaders who develop and utilize positive transformational leadership behaviors to

effect change in their institutions. Through motivational and inspirational leaders, faculty, staff, and even students, feel engaged and part of a community. Leadership development training for executives, or for all levels of university stakeholders, will enhance campus climate. Webb (2009) reported that, while higher education may be complex, the idea of an inspirational and transformative leader is universal. Presidents and higher educational leaders should always strive to implement the training and tools to be supportive and inclusive to promote job satisfaction and buy-in.

Most of the literature reviewed supports the need for new measures, methods, and perspectives, considered viable instruments for sustaining a Catholic college or university's mission when members of the founding order are no longer the sole representatives and carriers of that mission. According to Milner and Ferrari (2010), some institutions have embraced the need to implement mission-centered strategies, which provide incentives for any programming, academic achievements and even hiring, stemmed from the institution's mission and values. In addition, there is a need for studying and examining organizational culture, to ensure strategic planning for mission survival. Lay professional staff and faculty, committed to the essence, mission and philosophical purpose of the institutions they serve, should be given the tools, training and support needed to become the leaders and proud representatives of the mission instilled by mission officers and vowed religious who came before them. Boyle (2010) stated the need to broaden the definition of leadership beyond the "one-size-fits-all" approach to developing executive leaders to account for those who will live out the mission.

## **Review of Methodological Issues**

Because of declining numbers of vowed religious men and women, Catholic colleges and universities have had to discern the transformational process of developing leadership and staffing. Fleming (2014) encouraged Marianist educators to believe in “personal guidance, encouraging, and challenging” (p. 104) them while networking and fostering connections and mutual support in each other, leading to reflection on how leaders are developed.

Researchers have conducted studies examining how Catholic colleges and universities face the challenge of decline of vowed religious educators and leaders, to propose best practices and strategies to develop mission-centered leaders empowered with maintaining and sustaining mission and identity. In studies conducted on this topic, there was almost an equal balance between qualitative and quantitative research methods. Most of the qualitative methods used for examining mission and identity concerns utilized interviews as a primary source of data. A number of quantitative studies were conducted, collecting data through surveys to, for example, measure how mission and identity affect engagement throughout a university community.

**Qualitative.** Conducting a qualitative, historical content analysis, Reynolds and Wallace (2016) looked for ways to envision the future of Christian and faith-based higher education. By focusing on disruptive themes, such as the juxtaposition of faith-based institutional identity, the study proposed new models of institutional collaboration and innovative cultures of learning to enhance institutional efficiency and effectiveness. Researchers also reported on the complexity of change in faith-based institutions requiring dynamic and flexible leadership at the board, administrative, and faculty levels, to maintain mission and identity as the core root of all strategies.

Franz et al. (2012) conducted focus groups to address culture, implications, and practical issues related to engagement, and produced data that supports the notion that engagement is a complex phenomenon that requires a holistic and intentional change strategy at many levels. Eight focus groups took place, with 62 faculty, graduate students, and administrators at two colleges. Recommendations for more engaged teaching as well as campus activities resulted in less disconnect between the academic arena and student life, potentially leading to more collaboration. This study supports the need for Catholic colleges and universities to develop engaging ways to implement mission and identity into all aspects of the university's culture. According to Franz et al. (2012), there is a need to find mechanisms that bridge gaps to enhance engagement, which will only make mission and identity stronger.

Furthermore, Schuttloffel's (2013) study on contemplative leadership included interviews and observations. This qualitative study explored the manifestations of contemplative practice within Catholic school leaders' role in creating a faith formation community. The 10-year study, a historical content analysis, observed and interviewed over 100 Catholic educators, including top leaders and high school principals. The study, through interviews and observations of contemplative behavior, supported the claim that contemplative practices like meditation, attentive listening, and reflecting have positive effects on leadership skills to better shape faith-based schools.

Smith and Davies (2016) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study at Barry University, and through interviews and historical content analysis, reported on the need to develop mission-centered students, faculty, and staff leaders. The study supported how mission and identity need to be institutionalized as more lay leaders emerge. Strengths include the subject matter as relevant to retaining mission and identity embodied by lay professionals as they

support and partner with clergy mission officers. It is necessary for university leadership to expand in creating avenues to promote mission and identity as the laity grows in numbers assuming decision-making roles. However, it is noted that there seems to be a lack of intentionality in collaborative conversations specifically between the founding religious order and those making decisions that implement mission into policy. While board members are included as constituents who must understand the importance of mission and identity, this study does not provide concrete examples of how leaders disseminated, within the board and throughout the university constituents, ways to implement strategies. Limitations included not enough evidence of research done regarding the relationship between university presidents and their religious counterparts as entities of responsibility and patronage for mission and identity, therefore being ultimately responsible for making mission and identity a guiding priority for strategic planning.

**Quantitative.** Several quantitative studies on the topic of mission were also conducted using surveys as the main method. Boylan (2015)'s research on the perception of mission for college students builds a case regarding how mission and identity is part of the campus culture overall and can affect student experience. Conducting a quantitative study to assess attitudes, Boylan (2015) surveyed students from faith and non-faith-based colleges. Results showed students at Catholic colleges score significantly higher than those at independent colleges on scales representing a sense of mission, respect for diversity, and overall mission perception. Data were obtained between 2009 to 2012 from Catholic (59) and independent (24) colleges that administered the National Survey of Student Engagement, with extra Mission Perception Inventory questions added.

Surveys being the primary method to collect data, Webb (2009) used the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) survey to investigate the degree to which transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership are practiced by presidents of member colleges/universities in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). Those surveyed included 105 higher education institutions. Respondents were 223 vice presidents/chief officers from 104 member CCCU institutions. Statistical evidence supported the idea that presidents and higher educational leaders should always strive to be supportive and inclusive to promote job satisfaction and buy-in. University communities desire inspirational and transformative leaders. Additional data results included the suggestion that leaders inspired by institutional mission could positively affect all aspects of a college campus while having mission-centered executive councils as well as a supportive and encouraging president. Limitations included lack of depth regarding how leadership expectations and intentionality were manifested in relation to mission and identity.

To have a deeper understanding of how religious educators and lay leaders, in decision-making roles on Catholic colleges and universities, intentionally collaborate to instill a sense of mission and identity on campuses, further study is warranted. The three Catholic and Marianist universities have engaged in the necessary conversations to implement the necessary programming to develop lay mission-centered leaders.

### **Synthesis of Research Findings**

Researchers studied the different ways faith-based institutions sustain and maintain mission and identity as lay professional leaders assume top executive positions. Gardner (2006) reported on the impact of increases in lay leadership at Catholic higher education as significant and worth consideration as the number of clergy educators declines. This section presents the



studies examined as foundation for other institutions to explore intentional collaboration between executive lay leaders and religious members to foster the spiritual life and soul of a Catholic institution.

Findings include, among others, a need for creative ways to establish cross-campus collaboration. According to Estanek (2008), to nourish and support a campus community's spiritual development, strategies for including religious traditions, and charisms should be embedded in the language and activities throughout divisions. In addition, hiring for mission is a constant topic of conversation when planning to recruit and hire those faculty and staff who will understand and promote the mission of the university. Gilroy (2009) found there is a great need for a intentional documentation on processes for hiring to be shared with directors, or hiring managers, which must include terminology directly related to mission and identity.

These aspects of maintaining a university's mission and identity must continue to be included in strategies for leadership development. Lamm, Sapp, and Lamm (2016), reported that with change ever-present in higher education, there is a need for transformational leadership development. This finding supports a need for the commitment of executive leaders and decision makers to find, in creative ways, methods to develop positive and effective leaders today to carry on the mission of the institution.

A university's mission and identity invite all stakeholders to commit to the institution's values and beliefs. Milner and Ferrari (2010) reported that embracing an institution's mission helps everyone work towards common goals and provides an overarching vision towards which each member may strive. Executive leadership and management have advantage to support and manifest the mission, providing avenues for faculty and staff to learn about that mission, embrace it, and weave it into their daily work. According to Milner and Ferrari (2010), mission

and identity can be conveyed through administrative operations, academic programs and policies, and student services, if intentionally planned and strategically structured. New studies to explore how these new strategies for promoting mission have proven successful need to be conducted.

### **Critique of Previous Research**

In addition to synthesizing the research and findings regarding lay leadership development in Catholic institutions of higher education, it is important to note that there are more research and exploration to be done. For example, Dosen (2012) studied and reported on the need for communication and collaboration, as crucial for the sustaining of faith-based institutions as well as the balance between business practices and spiritual growth within a college campus, yet did not provide significant evidence on how the universities should prepare to face difficult realities, while embracing the need for collaboration between lay professional leaders and the clergy. There is a need for consideration and discussion of programming and activities; however, the study lacks the mention of the commitment from executive leadership to fully institutionalize the formation of lay leaders to sustain mission and identity for these new strategies of communication and collaboration to be successful.

It would be beneficial to have clarification when looking at Holter and Frabutt's (2012) study on using mission-driven data to inform leadership. The study followed masters students in Catholic school leadership for a year, and the findings included disconnect between skills and attitudes required of effective contemporary leaders, when it comes to mission. Nevertheless, there is not enough evidence to provide examples of how the implementation of mission-centered activities will then inform, develop, and support leaders and their strategies for success.

Engagement is necessary to nurture, sustain, and promote mission and identity on Catholic colleges and university campuses. Strain, Halstead, and Drexler (2009) proposed a Catholic engagement model as a process to define and distinguish Catholic identity. If the model, among others, is considered and is adopted by Catholic colleges and universities, there need to be additional assessments to understand its scope of influence, considering an understanding of the complexity of a diverse and rich campus with an array of different perspective or beliefs. As a process of engagement to promote mission and identity in all aspects of the university, trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, students, and benefactors need to continue strategic conversations regarding the Catholicity of the university. While Strain et al. (2009) made a case for the Catholic engagement model, for the purposes of further research it would be beneficial to take a closer look at decision making and the root of implementation from the top down. Conversations regarding mission, identity, and the role these play in decision making about campus culture, student life, curriculum, and leadership development must have the buy-in, support, and encouragement from executive leadership. According to Strain et al. (2009), every area of the university needs to have an openness to collaborate that requires diligence, patience, and mutual respect, yet without autonomy and delegation from divisional leaderships, it will remain a conversation with no hope for action and implementation.

According to Ben-Eliyahu (2014), qualitative approaches to research are focused on exploring to understand a phenomenon from a closer perspective and quantitative approaches tend to examine and explore from a larger number of individuals using survey methods. A number of quantitative and qualitative studies merit praise in desire to connect mission and identity with job satisfaction and student life. While a number of Catholic university presidents, provosts, and executive leaders were surveyed in several studies, there is a lack of depth in the

findings regarding the commitment to collaboration with top decision makers, both lay and religious. To fully weave into the thread of what makes a Catholic university unique, its mission identity, a clear understanding of the commitment to collaboration between the president and top mission officer, is necessary. Intentional partnership and committed collaboration, according to Fleming (2014) can lead universities in using and adapting the Catholic traditions of education as resources to support excellence and validate distinctiveness. James and Estanek (2012) proposed intentional workshops, seminars, and conversations because of surveying presidents.

To better understand a Catholic college or university's commitment to its mission and identity, and how it is manifested in all aspects of a campus community, one must witness how the people, faculty, staff, and students embody it every day. This lived-in manifestation of mission is developed and nourished by the stewards of the institution and the mission itself, presidents, and mission officers. There is a need for further research on the commitment to collaborate between executive leaders and the religious members of the congregation, to grasp the phenomenon that is living the mission of the institution and how it is used to create and shape mission-centered leader. According to Waters (2017), the goal of qualitative phenomenological research is to describe a "lived experience" of a phenomenon. There is a need to conduct new qualitative, phenomenological studies to explore how those responsible for maintaining the mission and identity of the institution collaborate and strategize to develop lay leaders for the next generation.

## **Summary**

A strong community of scholars, faculty, and staff is "a primary instrument to fulfill the mission" (Giardino, 2000, p. 1) of a Catholic higher education institution. Catholic higher education communities of leaders face the challenge of fewer vowed religious members on

campus. Therefore, there is a need for “developing and sustaining leaders in Catholic education” (Boyle, 2010, p. 94) who will embody the charism, values, tradition, and educational philosophies the clergy have witnessed for years as members of university communities.

According to Boyle (2010), those in charge of Catholic colleges and universities need to be more proactive in developing ways to be innovative and establish partnerships, in which lay faculty and staff can learn, embrace, and implement a committed sense of mission in an intentional way, while performing daily duties. The focus of this chapter highlights research previously conducted and focused on topics related to mission and identity. There is a direct link between thematic issues, worthy of conversation, to the decreasing number of members of the religious order in university leadership roles. There is a need for significant additional conversations to take place and evaluate the need for formal formation, professional development, and programming to develop the transformational lay professionals who will commit to leading Catholic higher education organizations. Further study should examine the partnership between executive leadership and mission officers and consider the position and leverage for decision making which can come from a strong partnership with commitment to collaboration for adaptation, change, mission, and identity.

This review of literature developed a unique conceptual framework using transformational leadership theory to understand the concern for the loss of institutional mission and identity, from Catholic colleges and universities. This concern stems from how colleges and universities founded by Catholic religious congregations face the decline of vowed religious men and women in faculty, staff, or leadership positions. With a need for mission-centered lay leaders to be developed, there is currently significant reason for thinking that an investigation examining the effect of intentional commitment and collaboration between executive leaders and

decision makers and mission officers would yield socially significant findings. I can, therefore, claim that the literature review provided strong support for pursuing a research project to answer the following multi-part question: How can intentional collaboration between lay executive leaders or decision makers, and their religious counterparts and mission officers create culture commitment among lay faculty and staff to sustain and promote mission and identity; how can formation efforts be effective in preparing lay leadership in Catholic higher education to sustain mission and identity; why would lay leaders have a responsibility or desire to be motivated by the religious founding charism and spirit as they perform their jobs on a daily basis, and what are the ways these lay faculty and staff leaders effect positive change through a mission and identity lens?

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

Catholic university leaders face changes in the landscape within the makeup of those who, for years, led and represented the religious charism and educational philosophies. Smith and Davies (2016) reported that, given the low number and presence of religious leaders on Catholic campuses, it is necessary to find ways to institutionalize and nourish mission and identity. Through increased intentional collaboration among campus leaders, beginning with executive leadership councils and the university's founding congregations, lay members of the university community can be invited, formed, and supported to take more formal leadership roles. There are lay professionals in Catholic universities who support the founding orders' charism, mission, and core values, which are weaved into university policy and overall infrastructure, often shared with the purpose of forming leaders among faculty, staff, administration and board members (St. Louis University, 2018). The following chapter will explain why I chose to conduct a qualitative phenomenological study to examine and understand the commitment to collaborate between lay executive leaders and mission and identity officers to sustain and nourish the religious charism through lay leadership formation, at three Catholic and Marianist universities.

According to Watkins (2012), qualitative research studies are important because they are efficient and essential for advancing educational and cultural knowledge. Evidence discovered from qualitative research exists within relationships in a given environment as well as attributes of relevant groups as they affect a larger population (Watkins, 2012). The study aimed to discover how the intentionality of collaboration between lay and religious leaders could enhance how these Catholic universities maintain their distinctiveness as Marianist educational

institutions providing excellence in academic and scholarship preparation, without losing faith traditions and spirituality.

This study is important for the conservation of the Catholic and Marianist presence in these university communities. To understand the phenomenon of collaborative commitment between religious and lay faculty and staff, a conceptual framework supported by transformational leadership theory is presented to guide researching what drives motivation and inspiration to face and implement change for positive adaptation for that change (Spahr, 2015). This chapter includes the research questions the study addressed in addition to an explanation of the selection of qualitative phenomenology as the design from a transcendental point of view, providing evidence to understand lived experiences with consciousness and intentionality. It will also cover the process by which the study was conducted and data collected important concepts, and other aspects of conducting a thorough exploration of the participants' perspectives and points of view.

### **Research Questions**

Pharr (2017) wrote that, because of Vatican II, the Catholic Church called for the laity to play a more active role in its educational and spiritual ministries. In Catholic higher education, the decline in the number of vowed religious men and women in teaching and leadership positions have echoed this call for more lay faculty and staff to assume these positions. In three Catholic and Marianist universities, both religious and lay leaders have established strategies to sustain their Catholic and Marianist identity. This focus on embedding mission into university decision-making grounds the research questions designed to understand the phenomenon of collaboration and commitment as the religious congregation invites lay peers and colleagues to support its charism. The following questions guided the research study:



- How are university leaders manifesting intentional collaboration between lay executive leaders, or decision makers, and their religious counterparts, in order to create a culture of commitment to sustain and promote mission and identity?
  - How is collaboration between lay executive leaders and their religious peers intentionally strategized to weave into the thread of the campus culture the essence of the Catholic and Marianist charism?
- How can formation efforts be effective in preparing lay leaders in three Catholic and Marianist universities to sustain mission and identity, and create avenues for promoting the religious founding charism and spirit as they perform their jobs on a day to day basis, while making a positive impact on their respective campuses?
  - In what ways can the university mission and identity be preserved and sustained by lay leaders and decision makers when there are no religious members of the congregation in active ministry roles on each campus?

### **Purpose and Design of the Study**

To enhance my qualitative research, this section helps explain the rationale for selecting a phenomenological design. The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of how collaboration between lay and religious leaders leads to sustaining the Catholic and Marianist charism, mission and identity on three university campuses. The last few years have seen these campuses shift from a mostly visible religious presence to that of lay people taking responsibility for its mission and identity. Lay leaders must learn to represent their religious colleagues, former mentors, and often teachers in ways somewhat difficult to understand knowing they have not undergone formal religious formation. The Marianists invite lay people to experience the Marianist charism, deeply understand and

articulate it if is to endure (Giardino, 2011). Understanding it as a life-giving experience, the charism sparks in some lay leaders a commitment to not allow the Catholic and Marianist essence to disappear from everyday campus life, by saying yes to be educated and nurtured, an educational emphasis, characteristically Marianist (Characteristics of Marianist Universities, 2014). The brothers invite lay peers and colleagues to join in prayer, service and community building (The Marianists, 2018b) and offer formation retreats to share their history with those committed. According to Gadoua (2017), after the hiring of its first lay president, one of the universities formed its first group of Marianist Educational Associates (MEA). Therefore, as phenomenology asks, “What is this kind of experience like?” (van Manen, 1997, p. 2). The purpose of this study was to gain insightful knowledge and perspective on the way the experience of sustaining and promoting mission and identity, and the religious charism is lived through intentional collaboration between lay and religious members. Through this study, as researcher, I wanted to assist in finding additional information regarding how the future lay leaders of these Catholic and Marianist universities learn and collaborate with the brothers to be effective transformational leaders standing at the front lines (Spahr, 2015) of leadership and decision-making.

According to Creswell (2007), phenomenological research focuses on the meaning of individual experiences, which then leads to the development of a composite description of the phenomenon. This study examined how, through a commitment to collaboration to work together for mission and identity, lay executive leaders and their religious counterparts ensure the essence of being a Catholic and Marianist university does not cease to exist when the number of religious members of the Marianist congregation is no longer teaching or in leadership roles in each university.

According to Eddles-Hirsch (2015), phenomenological researchers strive to capture the essence of an experience rather than measure the number of participants living the experience. In the case of this study, the essence of the intentional collaboration between lay and religious decision makers enhances how mission and identity are lived and experienced at these universities. A way of studying this lived experience is to look at the phenomenology as transcendental. According to Creswell (2007), phenomenological research focuses on the meaning of individual experiences, which then leads to the development of a composite description of the phenomenon.

To gain a better understanding as to why transcendental phenomenology was the best way to approach this study, it is important to consider two main characteristics according to Moustakas (1994), intentionality and the essences. To maintain, nourish, and sustain mission and identity in Catholic campuses with mostly lay leadership councils, intentionality allows for decisions to be made and actions to be taken with conscious effort. In addition, transcendental phenomenology allows for the investigation of subjective as well as objective experiences, which lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon. Van Manen (2011) further explained the notion of intentionality helps explain the structure of all consciousness, which helps in the discovery of intricacies within the relationships of leaders in correlation to experiencing and promoting mission and identity. There must be a sense of intentionality to think, feel, and act at all times (van Manen, 2011).

Therefore, transcendental phenomenology is an appropriate design to eradicate and explain how the meanings of things are constituted in and by consciousness (van Manen, 2011). It is an especially relevant and useful design due to its reflective, descriptive emphasis, and invitation to discover levels of structures within the lived experience phenomenon. Furthermore,

this method for conducting the study allowed for new knowledge to be uncovered, as transformational leadership theory frames how the phenomenon of these shared experiences may shed some light on how a commitment to mission and identity shows evidence for satisfaction and commitment at the workplace (Jyoti & Bhau, 2016).

### **Research Population and Sampling Method**

Doud (2014) affirmed an increasingly significant need for laity to learn and absorb many aspects of the charism. For the purpose of establishing a need for this study, it should be noted that the general population for this research could be faculty and staff from all U.S. based Catholic colleges and universities. To address and answer the research questions regarding collaboration and commitment between lay and religious leaders to sustain mission and identity, the target population for this particular study included lay and religious members with strong Marianist connections within three Marianist universities. There is an investment from these members of the university communities, in supporting the Catholic and Marianist spirit on campus. As a group, several of the lay faculty and staff who support the charism are the Marianist Educational Associates (MEA). According to the MEA guidelines listed on the University of Dayton website (2013), this group is a professional community “intentionally committed to strengthening and advancing” (p. 2) the Catholic and Marianist charism, mission and identity on campus. The sample, taken from the MEAs, other executive leaders, and religious members of the university communities, specifically included those individuals in decision-making roles at three Catholic, Marianist universities. These higher educational professionals, within their roles, have the distinctiveness to affect change and positively support mission and identity throughout campus. In comparison to quantitative research, Marshall

(1996) described qualitative research populations and samples as holistic and allowing for the exploration of complex human issues and shared lived experience.

The sample consisted of lay and religious members of three Catholic and Marianist universities located in Hawaii, Ohio, and Texas, recruited through purposeful sampling and combined criterion sampling based on the specificity and rich information likely coming from this specific group of people. Expected participants represented diverse attributives. While all are adult professionals in higher education, their ages ranged from the early 40s to mid-60s. The recruitment process included both male and female participants. The Marianist religious congregation is an all-male order; however, some of the participants were lay female. All participants self-identified as Catholic.

Appropriate sample size for this qualitative study realistically and adequately answered the research questions, and the number should not exceed 20 participants. Choosing a relatively small sample, according to Mason (2010), allows qualitative research to focus on the specific meaning behind the phenomenon. However, Marshall (1996) cautioned the number of required subjects may shift as the research, the study evolves, and new themes or explanations may emerge. Within this purposeful sampling, there was expert sampling. Expert sampling is necessary when analyzing the knowledge of individuals with particular expertise (Suri, 2011). This sample size did allow saturation to happen, after realizing that gathering new data did not provide new evidence, nor shed “any further light on the issue under investigation” (Mason, 2010, p. 19). For this study, the expertise these participants shared included time spent as members of the faculty and staff at a Catholic and Marianist university, decision-making role as a member of one or more leadership councils, formal or informal Marianist formation, studied Marianist educational philosophy and/or Marianist spirituality, and having worked in

collaborative projects or initiatives regarding mission and identity. It is important to note these experts were a mix of lay and religious leaders on all three campuses; at least three from each university, consisting of two top executive leaders and their vice president for mission, a vowed religious, for 18 participants.

### **Instrumentation**

As the primary researcher, I am also considered the main instrument and relied on my personal and professional knowledge and experiences as a higher education professional having studied and worked among colleagues in two of the three Marianist universities. In 2005, I began to study and embrace the Marianist higher educational philosophy and accepted opportunities for formation experiences. I did this to work with other colleagues, who also felt called to support the Marianist charism and sustain traditions that identified the culture of Marianist universities while adapting to the challenges that face American Catholic higher education (AMU, 2018, para. 3). According to Stake (1995), to gain qualitative insight into the subjects, a researcher is to perceive what is happening throughout key episodes and testimonies that allow for the narrative coming from the subject to tell the story. My exposure and commitment to Marianist mission and identity, in addition to shared experiences with other professional peers committed to sustaining mission and identity, enabled me to engage and gain the trust of those I recruited for the study. This is crucial as the ultimate desire for the reader to “gain experiential understanding” (p. 40) and knowledge of the study.

Therefore, interviews of two different groups of people needed to be conducted to gain the insight necessary to answer the questions directly related to how collaboration between religious and lay leaders strengthen and sustain mission and identity. The data supported reciprocity by establishing the mutual benefits between lay and religious community members

committed to mission and identity as well as to the participants and the researcher. In addition, as the primary researcher, I reflected on myself to examine assumptions that may shape finding outcomes (Wilkie, 2015). Ultimately, this study may benefit those participating through reflection on their experiences, perspectives, and commitment to mission and identity.

For the purpose of this study, semistructured interviews provided data from two sources: lay professional executive leaders and vowed religious who hold leadership roles as members of the faculty and staff. The group of professional lay leaders was divided to make a third source of data. This third source would be those lay professionals who are MEAs, while the original lay group of professionals includes decision makers committed to mission and identity, but not undergone formal formation and training. This allowed for triangulation. According to Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, and Neville (2014), triangulation provides validity of the data, gathered from different sources while addressing the research questions needing an answer. In addition to the different sets of people to interview, participants referenced relevant data sources such as the Characteristics of Marianist Universities and the Guidelines for MEA, as they related to lay formation initiatives at the three universities. Interview questions were designed aligned with the purpose to address and answer the research questions stated above, and were reviewed by an expert panel prior to submission for approval (see Appendix A). The expert panel included two vowed religious brothers and Marianist educators, and two lay teachers who also have taught in Marianist schools for over 20 years.

## **Data Collection**

The questions were reviewed prior to conducting the interviews by a knowledgeable and trustworthy expert panel that provided feedback on tone, wording, and reliability. The panel examined and approved the questions, then leading the invitation of potential participants. Invitations were done electronically, via email, or by phone (see Appendix D). As researcher, I also invited other participants in person. Given the geographic diversity of the locations of the universities, invitations via email were most convenient. The interviews were standardized, open-ended, and included the same questions asked to all participants. Nevertheless, there was an understanding that semistructured interviews allow new information to be shared based on participants' perspectives.

Moustakas (1994) suggested phenomenological long interviews are best, as they provide an environment that is both informal and interactive, “evoking a comprehensive account of the person’s experience” (p. 114) within the phenomenon studied. This type of interview gathers data that is descriptive and experiential shared by the expert sampling of participants. The long interviews were standardized, open-ended, followed a script, and consisted of the same open-ended questions (see Appendix B). These interviews were audio recorded and were scheduled to last 60 minutes during which to discuss consent, confidentiality and any questions subjects may have prior to beginning. It is also important to note that given the location of some of the participants, interviews took place in person, one via video conference, and two via phone. All participants were requested to provide consent in order to participate. A written consent form given for each to sign (see Appendix C). This written consent included confidentiality. It is important to explain fully, in a meaningful way, what the research is about and how it was



disseminated (Corti, Day, & Backhouse, 2000), and names were omitted. Once the interviews are conducted, audio recordings were transcribed and member checked.

The following steps summarize recruitment prior to the interview and data collection. An email was sent to the target population as an invitation to meet with me in person before agreeing to participate in the study. Next, in-person or phone call meetings took place to discuss the study and gain consent from participants. Then, audio-recorded interviews took place. Afterwards, the recordings were transcribed verbatim. At participants' discretion, I personally shared their interview transcript documents via a password-protected email for additional input they may want to add. By doing this, I ensured member checking. As a researcher, I transcribed all audio recordings and audio recordings before deleting them upon completion of the study. Paper-based forms were shredded after they were digitized and will be kept for three years after completion of the study.

### **Identification of Attributes**

In qualitative studies, Stake (1995) wrote, researching phenomena aims to seek patterns within “expected relationships” (p. 41). These patterns represent the participants as lay and religious collaborators in Catholic and Marianist universities. The participants have all been part of the universities' communities and established professional and friendly relationships. As far as attributes, one of the most significant is context. According to Kvale (2006), dominant attributes of context, meaning and significance of the phenomenon are evident and allow for the discovery of to surface through the interviews.

Context by definition is the circumstances that shape something, perhaps an event, or an idea in ways that can be understood (Kvale, 2006). Catholic and Marianist university personnel are experiencing a shift in how they live, share and nurture their religious charism to preserve it.

Each university, while located in a different geographical location, offers collectively, a rich history, religious and lay representation in leadership roles, and a deep commitment to excellence in “education for formation in faith” (AMU, 2014), attributes that characterize Catholic and Marianist education. The participants provided a rich context based on experiences, personal and professional, perspectives, and having the necessary skills set, adding to the attributes identified.

The attributes of meaning and significance stem from the need for strategic collaboration and desired additional formation opportunities to develop lay leaders to sustain mission and identity. The members of the religious congregation manifest deep meaning of commitment to the charism and are open to share that with lay collaborators. All participants offer their experience, knowledge, and insight into the meaning and significance of mission and identity. They are all members of the Catholic and Marianist university communities in their campuses and have shown some level thus far to be committed to the mission and identity. In addition, the study included participant experiences of the sense of community, inclusivity, and values-centered attributes in a Catholic, Marianist University, supporting the desire to sustain mission and identity.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Obtaining results of this study was possible using the Van Kaam Method (Moustakas, 1994). This method allows for use of the complete interview transcript to provide enough data to present aligned topics to support the research. According to Moustakas (1994), the steps for phenomenological transcription of data from interviews could include, at least, “horizontalization” (p. 120), or preliminary grouping, in addition to themes and clusters within the “core themes of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). The desired results, for example,

included participants sharing perspectives from their point of view, which was linked and clustered together to core themes emerging from the interviews.

Specifically, the Van Kaam Method suggests a detailed analysis of the data from each individual interview. It is important to note that each interview is to be treated as its own source of data (Moustakas, 1994). Beginning with horizontalization, it is important to consider each source of data equally important, to code and group in an impartial way. When reviewing quotes from participants it was imperative to also know if what they are saying is significant to the lived experience within the phenomenon. If not, there is no need to keep it.

There was a need to reduce quotes, and only the valuable ones proved useful. These quotes were then grouped by themes to express each participant's experiences. Furthermore, each theme was verified against the data to ensure validity. In addition, each participant's experience was described texturally and structurally. There was a combination of verbatim descriptors and participant quotes as well as description of the emotional, cultural, or social excerpts within the quotes.

### **Limitations of the Research Design**

There are limitations in any research study. To begin, as the primary instrument, potential researcher bias was addressed by bracketing (Moustakas, 1994) in attempts to set aside any preset assumptions or expectations. Other limitations of research can be seen as characteristics which can influence the interpretation of the study (Price & Murnan, 2004), such as generalizations regarding the sample or data sources. For this research, limitations existed within the sample and within the findings. Limitations of the sample include the relatively small number of leaders in decision-making roles in each of the three universities. However, regardless of the number, limiting generalization offsets the depths of the data source can

provide. According to Crouch and McKenzie (2006), a smaller sample allows the researcher to establish trust, while building a rapport with respondents to delve deeper into the research problem.

Similarly, limitations of findings could include, but are not limited to, the Catholic higher education community. Specifically, professionals in higher education within the Marianist tradition would benefit due to the specificity of the educational approach and focus on mission and identity from the subjects' points of view. However, according to Gardner (2006), since it has been challenging for many institutions to “manag[e] the transition in leadership from governance by religiously appointed individuals to lay leadership” (p. 219), this study provides transferability. The Marianists have considered the implications of declining number of religious leaders and have embraced “encoding the characteristics of the mission in all parts of the university hierarchy” (Gardner, 2006, p. 222), to strategize to prepare lay leaders to better support the universities' mission and identity. Participants were vowed religious and lay professionals. This delimitation implied the study would not include other types of leaders, such as students in leadership roles.

## **Validation**

For this research to be considered a necessary and credible potential source of new knowledge, validating the purpose, process, and methods is necessary.

**Credibility.** To establish credibility, or trustworthiness for this study, I incorporated ways for participants to see the trust-value of the research and their role in it. I explained thoroughly the topic and the rationale behind it. Each participant had spent at least five years as members of their university community. In addition, as a researcher, I provided an environment where they feel comfortable prior to and in preparation for the interview and during the time

spent together gathering data, aware of reflexivity, using my experiences related to the topic and establish the commonalities the subjects and I may share. These individuals, their perspectives, years of committed service to the institution and interest in the charism provide reliable validation of their participation and the resulting data, which came from their interviews. Having both lay and religious members of the university community as two different data sources and the use of university and religious congregation formation and historical documents support triangulation. I ensured member checking by establishing open communication regarding the study and address any issues that may arise.

Furthermore, an important attribute that provides participants credibility was evidence within their shared experiences when asked about collaborating as Marianist religious with lay professionals as well as the opposite: lay professionals' shared experience and perspective collaborating with vowed religious to promote and support mission and identity. As members of these university communities, the selected participants have committed to building strong partnerships with members of the Society of Mary, accepting invitations to "deepen their understanding of and their commitment to the traditions and beliefs that make the university a Catholic and Marianist community" (The Marianists, 2018a, p. 3), which adds credibility to their shared experience. According to McInerney (2012), those working in a committed way to the religious identity help create and cultivate the kind of mission-driven Catholic culture imperative to these campuses and nurture ways to maintain it long term.

**Dependability.** It is also necessary to establish a sense the study is stable and dependable. As a phenomenological study, I designed this study to examine the consistency of the "shared experience" (van Manen, 2011) of being a leader in a Catholic and Marianist university. As written by their founder, William Joseph Chaminade (1838), their Rule of Life,

stated the Marianist religious take a solemn vow of stability, which is a “perpetual profession, sign and seal of their vocation” (p. 6) by promising to persevere within the Society of Mary. As much as stability plays a role in how the vowed religious leaders act, work, and minister, lay professional leaders who have worked at the university for more than three to five years, as part of this phenomenon, provide consistency and stability to the study. Many of them, in senior-level positions of leadership, have had prolonged engagement with each other as well as with members of the other campuses. According to Schuttloffel (2013), leaders who have an affinity with a school’s identity, shape their engagement, leading their beliefs and actions to create credibility within a school, fostering its Catholic faith, and, for the purpose of this study, Marianist identity.

To address the further need for dependability, an expert panel first evaluated the interview questions. The expert panel was identified and qualified according to the purpose of study based on panelists’ knowledge of Catholic and Marianist higher education, the universities’ mission and identity, and the religious traditions of the Society of Mary. The interview questions, after review by the expert panel, allowed participants to share reliable and aligned anecdotes, experiences and information, resulting in dependable data, supporting the research.

Finally, as a researcher, I provided over 17 years of professional experience as a lay staff member, with previous and current experience in two of the three Marianist universities. To avoid researcher’s bias, it was imperative to provide credibility and stability, and provide the trustworthiness that participants need to openly share their unique, yet shared lived experience being Marianists, religious and lay leaders committed to collaborating, strategizing and maintaining the Marianist charism and identity on each of the universities.

## **Expected Findings**

A study that researches the phenomenon of a shared lived experience opens doors of discovery into personal insights and reflections (van Manen, 1990). Expected findings were a deep understanding of the thoughts, opinions, and intentions that stem from a commitment between lay and religious leaders to collaborate to sustain the Catholic and Marianist mission and identity at the three universities. There was consideration, in anticipation, that lay leaders would share why sustaining the Marianist charism is important to them as it relates to collaboration with their religious counterparts or peers. Findings uncovered how the religious brothers and priests with leadership roles in each university feel about how their lay counterparts and peers demonstrate a deep commitment to sustaining the Marianist identity in each of the three universities. In addition, I hoped to uncover expected findings include uncovering why there is such a commitment from participants, especially from the lay perspective.

Other anticipated findings were care and concern. The religious professionals may have serious concerns about the charism being lost if allowed to be left in the care of lay professionals. Lay professionals have families and other responsibilities, while the brothers have lived on campus, and worked in their given ministry and role for years. On the other hand, the study's results revealed feelings of concern on behalf of the lay professionals if the mission and identity of the universities are placed in their hands and becomes their responsibility to keep alive.

Finally, overall expected findings included how these Catholic university leaders have intentionally promoted ways to systematically maintain and nourish their distinctive Marianist identity, through collaboration between religious and lay leaders. In addition, it is important to note that findings uncovered that there is much more to be done in the area of development of

mission-driven leaders, to create a process of institutional discernment for the strategic prioritization of mission as the foundational core driver for the future (Smith & Davies, 2016).

### **Ethical Issues**

All precautionary steps were taken to avoid ethical issues. First, an issue that could have risen, but did not, was the possibility of individual participants feeling threatened by sharing personal information. This was avoided and addressed prior to the study by reassuring confidentiality, reminding participants of the signed agreement and that the information shared was only to be used as positive ways each participant supports mission and identity.

**Conflict of interest assessment.** A possible conflict of interest was the influence of my knowledge of the charism, the Marianists, and individual participants. It was important to bracket or *epoche* (Moustakas, 1994), which required me to set aside preconceived opinions about previous experiences related to the subject being investigated. It is important for the subjects' experiences to be looked at from a fresh perspective and in a new light. My previous knowledge or understanding of a Marianist educational environment stems from previous years as a professional staff member at one of the three universities and had been involved in related activities prior to this study taking place. Currently, my role at another university campus is categorized as part-time and volunteer, therefore establishing that there is no direct conflict that would lead to professional or financial benefits.

**Researcher's position.** As a primary researcher, it was imperative to build trust. Participants may have feared the sharing of information could result in damaging the reputations of individuals and institutions. Therefore, confidentiality was discussed and guaranteed via the consent form prior to participating (see Appendix C). Subject interview questions were designed to ensure participants could answer them in a nonthreatening manner and in an environment of



trust and confidentiality. Names were changed to protect the identity of the participants. The agreement was discussed during the recruitment of participants, and the study would not have taken place had the subjects objected to signing it. Furthermore, all participants received a copy of their individual transcript and audio recording to avoid misinterpretation. In addition, while maintaining impartiality on the data collected, it was important for me as the primary researcher, to consider preconceived opinions and assumptions (Wilkie, 2015) and not allow my previous bias or connection to the research impair the process.

**Ethical issues in the study.** I stressed the importance of honesty, inviting and reassuring participants that truthful testimonies can only make the study richer, while more valid and credible. To also avoid anecdotal testimonies that could overshare on unrelated topics, I began each interview by reminding the participants to address the questions and overall experience as they relate to the topic. Prior to conducting the interviews, IRB approval was received to begin data collection, which included approval from each campus to conduct interviews, by the Presidents and VPs for Mission, which make up the Board of the Association of Marianist Universities (AMU). There was full disclosure that there would be minimal risk to the participants upon consent to participate. Privacy was ensured by participants agreeing to meet in their own office, or in the library university library conferences, and after transcribing data, each transcript was sent via email by me directly to participants, with confirmation of receipt. Data was securely stored in a locked desk drawer in my home office. All documents are saved in a USB flash drive kept in a locked desk drawer in my office.

## **Summary**

The information featured in this chapter presents a rationale as to why this phenomenological study has value to mission-driven Catholic colleges and universities. The

purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of collaboration between lay and religious leaders, as it relates to sustaining the Marianist charism and identity on three university campuses. Lay and religious leaders from three Marianist universities were interviewed to gather significant data to provide evidence on how human, shared experiences shed light and evoke a fundamental sense of wonder (van Manen, 1990) regarding the need to keep mission and identity alive in a growing secular higher education world. These participants, their roles on campus, commitment to the mission of the universities, and their years of service, provide the necessary validity to inquire how they manifest collaboration with each other as mission-centered leaders.

A panel of experts reviewed the interview questions prior to the interviews. In addition, among the aspects of the study, confidentiality and ideal time and space for the interviews were discussed with participants, including sharing the nondisclosure agreement to ensure confidentiality and avoid limitations or concerns. The interviews took place in person, or via Skype, and each transcript was shared with participants to ensure their voices and anecdotal data were recorded accurately. As the researcher, I took a closer look at the meaning of individual experiences, which collectively, helps describe the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007) of collaboration between higher education professionals, committed to keeping the Marianist charism as a living part of the identity on their campuses.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results**

Leadership, boards, and stakeholders who support Catholic higher education institutions face the declining number of religious men and women in executive positions. Therefore, leadership is being transferred to lay professionals (Rizzi, 2018). For this study, the researcher explored how lay leaders and their religious peers and counterparts collaborate to sustain the Marianist religious charism and essence to preserve their campuses' core mission and values. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain insight and perspectives on how sustaining and promoting mission and identity, and the religious charism is lived through intentional collaboration between lay and religious members. The research and subsequent interviews conducted addressed the following research questions:

- How are university leaders manifesting intentional collaboration between lay executive leaders, or decision makers, and their religious counterparts, in order to create a culture of commitment to sustain and promote mission and identity?
  - How is collaboration between lay executive leaders and their religious peers intentionally strategized to weave into the thread of the campus culture the essence of the Catholic and Marianist charism?
- How can formation efforts be effective in preparing lay leaders in three Catholic and Marianist universities to sustain mission and identity, and create avenues for promoting the religious founding charism and spirit as they perform their jobs on a day to day basis, while making a positive impact on their respective campuses?
  - In what ways can the university mission and identity be preserved and sustained by lay leaders and decision makers when there are fewer or no religious members of the congregation in active ministry roles on each campus?

In this chapter, I include a discussion of data analysis using the Van Kaam Method (Moustakas, 1994). I also describe the results and findings of the analyses, displaying themes such as being rooted in the history of the institution, as well as being open to change and institutional challenges as they relate to mission and a need to hire and train for mission-centered leaders. It is also important to mention the fact that, as a researcher, my role served as a source of motivation and comfort, given my almost 20 years working in various Marianist ministries, including the universities. Years of experience and collegial collaboration with some members of all three Marianist university communities provided an instant sense of trust from those who participated in the research. This sense of trust allowed for the interviews to take place in a manner that was both comfortable and meaningful for the participants as well for me. Nevertheless, as the researcher, I placed priority on remaining neutral and not biased to not allow the data to be compromised by my personal or professional history and background.

### **Description of the Sample**

Participants came from three groups. One group was lay professional executive staff and administrators. This group included presidents, provosts, or vice presidents of academic affairs, and deans at the three Marianist universities. The second group included lay professional staff and faculty with a proven commitment to mission and identity. This group had multiple years' experience at one or more Marianist university and a significant number of years studying, participating, and engaging in mission-centered activities at one or more Marianist university. The third group of participants was made up of Marianist Brothers or Priests with a role in active ministry at each of the three Marianist Universities.

The 18 participants that were interviewed received a pseudonym to enhance confidentiality. Five of the participants were in the category, or group labeled lay executive

leaders. Of these participants, one was located in Hawaii, two in Ohio, and two in Texas. The second category, or group, the lay leaders, as mentioned above, included professional staff and faculty, who are lay men and women, not vowed religious. There were five participants in this group, one was located in Hawaii, two in Texas, two in Ohio. The third group or category was the religious, Brothers or Priests in the Society of Mary (Marianists). This group had seven participants; two were located in Hawaii, two in Ohio, and three in Texas. Out of the 18, 14 participants were Caucasian males, including the vowed members of the Society of Mary who either hold an administrative position or are in active ministry. There were four female participants, three in leadership roles as professional staff members and one as an executive administrative leader. Of the four females, one was a Hispanic lay leader and faculty member. Four Caucasian males were in executive leadership roles, three Caucasian males were in lay professional staff roles, and seven vowed religious Marianist brothers and priests participated. All vowed Marianists were Caucasian males.

While it was a goal to conduct up to 20 interviews, by the time I concluded with the 18th participant, saturation had been reached, as data showed similar patterns in expressions, phrases, and feelings. The main challenge during the data collection was initial scheduling glitches with the time difference in Hawaii. All time zone concerns were addressed thanks to the flexibility of subjects and the researcher. All subjects invited to participate agreed to be interviewed. The process of interviewing, purpose of study and confidentiality were revisited and discussed, as it had been when initial recruitment took place. Reviewing the purpose of the study and guaranteeing confidentiality by reminding participants they would receive a pseudonym provided additional opportunities for participants to trust me as a researcher. No one declined or expressed concerns or reservations regarding questions they had about the overall study.

## **Research Methodology and Analysis**

The Van Kaam Method (Moustakas, 1994) was an ideal fit to collect enough significant data directly related to the research questions, allowing the phenomenology to come alive. Creating an environment to conduct standardized, semistructured interviews, using open-ended questions was the first goal to invite participants to comfortably answer questions.

**Phenomenology design.** All data from the interviews were collected and analyzed using the Van Kaam Method (Moustakas, 1994). Specifically, I analyzed for the purpose of “horizontalization” (p. 120), which is to group all data in aligned topics according to how the research questions were answered. In other words, the first research question focused on the macro perspective of collaboration for mission, so themes and topics clustered in themes were aligned with it. I repeated the same process for the second research question, which focused more on the micro and more detailed perspective of practical tactics for collaboration and mission integration at the three campuses. The goal of a phenomenological research study is to take a much closer look and discover elements of the participants’ “core themes of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121) they shared. In this study, all participants work and minister at Catholic and Marianist universities with a deep sense of commitment to the mission.

**Data analysis and coding.** Once the 18th interview was concluded, data saturation had been reached, therefore allowing data analysis to begin. The steps taken to organize, arrange, and analyze the data included listening to audio recordings multiple times while transcribing. In addition, while the data was being collected, thorough note taking included re-reading to the participants what had been shared. This allowed for reduction and elimination (Moustakas, 1994) of significant quotes to verify their importance in participants’ experience, which meant grouping relevant experiences. Once transcripts were finalized, I read and took additional notes

highlighting major themes, clustering and thematizing invariant constituents (van Manen, 2014) which represent the participant's experience and can be described as a theme. This was done by circling words that appeared multiple times and adding them to the cluster, which made up the main theme. Within the clusters of themes, subthemes also emerged based on data presented.

Themes and subthemes addressed the intentionality of collaboration and commitment to mission and identity between religious and lay leaders at the three Marianist universities. I checked and validated the themes by verifying the research questions were answered. I wrote the research question in and repeated the same process for the second research question, which focused more on the micro and more detailed perspective of practical tactics for collaboration and mission integration at the three campuses. In addition, it was necessary to check the themes against the data to ensure the themes accurately represented the experience the participants shared. The next step was to create individual and composite descriptions of the participants, including the significant quotes that provided substance and validity to the themes.

To ensure validity and trustworthiness for this study, member checking took place within one to two weeks of the interviews taking place. All interview transcripts were emailed to the participants with five affirming their voices were captured in a way that caused no concerns, making no requests to change or update their words. The remaining participants did not respond.

Data analysis included document analysis through the presentation of physical evidence, or artifacts (Bowen, 2009), which have been cited throughout as valuable resources of Marianist history, and Marianist education. In order to corroborate, and converge on the data and establish triangulation, the *Characteristics of Marianist education* (Society of Mary, 1996), and the *Characteristics of Marianist administration* (Society of Mary, 2013), were handbooks and

documents that supported evidence presented in the data. These documents assess the validity and authenticity of the study, reducing possibility for bias.

### **Summary of the Findings**

To summarize the data collected, I identified significant patterns that addressed the two main research questions. Each question had a subquestion. The first research question was how leaders in universities are manifesting intentional collaboration between lay executive leaders, decision makers, and their religious counterparts in order to create a culture of commitment to sustain and promote mission and identity. Its subquestion asked, specifically, how collaboration between lay executive leaders and their religious peers intentionally was strategized to weave into the thread of the campus culture the essence of the Catholic and Marianist charism. The second research question was how formation efforts can be effective in preparing lay leaders in three Catholic and Marianist universities to sustain mission and identity, and create avenues for promoting the religious founding charism and spirit as they perform their jobs on a day-to-day basis, while making a positive impact on their respective campuses. Its subquestion asked the ways in which the university's mission and identity could be preserved and sustained by lay leaders and decision makers when there are no religious members of the congregation in active ministry roles on each campus. The data directly answered the questions for providing the necessary attention to mission and identity at these three Catholic and Marianist institutions.

There were six major themes. Each theme provided an overarching "home" for subthemes to answer both how prepared and aware these universities were regarding a sense of mission and identity and the practices in place or needing to be established. The six themes and their corresponding subthemes are separated into two sections, each addressing the two research questions.



The first research question was addressed by three overarching themes and their subthemes. The first theme was intentionality as it relates to collaboration for mission. The subtheme was a level of commitment to the Marianist identity. The second theme was the importance of trust and empowerment as these relate to preserving the mission, the players involved and ambiguity of ownership. Subthemes were a passion for ownership and a sense of duty. The third theme was acceptance of, and adaptation to change. The subthemes were a sense of hesitation as well as a sense of cautious optimism about succession.

The second research question was also addressed by three additional overarching themes and their subthemes. The first theme focused on a need to be anchored in the story by means of honoring where the mission came from and how it is relatable today. A subtheme to complement that was a deep desire to learn and understand the history. The second theme to emerge as an answer to the second research question was the notion of hiring for mission. The subthemes supporting hiring for mission were intentional engagement with areas such as the office of human resources and assessments as well as changes needed for processes and procedures of hiring. The third theme highlighted the need for formation for mission. The subthemes concerned professional and spiritual development and a desire for a deeper understanding of the charism. The following section will detail the results and include examples from participants in support of the themes and subthemes.

### **Presentation of the Data and Results**

In this section, I explain how each of the six themes relate to the research questions, as well as include quotes from the three participant groups: senior executive lay leaders, lay leaders committed to the mission, and members of the religious congregation.

**Research question 1.** Research question one asked how universities are manifesting intentional collaboration between lay executive leaders, decision makers, and their religious counterparts, to create a culture of commitment to sustain and promote mission and identity. The subquestion of how collaboration between lay executive leaders and their religious peers strategically weaves the essence of the Catholic and Marianist charism into the thread of the campus culture is also addressed. Table 1 provides the themes as well as quotes to capture the theme.

Table 1

*Themes for Research Question 1*

Main theme and subthemes	Participant quotes in support of themes
Intentionality of collaboration  Subtheme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commitment to the university Marianist identity</li> </ul>	Fr. Mitch: This is not about forced collaboration due to a need, or a lack of religious, it is an intentional awareness that through collaboration, our mission will live on.  Valerie: There is a commitment to the mission, but I don't see the intentionality in wanting to figure out how to better collaborate to manifest it on campus.
Trust and empowerment  Subthemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passion for ownership</li> <li>Sense of duty</li> </ul>	Angela: It is the responsibility of those in top leadership positions to be firmly committed to the mission and to sustain it. We just need to make those who question, trust us.  Diana: I have been trusted and empowered to live out and share the charism.
Acceptance or, and adaptation to change  Subthemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hesitation</li> <li>Cautious optimism about succession</li> </ul>	Fr. Sam: Lay leadership is the future. We would be blind not to see it, embrace it and be grateful for it. Our mission will not die.  Andrew: We cannot continue to work organically and call it "being Marianist." There is a sense of welcoming, but a lack of system when it comes to institutionalizing mission.

***Theme 1: Intentionality of collaboration.*** Participants spoke of intentionality in various ways as it related to collaboration. Fr. Mitch stressed how, for many years the vowed religious believed collaboration with lay people were forced, but that has begun to shift. He shared,

Because of the history of the Marianists, including lay people as part of the foundation of the order, many of my brothers believed that we had to collaborate and work with them, regardless of wanting or needing to. I think the reality check that we need lay collaborators more these days is scary and exciting at the same time.

Chris stressed how, as a lay executive leader, he relies on the members of the religious congregation as sounding boards, mentors, and figures of wisdom, essential to the campus community:

Collaboration with the [Society of Mary] is essential. There is no choice. I consult with Father, who is my VP for mission, before major decisions have to be made. I value how our conversations and deep discussions on our mission lead to action.

However, for Tony, being intentional is directly related to a sense of urgency due to the lack of members of the Society of Mary on each campus. Tony feels there needs to be more intentional collaborative opportunities and strategies before more religious brothers or priests are no longer present on campus:

I am committed to this university's charism because, through the brothers, it has shaped me, who I am as an educator and professional and I worry about the future. We have to do more to collaborate with them now. I need more time with them. I need more time with the brothers to learn from them, to witness their vocation and how they live out the mission. Some people think we have plenty of time to prepare, while the brothers get older, retire, or leave this world.

Valerie's concern stems from feeling that certain aspects of the mission seem to only come from a small group of people on campus: "There is a commitment to the mission, but I don't see the intentionality in wanting to figure out how to better collaborate to manifest it on campus."

Fr. Philip expressed his opinion for collaboration by sharing:

We all, faculty and staff, religious or lay, are Marianist educators. We are all here for the same reason to share the charism, to build faith communities and we are doing it. We have been collaborating for decades and we will continue to do it until it is necessary. We all are a blessing to each other.

As a former provincial, Fr. Sam values the conversation of how to share the charism and sees it a necessity staying ahead of competitive forces in Catholic higher education:

When I speak to the lay folks in leadership positions, including directors, VPs and deans, I appreciate the openness for discussion. There is never a question to the commitment to the Marianist identity of the university. We share a common charism and goal: to educate the whole person and make, not only young adult professionals in their field, but responsible and committed community members. I have seen lay leaders and those of us brothers in current or former roles of authority have disagreements, but also agree on all the positive ways we can impact the lives of our students, through programs, courses, and retreats.

For members of Catholic and Marianist university communities, collaboration is important, and intentionality and desire for it sustain the mission. This theme addresses collaboration and how specifically it is weaved into the thread of campus life, or where it is missing, while underlying the sense of deep commitment participants expressed, which is the subtheme of commitment to the identity.

***Subtheme: Commitment to the university Marianist identity:*** The level of commitment for mission and identity is shared by the religious and lay, which is evident by what was expressed by the participants. Fr. Sam also said:

We all have a deep desire to be faithful to our Marianist identity. The brothers and our lay collaborators are committed to working together so our identity, especially as Catholic universities, adds to the gifts to the world. Our Marianist charism, our identity, feeds our hearts and influences our behaviors. Together we have come a long way and there is much opportunity for more.

Lay executive leaders, specifically like Joseph, said referencing past Marianists:

Our identity is a gift to the world, and as leaders and animators of the charism, we must embody these virtues, spirituality, educational philosophy and our own personal commitment, to help others see Mary, Blessed Mother, as a model, and to find Jesus Christ in ourselves and in the rest of the community. Our commitment is evident based on the “yes” we said to the teachers of the past, to our mentor.

According to Glodek (2012) to sustain a Marianist educational community, it takes collaboration between committed people who believe their individual gifts strengthen it. The commitment of the lay faculty and staff, stemmed from their shared lived experience on a Marianist university campus, supports the intentionality of collaboration. The commitment to this identity, through support and invitation of the brothers to their lay peers, addressed the research question.

***Theme 2: Trust and empowerment.*** Participants reflected on how the Marianist charism is shared, talked about, and supported on each campus. Trust affects how top leadership is empowered by the religious to carry on the mission and how lay supervisors are allowed to

embrace and manifest the charism within their scopes of influence. Bro. Colin speaks to how his role as a religious allowed him to lead retreats, discussions, and workshops on the charism for lay leaders as his way of ensuring the charism continues and is part of everyday campus culture:

I am an influencer on campus, not a leader. You [lay faculty and staff] are the leaders and the future. You bring a unique perspective, career preparation, families, and a deeper level of commitment to the charism because of all you have to balance. By saying yes to our charism, we can only feel confident and hopeful that we can trust you to carry it forward and not let it diminish.

As a lay executive leader, Angela understands that she has a role that can influence how the charism is lived out on campus and how it can affect many areas of the university. However, due to the role she has, she is committed to breaking the sense of mistrust between the levels of administration, faculty, and staff. She mentioned,

It is the responsibility of those in top leadership positions to be firmly committed to the mission and to sustain it. We just need to make those who question, trust us. When I speak of the charism I am committed to, seeing that all aspects of it are embedded in the curriculum, staff handbook, and student life activities. I have been trusted with this responsibility and others should trust it will live on.

Leo, also as a major decision maker and influencer on campus, when it comes to his role and responsibility to sustain the charism, stresses that the charism does not just belong to the religious. He stated, “We all own the charism and we own the mission and it is our duty, as it was passed on from the brothers to institutionalize it and to not let it die.”

Diana shared her experience about her way of embracing the charism as a lay leader, influencing different areas on campus:

Throughout my years at the university, I have been trusted and empowered to live out and share the charism. I am grateful for those who have taught me to embrace the charism and then share it within my department.

Not all members of the campus communities feel the same way. Celeste and Jack have apprehensions as to how the administration embraces the charism. Celeste, a lay leader and someone who works closely with students and staff, does not trust the current university administration, which is mostly made up of laymen. She shared,

At this moment, and from where I am standing, I don't see mission as a priority for the administration. I don't see it lived and played out in decisions that impact my area. I need to be convinced. To me, it is a responsibility given to me to share with my students. I don't feel I can freely exercise my duty as a steward of the charism when my administration takes the mission for granted.

Jack sees the administration's stance on the charism as "lip service" and not as a priority infused in strategies for the future when there are no members of the Society of Mary around to be the visible reminders. Jack said,

Embracing the charism is not a checklist of events for a report to show our school is Marianist. Those on top should not just add the word Marianist to a speech and expect us to truly believe they are serious about preserving the charism. Being Marianist and a Marianist educator is so much more than that. You have to, at a certain personal level, embrace the charism within you. That allows you to work and manage a certain way, the Marianist way, with respect for human dignity, and within the (Marianist) family spirit of educating the whole person.

However, even with lay leaders who have gone through formation and worked at the university for decades, there is mistrust in them as the future representatives of the charism. Jerry has been encouraged to become a member of the Marianist Educational Associates (MEA) lay faculty and staff committed to sustaining the charism, but has not. Jerry said,

I have gone to MEA meetings, and some of my dearest colleagues are MEAs. I have worked here for almost 30 years, but I am not a MEA because I don't want to take the place of the brothers. Without the (religious) Marianists, this campus will not be the same. I was taught by the brothers and it was different. I am not the right person to be speaking of the mission and identity of this university because I am not a brother.

When it comes to trust and empowerment of the mission, there is a mix of opinions. This theme addresses the first research question stressing that while some administrators are firm in their responsibility to sustain the charism, some feel the rest of the campus community does not see it. There are also lay leaders, confident in their sense of empowerment and trust from the hands of the brothers to them, while others do not see themselves as fit to take mission on.

***Subtheme 1: Passion for ownership.*** The subtheme of passion for ownership is found within the experiences the lay leaders shared in terms of having been empowered and trusted with learning and embracing the charism and the educational philosophy of the Marianists. As Diana shared,

When I said yes to the invitation to enter formation and to join a lay community, I felt trusted with something very special. The emphasis on community is something that I own proudly because it reminds us that we are all one Christian community, embracing this charism as we touch, and influence positively, the lives of students every day.



***Subtheme 2: Sense of duty.*** As a subtheme, having a sense of duty was a notion expressed by participants. Bro. Nick shared:

I am blessed to have been given the assignment of coming to this campus. I can now assist as best as I can in formation for those lay faculty and staff who are committed to this mission. It is my responsibility as a religious to share the charism, as it was shared with me.

Glodek (2012) invites both religious and lay Marianists who support and minister in educational efforts, to promote “openness to the Gospel message of transformation” (p. 10), while preparing to empower others to lead and support the mission towards a sustainable future. The Marianists, religious and lay, have affirmed each other as members of university communities, and through these testimonies allowing answering the question of intentional collaboration as it relates to sustaining the mission.

***Theme 3: Adaptation and change.*** Conversations with participants who have worked at the three universities for several decades included a sense of loss and nostalgia for the past, as well as hesitation to embrace the present. Valerie was quick to say,

It’s not what it used to be. There were so many brothers and priests on campus 20 years ago, you felt their presence. Whatever the essence of the charism is, you felt it. It was a family, it was home. Now it’s just the place I work at. I can’t help but feel disengaged and apprehensive about how different things are and how years from now, this school will have lost its identity and its soul.

Fr. Jason and Bro. Henry have concluded that change is good, and the realities of today pushed for a new way of looking at mission. Fr. Jason quoted the Marianist founder:

We must create a new fulcrum. Fr. Chaminade had to endure lots of change in France, and while we are living in a war-torn country, we must read the signs of the times and find peace of the heart to, prayerfully and creatively, keep the charism flame alive. I believe we can do it together, with those lay leaders who believe in our mission and are committed to living it and let it guide university life.

Bro. Henry spoke of acceptance and handing over the charism to those who have embraced it professionally:

I believe that the MEAs are the best thing that has happened to our Catholic and Marianist universities. We need to do a better job at training them, supporting them, and empowering them to invite others to join. As lay faculty, staff, and administrators that have said yes to work and lead our universities into the future, they need our support as we hand over our mission to those who will make it relevant to the students of today. A Catholic and Marianist education is special, unique, and timeless. It is rooted in spirituality, family spirit, and community. As committed faculty, I know the MEAs will challenge our students to think of others, not just themselves, to be life-long learners and challenge the status quo. We, as religious, have to finally, fully trust our lay fellow educators. That is how our charism will live on.

The theme of adaptation and change address the first research question by highlighting the feelings of the participants. Throughout this section, participants have shared their perspective as to how there is a sense of intentionality and desire to collaborate with the Brothers and those who support the mission and identity. Answering the first research question entailed asking participants to express ways to assist university decision makers, boards and executive

leaders consider being intentional about institutionalizing mission as well as collaborating for leading through change.

***Subtheme 1: Hesitation.*** Valerie’s hesitation was clear when sharing how she is not convinced that the charism or the university’s mission will carry one without a significant number of religious brothers around. Fr. Philip shared he sensed hesitation from some MEAs to speak up in matters of mission. He said:

I have not yet figured out why it is, but I get a sense that some of the MEAs are not stepping up and being more active. I have a feeling some of them need to be told what to do, when they should be more confident in representing the mission and identity, especially after experiencing initial and on-going formation. I know I may be seen as the one-man show, but I need their help.

***Subtheme 2: Cautious optimism.*** While there may be uncertainty in the future of the charism with less number of vowed Marianists on campus, there is optimism. Andrew shared:

We cannot continue to work organically and call it “being Marianist.” There is a sense of welcoming, but a lack of system when it comes to institutionalizing mission. The commitment and excitement is there, but only relying on the Brothers to influence you because of their presence is not enough. It is hopeful to see many faculty, staff, and students attend mission-related events, but then what? We have to take a minute to reflect and plan cautiously. Do it, but do it right.

Adapting to change is a fundamental characteristic of Marianist leadership and it invites all Marianist educators to “embrace Catholic and Marianist traditions of higher education for the sake of the common good of the world and the Church” (Society of Mary, 2013, p. 11). The

themes mentioned in this section address the desire for a commitment to one mission and charism, trust, change and collaboration along with the first question.

**Research question 2.** The second research question asked how formation efforts could be effective in preparing lay leaders in three Catholic and Marianist universities to sustain mission and identity, and create avenues for promoting the religious founding charism and spirit as they perform their jobs on a daily basis, while having a positive impact on their campuses. The subquestion specifically asked how the university mission and identity could be preserved and sustained by lay leaders and decision makers when there are no religious members of the congregation in active ministry roles on each campus. Table 2 provides the themes and subthemes that emerged to answer this question as well as a significant quote to capture the theme.

Table 2

*Themes for Research Question 2*

Main theme and subthemes	Participant quotes in support of themes
Being anchored in the story  Subtheme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deep desire for learning and understanding the story</li> </ul>	Joseph: Our Marianist story can be told today as well as it was told years ago. We can get very creative in introducing a new generation of students to our founders and their story. They are great characters of the past we can learn from today.  Fr. Sam: We have a need to be rooted in relevance. There are so many important aspects of our story that shaped who we are as Catholic and Marianist educators in our universities. We need to do a better job at exploring that today.
Hiring for mission  Subthemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentional engagement with HR</li> </ul> Need for change in process	Tony: This is not my job. This is my vocation. I was meant to work here.  Andrew: Through new strategies, we can be intentional about how much mission guides our processes.
Formation for mission	Bro. Nick: Senior leadership must encourage formation for

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Subthemes:

- Professional v. spiritual development

Desire for deeper understanding of charism

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mission at the board level.

Celeste: There is a hunger for more formation opportunities so we can support the charism.

***Theme 1: Being anchored in the story.*** Fr. Philip stressed the story of both the university and its foundation and of the Marianists:

The story of the founder is the story of a man who endured war, persecution, exile, and imminent death. That story can be the story of so many people living in today's world.

Why wouldn't we want to tell his story? His courage and survival, plus vision and deep faith, lead to the foundation of the order that came to the United States and established our universities. You can talk about all these things and inspire faculty, staff, administrators and of course, students, to be brave, have faith and to never give up. This is foundational in our educational philosophy.

Joseph appreciates the story of the Marianists because he is an alum, and was educated by the brothers as well in high school:

Our Marianist story can be told today as well as it was told years ago. We can get very creative in introducing a new generation of students to our founders and their story. They are great characters of the past we can learn from today. The brothers that taught me in high school also taught some of my college classmates, and they would tell the stories of the foundation of the order, with energy and enthusiasm. We must engage in conversations that make our story come to life to keep these characters with us.

A need for relevance to today's challenges is what Fr. Sam mentioned:

We have a need to be rooted in relevance. There are so many important aspects of our story that shaped who we are as Catholic and Marianist educators in our universities. We

need to do a better job at exploring that today. We must take the story, the charism and live it every day, and interpret it for real issues for faculty, staff and students. The charism is manifested in relationship with daily life.

Chris appreciates also being invited to learn more about the story and sees the value on sharing it, while using it for strategic planning:

The brothers told me their story, and I want to share it with others. By being part of a committee on the charism on campus, when I heard the story of how the university was founded, I was surprised. I didn't know the brothers had been so bold in coming to this area of the USA at such a time where there had been civil unrest, and social conditions were not the best. The brothers made friends with community members, built relationships, and were trusted with the education of the boys at the time. They didn't have a lot of money, but what they had, they shared, and vice versa. This is a story worth sharing, and one that should be used to inspire creative ways for curriculum design, programming and to nourish the seeds already planted.

Valerie shared how the story of the foundation of the university connected with her in ways she was not expecting:

The brothers came from Europe to help the poor and sick, and all they had was their faith and their skills as teachers, cooks, or as working brothers, doing carpentry, horticulture, or bookkeeping. They gave themselves to the needy and built strong bonds with the families, who in some cases gave them land to develop for the community. That land eventually became a school, and now our university. I went to a workshop on the history of the Marianists in this city and it left me wanting to know more about those pioneers who came so far to do God's work. I am inspired by them.

The history and foundation of the university, as the story of the Marianists is important to participants. While the story itself is significant and meaningful, some participants felt there could be ways to use the very story to develop new strategies to infuse the mission and identity of the university. Their shared experiences and perspective give evidence of a deep desire for learning and understanding more of the story, which is the subtheme of the main theme of being anchored in the story.

***Subtheme: Deep desire to learn and understand the story.*** As educators, the Marianists have made a commitment to provide formal and “nonformal” (Glodek, 2012, p. 4) education. Initiatives in India and Africa, for example, are what Valerie would like to also know more about. She shared:

I have only heard of the schools the brothers opened in Malawi, and in Deepahali, India. I know I can sponsor a student, but I would love to know more of how the brothers even became interested in going there. I guess it was the French connection, for French speaking Africa, but how did our American brothers get there? What drove them? We should have those who can tell the story.

According to Glodek (2012), a Marianist educational environment includes working consistently to transform society through entering into secular systems and transforming them. This section addresses the second research question by aligning storytelling, through systems and opportunities to form those who have a more genuine interest and deep desire to learn the story of the Marianists and use it as a resource to share the charism.

***Theme 2: Hiring for mission.*** Hiring for mission was one of the topics that came up in most of the conversations with participants. If it was not explicit, it was hinted that hiring for

mission needs to be a bigger priority than what it is currently across all campuses. In recalling his own experience of being interviewed, during times he had to hire a new staff member, Tony shares,

I remember being asked questions with a sense of intentionality about how I would connect to the mission of the institution. Regardless of what I knew about the Marianists or the brothers, I appreciated the depth of the questions and the importance those interviewing me, put on mission. Over the years, I realized that I wasn't just interviewing for a job. I was uncovering my vocation. I told myself, this is not my job. This is my vocation. I was meant to work here.

Angela and Leo, as lay executive leaders who work with those who design interview days and processes in the offices of human resources, stress the need for mission-centered advertising of the mission and identity within a job ad. Angela said,

When we hire, we do our best to be intentional about how much our mission is part of the process, and how anyone who applies for a job, understands that. Every job we advertise, regardless of whether it is, includes the necessary language to let applicants know our mission means a lot to us. A potential faculty member will know ahead of time that the CMUs [Characteristics of Marianist Universities] drive our curriculum design and programming. Therefore, during orientation or as part of the tenure process, our Catholic and Marianist mission and identity, is very much present.

Leo's comments focused more on the professional staff process, especially on a concern that came up because of employee turnover:

Recently, my colleague and I noticed that job advertisements in non- ministry or mission related positions, did not have the words Catholic and Marianist in them. It dawned on us



that a particular division was having a higher than usual employee turnover. We were attracting good people, well-trained professionals, but with no knowledge, interest or initial appreciation for the fact that we are a Catholic and Marianist institution. The mission piece was missing, so we have made the necessary changes to include a tagline about the charism in all job ads on our university human resources website. We want to hire qualified professionals in their field, who are good people, but we would also love to have more people who have a sense of embracing the charism as members of this university community.

Fr. Jason helps with new staff and faculty orientation at his university, and feels more can be done to incorporate mission into onboarding:

I have a captive audience twice a year where these new members of our community get to hear our story. That's great, yet it's only an hour at a time. I am in conversations with human resources to explore ways we (the Marianists) can implement mission-centered activities into a series of orientation programs.

Diana spoke as a supervisor on practical ways for middle management to share how charism can be more visible at work:

Only some of us are MEAs so it would be helpful to have more staff with knowledge and experience on the Marianist charism. If we can't have more MEAs around, maybe we can get some training, or attend retreats to help us share the charism with employees, especially new ones. I think the HR office should work closer with the MEAs or the brothers to help with supervising issues, in lieu of the family spirit and community we support and want to maintain. One day there will also not be any brothers around, so we

need to make sure we have a system in place for hiring for mission and keep our charism alive.

***Subtheme 1: Intentional engagement with human resources.*** Hiring was mentioned by most of the participants, in particular, the need for Marianist or Marianist representation in human resources. Chris shared:

I make sure that our VP for mission or one of our chaplains is present when we discuss hiring a new administrator. I have asked Father to work with those in Human Resources who can make sure adequate Marianist representation is present in hiring committees.

***Subtheme 2: Need for change in the process.*** Participants also mentioned assessment in the hiring processes and procedures. Angela added:

While we do a very good job at hiring faculty with a strong message rooted in our mission, I am quick to admit we need to evaluate and assess the process for our non-exempt and hourly staff. Are we articulating our mission accurately? There is always room for improvement.

The main theme of hiring for mission, and subthemes of intentional engagement with departments like human resources, as well as a realization for need and changes in processes of hiring address the second research question by highlighting systematic ways mission and identity can be promoted in the daily work life of faculty and staff.

***Theme 3: Formation for mission.*** Formation is a term used often in Marianist educational settings, as it relates to giving shape or forming something or someone. In this case, it is regarding how the Marianist charism, mission, and identity shapes Marianist educators, and for the universities, provided a cultural and educational foundation. Formation for mission was mentioned often during the interviews as a necessary strategy for institutionalizing mission into

the micro and macro visioning for the future of the universities. Fr. Mitch was very straightforward when he spoke of formation as it relates to the Board of Trustees or Regents at the universities:

Our board used to have a mission and identity community, but we realized the charism and the mission were not as explicitly embedded within the other committees of the board. We did away with the mission and identity committee and now all board meetings begin with a two hours session on mission for all to attend, discuss, and engage in conversation. Mission must be institutionalized at the board level in order for it to systematically be infused into all areas of the university.

Bro. Nick echoed a similar sentiment regarding the board:

I believe that senior leadership must encourage formation for mission at the board level. When the board decides on something, leadership follows. Those major decision makers must be open to participating in formation activities in order to fully understand how the charism is a gift from God to our campus community.

Celeste spoke on the interest for formation as a staff member who works with students:

There is a hunger for more formation opportunities so we can support the charism. Not only as a staff member and among my peers, but students ask, “what are the Marianists?” and I share what I know. I don’t teach in the classroom, but I have a captive audience of students that is open to learning more. I wish there were annual workshops or seminars on mission so staff, regardless of your area, could learn more and then implement it into their job. Whether or not, formation is crafted around spirituality and faith for spiritual development, which is what these kids need at this stage of their lives, retreats for adults on formation is the type of professional development I need in my area on campus.

Andrew would like to see formation become as much a part of professional development as professional conferences:

We need to do a better job at creating mission-centered incentives and encourage faculty to teach creatively, for staff to manage and supervise, in a way that reflects our Marianist values. We also need to articulate professional development differently here. Some folks think professional development is what you need as a result of a negative evaluation. Like you need to improve in some skill because you have not completed a task or not done your job right. Professional development should be re-defined as formation. We really need to look at ways of implementing Marianist strategies into ongoing formation for faculty and staff. I think that will make a huge difference in sustaining the mission for the future.

Chris feels strongly about formation for mission because of having participated in a retreat-style national conference, which focused on how to be mission-centered as a lay leader:

We spent four full days engaged in deep thought about our mission and how it narrates, not only our story, but how it should drive our planning, and ground our decisions. As Catholic higher education institutions, our charism is what makes us distinctive and we need to do a better job at utilizing our own historical resources (our mission, our story) to create an environment of learning where faculty want to teach and students want to learn. Our mission can facilitate that if we invest the time in implementing strategies to inject mission into our orientation programs, staff benefits, tenure-track processes, and etcetera. I believe it will make a difference.

Bro. Colin gave examples of how formation for mission can be effective for both students and adults by means of it being institutionalized:

It is not an accident that student life issues within the residence halls have improved. When you have a VP of student development, a dean of students and a director of residence life who are MEAs, the conversations amongst them and with the rest of us that work close to them, are different. They are about mission, and how mission impacts whatever the situation involves. A commitment to community, and the expectation of ownership of actions that have negatively affected the community, is what our students are taught now; before it was a list of rules and guidelines to follow. If they didn't, they got fined or depending on the seriousness of the issue or incident, suspended or expelled. Now our residence life staff goes through a two-day workshop just on how our mission and charism helps create a community of equals, holding each other accountable for the sake of the community. When we hold students accountable for their actions, they grow. Sometimes as adults, we struggle with that, and I encourage the staff to respectfully have conversations around accountability. That is formation. We are forming, shaping, amazing young people and as their formators of teachers, we must do the same.

Diana had a strong opinion on often having to explain to her colleagues the difference between professional and spiritual development when she spoke about formation for mission:

More of my colleagues would want to become MEAs if there was more clarity in expressing the different approaches to formation. Being a MEA is more of professional development because it is rooted in our jobs within a Marianist university structure. We just do it with the charism as our anchor. Spiritual development is more personal and private, and should be treated as such. One's relationship with God should be irrelevant to the job they do. We are lucky our universities offer both types of formation.

Formation for mission and its subthemes provide answers to the second research question by addressing what lay and religious can do in partnership to foster mission and identity on campus, while planting seeds for the essence to remain when the brothers are no longer active to be the animators of the charism.

***Subtheme 1: Professional v spiritual development.*** According to some participants, it was evident to sense a tension between professional development and spiritual development as it related to “ways” of doing a job. Valerie shared:

When we first got together as MEAs, we were part of a spiritual community, it was a Marianist lay community, and it was informal, faith-filled, and social. It embodied the family spirit that we had been formed to appreciate.

Angela, as others including Diana, appreciates the parallels, but sees the difference, as highlighted above. Angela added:

I am responsible for leading my team as professionals in a professional setting that happens to embrace a spirituality that is quite special. I will support any type for professional development initiatives that include mission-centered strategies because it was only add to the richness of our campus culture.

***Subtheme 2: Desire for deeper understanding of charism.*** Participants shared how the process of formation to understand the charism is important. Celeste shared:

There is a hunger for more formation opportunities so we can support the charism. Those of us, who have time and commitment to attend a retreat or workshop, need to.

Understanding the charism, which is what drives our focus, and provides a vocabulary, will bring new life to our Catholic spirit. This charism happens to be Marianist.

The subthemes of the question between professional and spiritual development emerged as the participants shared their experience of attending retreats and how the charism assists in ways to be a better colleague and a more committed and motivated worker. That participant perspective also addressed the need for process assessment and change in how the mission and identity of the university can positively affect hiring processes and inform mission-driven decisions within staff relations.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, the researcher presented the data collected through open-ended interviews highlighting the voices of participants, all members of three Catholic and Marianist university communities. Their collected shared experiences support the design for this phenomenological study to answer the research questions of how collaboration between lay leaders and vowed religious is manifested and intentional. The data also addresses the question of what steps are needed and desired to ensure mission and identity are preserved, and nourished, by lay leaders in Catholic and Marianist universities when there is a declining number of religious brothers in active ministry. The themes, which answer the first question, were intentionality as it relates to collaboration for mission, trust, and empowerment as they relate to preserving the mission and acceptance of and adaptation to change. These themes were supported and complemented by subthemes, such as deep commitment to the identity of the institution, passion for ownership and duty regarding the charism, and a sense of cautious optimism towards the future. Themes that answered the second question were a need to be anchored in the story and history of the order and institution, hiring for mission, and the need for formation for mission. Subthemes that complemented these themes were a deeper desire for learning more about the foundational story, cross campus collaboration with offices, such as Human Resources, and a need for professional

development embedded in the mission and identity. Chapter 5 will include a summary of the results, implications of those results and recommendations for further research as it relates to keeping and sustaining the Marianist charism on the three university campuses.

### **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

This phenomenological study was designed to explore how lay leaders in three Catholic universities, founded by the Society of Mary religious order, collaborate with their religious colleagues to sustain the charism, mission, and identity on each campus. This study was also designed to examine the shared lived experience of leaders, the religious brothers who committed to their vocation, as members of an order, and teachers, share their educational philosophy with their lay colleagues who are committed to nurturing how the charism makes a Marianist university distinctive from other Catholic institutions of higher learning. In this chapter, as researcher, I discuss the findings of the research conducted through a set of interviews of 18 participants who are members of the faculty, staff and administration in each of the three universities.

This chapter includes a summary of the results, highlighting the major themes and subthemes and a thorough discussion of how results relate to the literature. There is a section dedicated to limitations as well as implications for practice, policy, and theory, and recommendations for future study. Finally, there is a conclusion reminding the reader of the purpose of the study as well as its significance to those interested and working in Catholic and Marianist higher education institutions as well as other Catholic higher educational scholars interested in how mission is preserved.



## Summary of the Results

This phenomenological study was designed to better understand the shared lived experiences of lay professional leaders and their religious collaborators personal insights and reflections (van Manen, 1990), as they relate to sustaining the Marianist charism, mission and identity on campus. This study focused on lay and religious leaders in three Catholic and Marianist universities. The research questions that this research addressed were:

- How are university leaders manifesting intentional collaboration between lay executive leaders, or decision makers, and their religious counterparts, in order to create a culture of commitment to sustain and promote mission and identity?
  - How is collaboration between lay executive leaders and their religious peers intentionally strategized to weave into the thread of the campus culture the essence of the Catholic and Marianist charism?
- How can formation efforts be effective in preparing lay leaders in three Catholic and Marianist universities to sustain mission and identity, and create avenues for promoting the religious founding charism and spirit as they perform their jobs on a day to day basis, while making a positive impact on their respective campuses?
  - In what ways can the university mission and identity be preserved and sustained by lay leaders and decision makers when there are fewer or no religious members of the congregation in active ministry roles on each campus?

According to Spahr (2015), transformational leadership is inspirational in driving leaders to move groups to achieve goals, and positively lift morale. This study was designed using transformational leadership theory as a framework by highlighting how organizations, in this case, three Marianist universities, shine by embracing how to manage change, encouraging and

shaping behaviors of key influencers (Jyoti & Bhau, 2016). Lefevere (2019) highlights how Catholic universities are creating resources for leadership and spiritual formation for both full-time and part-time faculty and staff members, as well as developing and assisting leaders for strategic planning. Lefevere's (2019) research aligns well with an overall major finding of mutual commitment from university administration, faculty, and staff at the three campuses, as well as several of the themes shared among the participants, such as desires for more formation and learning opportunities focused on mission. Additionally, it was stressed that there is a need to intentionally partner with campus colleagues in departments, such as human resources, which would result in more formalized ways to institutionalize the mission; for example, through redesigning job ads and training search committee members to present the mission in ways that would draw out the best candidates for certain jobs and strategize to prevent attrition.

This study was conducted using the Van Kaam Method (Moustakas, 1994), allowing the researcher to analyze the data extracted from each individual semistructured interview in detail and with precision. The results came from data gathered from three sources; lay professional executive leaders, professional lay leaders who are committed to the Marianist educational philosophy, and vowed religious. All participants hold leadership roles as members of the faculty and staff.

## **Discussion of the Results**

Current research supports the need for Catholic colleges and universities to consider strategic ways to sustain their mission and identity with an increased lay presence among leaders. According to Lefevere (2019), new initiatives, such as daily invitations for prayer and presentations on various themes dedicated to ministry and mission, affirm the role of lay professionals while providing opportunities for leadership development. Lay leaders would have

the necessary tools for planning retreats and facilitate mission-centered faith groups among peers. This study allowed for lay leaders on the three campuses to express levels of shared excitement for mission integration, and even some concern about the university administration not doing enough to preserve it. It also included the perspective those vowed religious members of the university communities sharing they have learned to embrace the reality that comes with declining numbers within their order and how that affects their way to lead and represent the charism. The study also revealed optimism expressed by the brothers as it relates to sharing their spiritual charism and legacy to the lay leaders of the future.

In exploring the first research question, the participants were invited to think at a macro level in considering their perspective towards collaboration for mission and identity between lay leaders and their religious peers and colleagues. The question also addressed how mission and identity are strategically placed within university activities through these collaborative relationships. Both lay and religious leaders answered candidly, especially when addressing collaboration. Many, like Fr. Mitch, see collaboration as a natural way of living and working:

As Marianists, we have always known that collaboration with lay people was part of our history. Even if it felt forced at a time, it is important we work together, especially because we (the brothers) are too old and can't work anymore, or are simply dying.

There are not enough of us. Some of the lay folks I have gotten to know are committed. It is natural for us to work together because they allow for us to stay active too.

The sentiments of the participants challenge Marianist university leadership and the Catholic higher education community in general where there is a perception of not engaging in dialogue of encounter to keep the mission alive (Galligan-Stierle & Casale, 2010). Chris shared

his sentiments, yet was not afraid of a future without members of the Society of Mary around campus:

We can still be Catholic but not Marianist. The brothers have done a very good job planting seeds that are very deep rooted. The charism will be fine because without being Catholic we wouldn't be Marianist. We may not have members of the SM [Society of Mary] on campus, but we will welcome diocesan priests, or members of different orders to join our university community in order not to lose what makes us Catholic.

The results of this study have provided, however, a sense of concern and hesitation from some members of the lay faculty and staff towards their trust, or lack thereof, in the administration's commitment to sustaining the Marianist charism when the time comes and there are no vowed religious brothers or priests on campus. Staff members, such as Celeste, shared how they hoped for better manifestation of the charism from administrations after recent top-level hires, and in changes to operations in certain areas. Celeste said:

There was a new VP hired and there was no indication that they have an interest in learning about the charism. They looked very good on paper, with degrees and professional experience. Yet, when they addressed people, there seems to be lack of depth, interest and genuine care for the history, educational philosophy and essence of what makes this place special. We talk about our characteristic of "family spirit," but our administration is hiring people that don't understand that, nor want to learn what it is.

It was made clear through the passion of their responses that lay leaders are very committed to the mission and identity of these universities. That is a reason why there is a sense of responsibility and protectiveness towards it. Whether through the experience of having a brother teach them in class, if they were alumni, or spending time with another religious who was on a

retreat with them, lay leaders who are committed to the charism have an opinion when administration does not place mission at the center of strategic planning, assessments, or curriculum design to help guide the universities in preparations for the future. Jack shared his thoughts about the next strategic plan executive leaders will be developing:

Talk all you want about the innovation of technological resources as needed to prepare to be distinctive, but I hope that in addition to technology, a successful scholarship campaign, and any new building you want to build in the middle of campus, you (administration and the board) are using our mission and identity to guide those plans.

Another interesting discovery related to the themes for the first research question is the witness to being intentional about collaboration and having a deep commitment to the universities' Marianist identity. In addition, it is to be noted how the empowerment of those lay leaders to own the mission and identity have evolved into embracing adaptation and change. As Diana expressed, her passion leads to action:

I understand how some of my colleagues who have been here longer felt a little scared about the future of the university without the Marianists, but it doesn't have to be like that. I have made it my responsibility to engage in conversations with those [members of the Society of Mary] that are still around, and encourage others to do the same. There is a rich legacy that we are learning from, in order to pass it on to the future generation. Once a month we have a brother come and give a talk that includes the challenge of each of my staff members creating a lesson, a retreat, a talk, or an essay that is Marianist themed. Those then get added to our staff retreat agenda and we discuss to use for activities during the year.

The second research question provided participants to address how formation efforts could be designed in effective ways to prepare lay leaders for sustaining mission and identity as they perform their jobs on a daily basis, including anticipating there may not be any religious members of the order in active ministry.

While it has been mentioned already, there is a strong commitment to the charism by lay leaders at these three Marianist universities. However, it was also evident that the religious expressed an equal commitment. The vowed Marianists that participated stressed how their story, and the story of their foundation, and that of the university they ministered in, was relevant to conversations today. Fr. Sam's emotional testimony was heart-felt:

Our story begins in times of war, injustice, exile, and even death. But our story is also about incredible faith, hope, opportunity, and resilience. We are living in times where we are at war, we see injustice every day, there are immigration challenges where people have to leave and live in exile, just like our Fr. Chaminade. There is death. We can look back at Fr. Chaminade's story and learn how he and the inspiration from our Blessed Mother Mary, gave him strength of the heart and courage to never give up and creatively find ways to put faith first.

Being anchored in the story led to comments by participants who expressed a thirst for knowledge and educational development. Joseph had been educated by the brothers, came to work at the University, and shared the value of informal teaching, as well as formal:

One way to learn more about the Marianist is to sign up for a class or go on retreat, but there is such wisdom in the brothers living in the older communities. There are teachers, artists and scholars whose bodies may be old and decrepit, but their minds, sharp and

alive. Learning from them via lunch or coffee is a blessing and a gift that everyone needs to take advantage of.

Furthermore, this study revealed mixed reactions by some participants as it related to the hiring of faculty and staff and the need to hire “for” mission was a major theme because all three campuses have struggled with keeping professional lay faculty and staff long term. Some have made strides to correct that. Hiring for mission surfaced as it relates to retention. In his own way, Tony shared how more people could see being hired to work in a Marianist university as a gift and not just a job:

I don’t mean to sound negative about some of my past colleagues, because many of them were and are good people and we are friends. However, I find it sad that throughout their hiring process mission and identity, the charism and Marianist spirituality, were not exposed more, and explained so some of them could embrace the culture on this campus. We need to do a better job at keeping good people, professional staff, and scholars who want to be here. Our identity can help with that.

As far as faculty is concerned, some of the participants found it challenging to see how mission and identity could be used to enhance the curriculum. Fr. Jason shared his concern:

There is always opportunity to, through conversation and collaboration, find ways to include our charism in the curriculum. I have not taught in the classroom for many years, but I have to believe that these very brilliant faculty members we are hiring, with the right set of tools and resources rooted in our educational philosophy, could come up with creative ways to “teach through Marianist lenses.”

In addition, Fr. Jason also spoke of hiring for mission as an important reason to collaborate with offices on campus, such as the human resources department to systematically use mission and

identity to design hiring processes and procedures, and creatively collaborate with Marianist lay leaders, specifically the Marianist Educational Associates. He said,

As much as I am involved in assisting with orientation, I see a bigger opportunity for HR to invite other people, like the MEAs, who are very well versed in Marianist lingo, to assist in orientations, assessments, hiring committees, and training. It should not have to always rely on the one with the SM [Society of Mary] behind their name to lead the Marianist talk.

Formation for mission is another term for training or professional development. In Marianist educational settings, formation for mission programs are designed to provide deeper, thought-provoking, often collaborative avenues for conversation about mission and identity. This study revealed that all three Marianist universities offer some type of formation program, especially for MEA and other lay faculty and staff that are interested in learning more about Marianist themes. However, there is a strong sentiment by some participants that more can be done, including at the board of trustees level. Bro. Nick shared:

While the board is made up of very committed individuals who believe in the university and have supported it financially with much generosity in some cases, there should be a uniform approach to formation for mission. Where does mission fall as the board is beginning conversations for strategies for the future?

As shown in the quote previously, presidents, or executives in colleges and universities should consider board formation as part of the ongoing conversation to also avoid any concerns regarding there being conflicting goals between mission and values and strategic planning. According to Carney (2010), there needs to be intentionality from university leadership,



including board members, to create an environment of collaboration to be mission-centered when strategizing for the future.

Chris was very passionate about how formation can be part of professional development, especially as a former faculty member, and now his role as administrator allows him to provide opportunities to those within his scope of influence. He shared,

We are making strides to keep formation opportunities for faculty members as part of the ongoing conversation. Through working groups and committees, we hope to have a plan to create incentives for faculty to use Marianist resources for scholarship and research. It will be offered to all, and not simply theology, religious studies or philosophy.

It is important to mention how formation, as it relates to learning about a charism or educational philosophy like Marianist education, can be categorized as professional or spiritual development. For MEAs at the three universities, formation for mission is considered professional development since being an MEA is directly related to how they perform their roles on campus through a Marianist framework. For other members of the university community, who may have an affinity to the charism but have not committed to beginning MEA formation, spiritual development takes a more personal and faith developmental approach. Bro. Colin shared his perspective on spiritual formation:

When working in campus ministry, we realized we did not have the resources for adults' faith formation. Our focus had always been students. Using many Marianist resources for formation, we have been able to develop spiritual formation opportunities, such as retreats, sacramental and liturgical training for volunteers, and other means for faculty and staff to deeply explore their faith. We are happy to provide that in our campus community.

This discussion of the results from the study has provided a thorough interpretation of the perspective from the lay leaders and administrators, and their religious colleagues, as members of the three Marianist university campuses. From some lay participants, there is evidence of skepticism around how administration manifests its commitment to mission. However, that does not affect the affinity they show and support for how mission is still relevant today. There is commitment, passion, and cautious optimism. From the religious members of the university communities, there is some sadness as well as joy. Many members of the faculty and administration were brothers and that demographic has changed. However, it is the brothers themselves, in facing the present and preparing for the future, who are visionaries. They have embraced and encouraged lay leadership as a major factor in sustaining the mission and identity of what makes a Marianist university distinctive to all the other Catholic institutions of higher learning.

### **Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature**

In addition to connecting the results of this study as it relates to literature from previous research, the goal was also to focus on how the results relate to the community of practice, administrators or mission officers in other institutions, and how the results relate to the community of scholars, and researchers, particularly in Catholic, or faith and mission-centered colleges and universities who may be struggling with the question of how to sustain their distinctive charism. While this study focused on three universities, all Catholic educational organizations may find the information shared relatable. Studies on mission and identity's sustainability in Catholic organizations are relevant to the main questions of what is being done, what needs to be done, and whom the catalysts are to embrace the paradigm shift from vowed religious to lay leadership. Belmonte and Cranston (2009)'s study on Catholic school lay

leadership highlighted how a work environment nurtured by faith development created a stronger sense of mission among middle and secondary Catholic school communities. As stated by Belmonte and Cranston (2009), faith, as foundation of an educational organization, influences a positive work environment, especially when it provides leadership with the inspiration to see the benefit to all members of the organization: teachers, students, parents.

Research has been conducted to discover what and how Catholic colleges and universities sustain their distinctiveness, their charism, and identity. Winters (2017) shared that a number of Catholic institutions of higher education had incorporated lay leadership models focused on mission, regardless of the low number of vowed religious individuals currently in active ministries on campus. By doing so, opportunities for intentional collaboration were created. Themes, which answered the first research question addressed, at a macro level, the examination of mission and identity on campuses include a desire for trust and empowerment from the lay professional leaders' perspective. Grant and Sumanth's (2009) research showed that satisfaction, positive and proactive work influenced improved performance, because of an environment of trust, when created by supervisors or those in leadership positions. The theme of trust emerged positively and negatively in the results from the participants who were lay leaders. Some felt they had been trusted and empowered by those members of the Marianist order to carry on the mission, therefore, feeling satisfied with the way the charism, and its essence of mission, shaped and motivates their work. However, others shared not trusting current lay administration as good stewards of the charism. Trust leads to better collaboration. As the results showed through participants sharing examples, executive lay leaders feel a sense of responsibility because they were trusted with the charism. According to Fine et al. (2008), creating environments of trust and openness led to strategies forming when facing shifts in direction.

Another theme highlighted by previous research is adaptation and change. Some lay leaders at the Marianist universities expressed sadness and a sense of loss at not having as many religious brothers around the campus teaching and in active ministry. In a study conducted in 2006, Gardner found it has been challenging for many in Catholic institutions to accept the transition they see on campus when leadership shifts to lay professionals. This is in part due to a concern about a lack of commitment to the history and charism or educational philosophy. According to Gardner (2006), and in comparison and parallel to aspects of the results of this research, there is commitment by both religious and lay leaders to work together and to keep the mission and identity thriving. Gardner (2006) wrote supporting new methods needed to be in place if a religious identity was to be preserved, given those who traditionally preserved it was no longer available to do it in an active way. This notion supports themes of adaptation and change regarding how the three universities have had to implement new ways of embracing lay leadership, especially at the executive level. Franz et al. (2012) also examined how engaging in conversations about change lead to, particularly as faculty members, the discovery of new methods of teaching. In this study, results show how lay faculty committed to the charism, mission and identity, can use the very pillars of the mission to invigorate their teaching and scholarship, therefore contributing to the sustainability of the charism.

From the second research question, hiring for mission was a theme. Previous research supports that hiring for mission is crucial for the nourishment of the Catholic identity of a university. According to Heft (2012), while there may be an assumption that mission belongs to campus ministry or the theology department, hiring other members of the staff or faculty using mission-centered language and processes creates a stronger presence of the charism. Currie's (2011) study supported the theme of hiring for mission as it showed a commitment from Jesuit

universities strategized to recruit professionals, qualified and committed to the Catholic identity and mission. Because of this study, hiring for mission relates to the overall community of Catholic colleges and universities shifting to mostly lay employees. In addition, a number of Catholic colleges and universities have shifted to mostly lay board of regents or trustees, providing a more pressing need for mission and identity to be added to agendas and a sense that board members must be savvy and well versed in mission-related documents as they relate to hiring, and strategic plans. According to Currie (2011), board formation will also lead to the recruitment of top volunteers who support the mission as well support the creation of mission-centered orientation for new hires. Boards are resources for advice and strategy, enhancing the charism of the university's distinctiveness if embraced and executed fully. From the results of this study, lay and religious leaders were equally committed to the need for more intentional and better practices of hiring for mission to sustain the charism, both at the internal university community level, as well as with volunteers, such as alumni and board members.

Formation for mission is another theme and directly correlates to leadership as well as professional development and training. According to Boyle's (2010) report on the need to develop leaders for Catholic education, results included the creation of training workshops and retreats to assist all in the promotion of mission and identity. Ongoing training and continuous professional development opportunities were highlighted as ways to provide faculty and staff the necessary tools to sustain the mission and to incorporate it into the daily workdays. The desire and need for ongoing professional development related to the results of this study, in particular, as the participants shared their desire for more formation opportunities via retreats, for example. Participants expressed how, for those committed to the charism, formation for mission is and should be considered professional development, which would assist in assessing how mission is

institutionalized. Rizzi (2018) reported that through the proposal of an inventory, faculty and staff in any areas of a university can keep records of how mission and identity are manifested to help assess challenges and opportunities.

The literature and previous research have addressed the need for finding ways to sustain and nurture Catholic mission and identity at colleges and universities through leadership development and mission-driven hiring. In addition, research has shown a correlation to a need for trust to be established from leaders and adult constituents of a university community, committed to mission and identity, while adapting to changes to culture and demographics. While previous research indeed shows support for the results of this study, there are some gaps needing to be addressed. Even though collaboration is mentioned throughout the literature, there is not enough mention of direct and intentional collaboration between executive lay leadership and their religious counterparts. This study shows an intentionality that is rooted in the origin of the Marianist religious order which stemmed from lay religious communities of men, who “came to Fr. Chaminade with the goal of forming a religious institute under his direction” (The Marianists, 2018 p. 4). Marianist history has always included an intentionality of lay involvement in the support and expression of the Catholic faith. This has permeated through the Marianist high schools and universities. The research may benefit from additional studies on the relationship between lay appointed administrators and those religious members of the university and the intentionality of mission integration.

### **Limitations**

As far as limitations, this phenomenological study focused on a specific shared experience, a charism, a belief and educational philosophy. The limitation on scope of research topic can be expanded by future research conducted in other religiously affiliated institutions.

This study could have been conducted in other Catholic colleges or universities, but its purpose was to gain insight on the commitment to collaboration for mission between lay leaders, lay administrators, and the vowed religious, working and ministering in Catholic universities that still have a strong Marianist identity. Validity of data was achieved through the triangulation of the three sources of data. There are only three Marianist universities in the entire world; therefore, the number of committed leaders and members of the administration who are lay people, as well as those religious members, limited the sample. The limitation of the researcher as primary instrument could have led to researcher's bias yet was addressed by bracketing (Moustakas, 1994), setting aside assumptions or expectations. This limitation could have been avoided if an independent quantitative instrument, such as a survey, were used to collect data, therefore avoid having face-to-face interactions with participants in person.

Participants were all located in Ohio, Texas, and Hawaii, making this study limited to potential issues associated with privacy and trustworthiness, considering that those interviews not conducted in person were conducted electronically. Throughout the in-depth interviews via Skype and in person, it was a priority to build trust, which was achieved with ease allowing for candidness and honesty. In relation to geographical limitations, a more thorough study, using the same research questions can be done at each individual campus, avoiding any potential conflicts of participation.

In addition, this study was not very racially or culturally diverse. That is not the fault of the researcher or participants. The history of the Marianists as a religious order includes the merging of established separate provinces into one single province in 2002. The majority of members of the Society of Mary in the United States are Caucasian males. This limitation could have been avoided if Marianist religious sisters, formally known as the Daughter of Mary

Immaculate, would have active ministries in the universities. The Sisters are also a small congregation of fewer than 30 in the United States, with communities on Dayton, Ohio, and San Antonio, Texas. Nevertheless, they are included and invited to be part of mission-centered conversations, programming, and prayer. Furthermore, executive leadership positions in all three universities are mostly held by lay Caucasian males, with the exception of the role of vice president for mission, a position traditionally and currently held by a Marianist religious, also Caucasian male. Cultural diversity is a very significant limitation considering how Texas and Hawaii represent rich cultures that include members of the Marianist university communities who have positions as lay faculty and staff.

Another limitation was that all religious members who participated, due to being in active ministry on the three campuses, were all over the age of 60. According to Salinas (2015), in 2015 the 313 Marianist brothers and priests in the United States have an average age of 74, and only about 25 of them are under age 50. As of April 30, the number of vowed Marianist religious is 245 with only two priests serving under the age of 50. This limitation could have been avoided had the study been conducted with those Marianist brothers in one age group or at only one location. The most impactful limitation is the focus on only Marianist higher education. The Marianists (2018) sponsor 18 schools, most of them secondary, college preparatory, in at least five states, including Hawaii, and in Puerto Rico. The *Characteristics of Marianist Education* (Society of Mary, 1996) provide a foundational framework for the Marianist universities. This study could be conducted at the high school level where there is also a large number of lay leaders committed to the charism, presidents and principals who are lay, and aside from chaplains, a small number of vowed Marianists to represent the mission and identity. Larger samples, providing different demographics, can provide additional data to



answer the same questions of how lay and religious can intentionally collaborate for mission, and how more lay leaders can be formed and invited to be committed to keeping the essence of the charism alive.

### **Implications of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory**

This qualitative study was limited to the shared lived experiences and perspectives of lay leaders and their vowed religious counterparts, all representing a combination of faculty and professional staff, at three Catholic and Marianist universities. As a result, the implications may not be generalizable to populations outside of this study sample and environment. However, with the number of lay presidents in Catholic colleges and universities in the USA increasing over the last 15 years (Bradley, 2015), studies like this one could assist with exploring new models of strategy and planning with a mostly lay professional administration, faculty and staff.

**Practice.** Practical implications of this study include evidence of participants, who passionately shared their experience of working at a Marianist university and of having a commitment to the essence of the mission and identity of a Marianist educational philosophy. In reflecting on how to better collaborate for mission, participants present a need for more active engagement and collaboration, between executive members of the administration and those members of the university community who have expressed and shown a deep commitment to the charism, as it relates to integrity of the mission within the institution. For example, Marianist education is 200 years old. The Provincial administration has invited all ministries to celebrate this significant bicentenary. Through using the bicentennial of the educational philosophy at the universities, programming for faculty, staff, and students can be designed through a committee of those lay leaders interested.

New and frequent opportunities for gathering and dialogue between administrators and lay professional staff and faculty should take place. Similarly, gather and engage with those members of the university community who are vowed religious, still active in teaching and ministry. The vowed religious value the presence and support of the lay staff and faculty. The Brothers can propose scheduled prayer, meal, and social activities that include those members of the community who are interested in sharing time and space with them in addition to extending the invitation to lay leaders to their weekly community meetings. Finally, the Association of Marianist Universities (AMU), as the entity responsible for providing mission-related resources to sustain the charism on each campus, could also propose annual gatherings between different areas amongst the three universities in order to provide opportunities for community building and support, professional and spiritual development. The shared vision of the AMU and the three campuses sets a foundation for strategic planning for the future, as all three consider similar challenges of hiring, finances, demographic changes and can use mission and identity to ground and guide conversation.

**Policy.** The conceptual framework for this study was constructed to better understand the concern for the loss of mission and identity and how executive leaders are facing that concern in collaboration with their religious peers. Lay leaders committed to the mission and identity wish to support decision makers through trust and empowerment in the spirit of collaboration. By being anchored in the mission, identity and charism of the universities, university leaders and decision makers, can be transparent with their constituents throughout processes of strategy, curriculum design and assessments, in order to create an environment of trust. University hiring processes, as well as yearly evaluations, should reflect a sense of mission in policy and practice. Religious members of the congregation want to empower more lay leaders on campus through

programming and formation. In addition, the brothers desire to partner and support areas on campus that should foster formation as professional as well as spiritual development, such as hiring and onboarding. As has been noted, this study provides information helpful to institutionalize mission through deep commitments from executive leadership trusted with ensuring the identity is officially infused in all aspects of the university.

**Theory.** Reynolds and Wallace (2016) shared that optimistic leaders are transformed in hope and deliver with clear purpose. Lay executive leaders desire to ensure that the Catholicity of the university will not disappear regardless of the presence of vowed religious Marianist, while confidently showing a deep commitment to mission as those labeled as the main stewards of the charism. While the number of religious members of these three university communities continues to decline, these transformational leaders should continue to enable more members of the community to get involved, ask more questions and transparently assure all constituents that they will lead the universities through collaboration and intentionality. The results of this study inform the theoretical framework, rooted in transformational leadership, as it provided a platform for leaders to speak on mission as means to inspire their followers to be aligned with the institution's distinctness. According to Reynolds and Wallace (2016), it is through hope and aligning one's personal mission to the mission of the organization one is affiliated with that transformation happens. The leaders, vowed religious and lay at these three Catholic and Marianist universities have, or desire to, align themselves to the mission and the charism to sustain and nourish it. This study allows transformational leadership theory to continue to serve as a framework for leading change at times of challenging realities in the greater higher educational landscape.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

This study on sustaining mission and identity through collaboration between religious and lay leaders provides valuable information to support the following recommendations for further research. To begin with, this study should be replicated every few years at the three Marianist universities to assess mission and identity, lay leadership development and collaboration with the religious. The VP for mission at each of the three universities should coordinate the efforts for a recurring conversation between lay executive and other leaders on each of the campuses, along with the brothers, for ongoing assessment of mission integration.

Another recommendation is to conduct a comparison study between all three Marianist universities on mission integration activities and to promote collaboration between all three. The executive director of the AMU, would, in collaboration with the VP of Mission at all three, coordinate on-going gatherings and suggest topics of discussion. Furthermore, a thorough campus-wide Marianist “inventory” of mission-centered activities and initiatives to be conducted every five years, also requested by the AMU, and coordinated by the mission officer at each campus. In addition, it would be important to do an analysis regarding how lay faculty apply Marianist pedagogical strategies and behaviors to teaching. The provost, or chief academic officer of each university would collaborate with the mission office and the assistant provincial for education, to thoroughly examine how the characteristics of Marianist universities and of Marianist education are used as fundamental tools for teaching and scholarship.

Furthermore, a causal comparative study should be done on how other Catholic universities with mostly lay leadership institutionalize mission into hiring, promotion, and tenure in comparison to the three Marianist universities. The president’s office, along with those in leadership positions would reach out to the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) in collaboration and partnership. This study would benefit peer institutions also

desiring to sustain a deep sense of institutional mission in hiring practices and professional development.

## **Conclusion**

This study was designed with the purpose of examining how lay and religious leaders in three Catholic and Marianist universities face change, and lead, through collaboration to sustain the distinctive essence and charism its mission and identity. Two main research questions, and sub questions, guided the study:

- How are university leaders manifesting intentional collaboration between lay executive leaders, or decision makers, and their religious counterparts, in order to create a culture of commitment to sustain and promote mission and identity?
  - How is collaboration between lay executive leaders and their religious peers intentionally strategized to weave into the thread of the campus culture the essence of the Catholic and Marianist charism?
- How can formation efforts be effective in preparing lay leaders in three Catholic and Marianist universities to sustain mission and identity, and create avenues for promoting the religious founding charism and spirit as they perform their jobs on a day to day basis, while making a positive impact on their respective campuses?
  - In what ways can the university mission and identity be preserved and sustained by lay leaders and decision makers when there are fewer or no religious members of the congregation in active ministry roles on each campus?

The results of this phenomenological study included passionate testimonials from lay executive leaders, members of the Marianist religious order, and professional lay faculty and staff who are committed to the preservation and nourishment of the Marianist charism, mission,

and identity in all three campuses. According to Sanders (2010), Catholic universities face the need to find new ways to keep the charism alive as it relates to university and campus life. This study provided new and current data supporting the desire for new and sustainable methods to be developed to add mission and identity, or assess, within current university practices and to find new ways to infuse it into the daily work of faculty and staff. Catholic institutions of higher education can embrace change by staying rooted in their story, and creating new methods for relevancy. Participants shared examples of experience of, and a desire for, intentional and mission-centered professional and spiritual development. Current opportunities for professional and spiritual development are appreciated as well as questioned due lack of systematic consistency. The institutionalization of formation for mission is an opportunity. There is a sentiment that mission and the charism are not being institutionalized in a holistic way.

Mission and identity should be the guiding force for strategy. Traditions, core values, foundational philosophies, and religious charisms, seen as soft ideals. Catholic colleges and universities are not immune to current trends in higher education, such as the threat of political proposals that could make, according to Barden (2018), community college free for in-state students in cities where there are also private universities to consider. If the first two years of college are free, and traditional, 4-year universities, including Catholic and Marianist universities, are left with losses of not enrolling students their first year out of high school, how can mission and identity become a driving force for strategizing; for retention and increasing graduation rates? These challenges bring opportunities. This study should serve as a timely reminder that there are very committed members of the faculty, staff and administration who are ready and willing to do more for mission. By taking the mission, identity and the charism that make these Catholic and Marianist universities distinctive, board members and other university

constituents, who affect and implement change, have an opportunity to be intentional about preserving the soul of these institutions. According to Bro. Max Magnan, SM, “places and spaces speak” (2018, p. 13), and these universities are the homes where places of learning become alive and learning lives within the walls of classrooms and offices, residence halls and chapels. They also are spaces where friends pray and colleagues celebrate accomplishments and support each other in times of difficulty. It is the charism, the Marianist mission, and identity that needs to continue to provide sharp focus, a shared faith vocabulary (Marianists, 2018b) and a spirit that speaks to the many students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

The voices captured in this study shared a complex mix of contentment with the present, and an assurance that the mission is in good hands. There is optimism, hope, and joy from those who embrace reality and change. In contrast, there is sadness. There is nostalgia. Hundreds of brothers in black suits will never parade the hallways of these institutions of Catholic, Marianist higher learning. Still, many of these brothers, who educated, challenged and inspired so many over the years, now provide wisdom and experience. Some of them still live and work within the university communities as mentors, chaplains, and remind current Marianist educators where the charism they embrace came from. They are present. That presence is both valid and valuable. Results from this research also presented certain darkness in the voices of those that feel the essence of the mission is disappearing from campus due to a lack of trust in those whose responsibility is to sustain it. This study echoes and supports a conversation that has been taking place for several years. Yet, it is a conversation starter for the next steps in assessing what is creatively and intentionally needs to be done and what opportunities arise for growth and development as universities, strengthened by present and wise vowed religious and passionate lay leadership committed to their Catholic and Marianist foundation.





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## **Appendix A: Interview Protocol**

### **Interview Questions (Pre-expert panel review)**

1. Please share in your own words what intentional collaboration between lay and religious entities means in relation to sustaining and nurturing the Catholic mission and identity in Catholic and Marianist universities?
2. Please describe in your own words, what it means to lead as a lay professional (or a Marianist religious), a Marianist university, (or your own department, office, community) committed to nurture and sustain the mission and identity.
3. Please describe in what way does your role on campus help sustain and maintain the Catholic and Marianist mission and identity and how do you see it being conveyed and shared with the rest of the campus community.
4. Share your own experiences, as a member of this university community, that support the strategic aligning of efforts to connect religious and lay colleagues to maintain and sustain the Catholic and Marianist spirit and essence on campus.
5. Share how collaboration (between religious and lay leaders) influences decision making in a manner that sustains and nurtures mission and identity in your department/office, across campus.
6. Please share your thoughts, based on your experiences on campus, on how formative programs, retreats and formal formation enable the nurturing and preservation of the mission and identity.
7. Please share your experiences when working with lay leaders committed to mission and identity and describe ways to ensure that mission is part of the day to day “lived” experience in the classroom, department office, residence halls, cafeteria.

8. Please describe how you envision the future of the mission and identity in a Catholic and Marianist university when there is no vowed religious present.

**Interview Questions** (Post-expert panel review)

1. Please share in your own words what collaboration between lay and religious entities means in relation to sustaining and nurturing the Catholic mission and identity in Catholic and Marianist universities? Why is it important?
2. Please describe in your own words, what it means to lead as a lay professional (or a Marianist religious), a Marianist university, (or your own department, office, community) committed to nurture and sustain the mission and identity. Why is it important?
3. Please describe in what way does your role on campus help sustain and maintain the Catholic and Marianist mission and identity and how do you see it being conveyed and shared with the rest of the campus community. Why is role important?
4. Share your own experiences that support the strategic aligning of efforts to connect religious and lay colleagues to maintain and sustain the Catholic and Marianist spirit and essence on campus. Does mission guide strategic planning?
5. Share how collaboration (between religious and lay leaders) influences decision making in a manner that sustains and nurtures mission and identity in your department/office, across campus.
6. Please share your thoughts, based on your experiences on campus, on how formative programs, retreats and formal formation enable the nurturing and preservation of the mission and identity.

7. Please share your experiences when working with lay leaders committed to mission and identity and describe ways to ensure that mission is part of the day to day “lived” experience in the classroom, department office, residence halls, cafeteria.
8. Please describe how you envision the future of the mission and identity in a Catholic and Marianist university when there are no vowed religious present or in active ministry.
9. Follow-up question: Is the mission in good hands?

## Appendix B: Script

Script to follow during research interview for phenomenological study

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b>Name of Interviewee</b>	<b>Location:</b>
<p><b>Researcher:</b> Thank you so much taking the time to participate in this interview, sharing your insights into how the Marianist Charism is supported at the university.</p> <p>The study and these questions will explore and understand how intentional collaboration between lay and religious leaders sustain the charism alive currently, as more lay leaders take on significant roles on campus supporting the smaller number of religious peers and counterparts.</p> <p>Your participation will provide great depth to this research and reminder, your participation is completely voluntary.</p> <p>The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. May I ask follow-up questions to gain clarification when necessary? If there is a question you do not wish to answer, you may decline. You may stop the interview at any time if you deem necessary. Everything discussed in this interview is confidential, and your identity will be protected.</p> <p>I would like your permission to record the interview using this portable audio recorder in order to have the interview accurately transcribed. Do I have your permission to record the interview in its entirety?</p> <p><b>Distribute the consent form</b></p>	<p><b>Collect the signed consent form</b></p>
<p><b>Researcher:</b> Here is your copy of the questions you will be asked throughout the interview.</p> <p>As mentioned, I may need to ask follow-up questions to gain clarification. Do you have any questions about the interview or the study before we begin?</p>	

**Begin recording the interview and asking interview questions.**

## **Appendix C: Consent Form**

**Research Study Title:** Leading Change: A phenomenological study of collaboration for mission at Marianist universities  
**Principal Investigator:** Jessica González Uhlig  
**Research Institution:** Concordia University  
**Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Audrey Rabas

### **Purpose and what you will be doing:**

The purpose of this interview is to understand and describe the phenomenon of commitment to collaborate between lay leaders and religious members to sustain and nurture organizational mission and identity, as experienced in three Catholic and Marianist universities in the United States

To be in the study, you will participate in an in-depth interviewing process, consisting of one or more interviews, approximately 60 minutes in duration, and at a time and location of your choice. The number of interviews will be determined jointly between you and the researcher, depending on the amount of time you need to satisfactorily express your experiences and insights.

Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. You will be asked to review your interview transcripts, in order to ensure that the text adequately captures your intended meanings. Recordings will be deleted immediately following transcription and member-checking. All other study-related materials will be kept for 3 years from the close of study and then be destroyed.

You will be required to sign this consent form prior to interviewing. You will be asked to fill an anonymous participant details form. You may be asked to respond to follow-up/clarification questions posed by the researcher during the data analysis phase of the research.

### **Risks:**

The researcher does not anticipate any type of minimal risks and/or concerns. However, recollecting one's experiences could be a source of emotional discomfort. You are free to choose the content and degree of your responses to the questions posed by the researcher.

### **Benefits:**

There are no direct or tangible benefits to you. The intangible benefit of participation includes the opportunity and satisfaction of sharing your experiences, expertise, and insights for the benefit of leadership practice, collaborative leadership, and leadership development in Catholic and Marianist higher education.



**Confidentiality:**

This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell us abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety.

**Right to Withdraw:**

Your participation is greatly appreciated, but we acknowledge that the questions we are asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, we will stop asking you questions.

**Contact Information:**

You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions, you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Jessica G. Uhlig at email \_\_\_\_\_ if you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (email \_\_\_\_ or call \_\_\_\_).

**Your Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

_____ Participant Name	_____ Date
_____ Participant Signature	_____ Date
_____ Investigator Name	_____ Date
_____ Investigator Signature	_____ Date

**Investigator:** Jessica González Uhlig  
c/o: Professor Dr. Audrey Rabas  
Concordia University–Portland  
2811 NE Holman Street  
Portland, Oregon 97221

## **Appendix D: Statement of Original Work**

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously- researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

### **Statement of academic integrity.**

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

### **Explanations:**

#### ***What does “fraudulent” mean?***

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

#### ***What is “unauthorized” assistance?***

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

### Statement of Original Work (Continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University–Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*.



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Digital Signature

Jessica González Uhlig

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Name (Typed)

10/3/2019

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Date