



Cordially invites you to attend the

Eleventh Annual
Catholic College and University
Forum for Institutional Research



**The Role of Catholic Higher Education
In Society**



**Monday, April 4, 2005
9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

The Villanova Room
The Connelly Center
Villanova University
Villanova, Pennsylvania



Pre-Conference
Research Symposium
and
Organizational Meeting
**Sunday Afternoon and Evening
April 3, 2005**

For the eleventh consecutive year, we are pleased to host the Catholic College and University Forum for Institutional Research. This year's forum will be the second held under the auspices of the Catholic Higher Education Research Cooperative (CHERC) and is scheduled for:

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9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
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Villanova University
Villanova, PA

Please share this invitation with interested colleagues at your institution and beyond.

Monday's Preliminary Agenda

9:00 Registration, Continental Breakfast and Networking

9:30 Welcome and Opening Remarks.....James F. Trainer, Villanova

9:45 Keynote Address:

The Catholic University - A Contrarian Institution

George Dennis O'Brien

President Emeritus of the University of Rochester and a Past President of Bucknell University, O'Brien is the author of numerous books including *The Idea of a Catholic University* (2002) and *All the Essential Half-Truths about Higher Education* (1998).

11:15 Break

11:30 Research Reports

Representatives from various CHERC member institutions will offer presentations and discuss research that they have been conducting. Potential topics include: Mission Effectiveness, Critical Incident Methodology, Assessment Practices at Catholic Institutions, Social and Civic Engagement, and The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), among others. Additional topics and presentations are welcome. Please share your ideas with us!

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Research Reports (continued) followed by "News from on Campus from Around the Country"

The research report segment begun before lunch will continue followed by an opportunity for attendees to share with their colleagues information on "hot" topics and issues of interest from their campuses and beyond.

2:00 Roundtable Discussions

We will convene a number of roundtable discussions to address "hot topics" impacting institutional researchers and planners at Catholic colleges and universities.

2:45 Closing Remarks and Evaluation

3:00 Adjourn

The Catholic University -- A Contrarian Institution

Noted author, George Dennis O'Brien will deliver the keynote address at this year's Forum. Author of a variety of books including "*The Idea of a Catholic University*," O'Brien will speak on **The Idea of a Catholic University as a Contrarian Institution**.

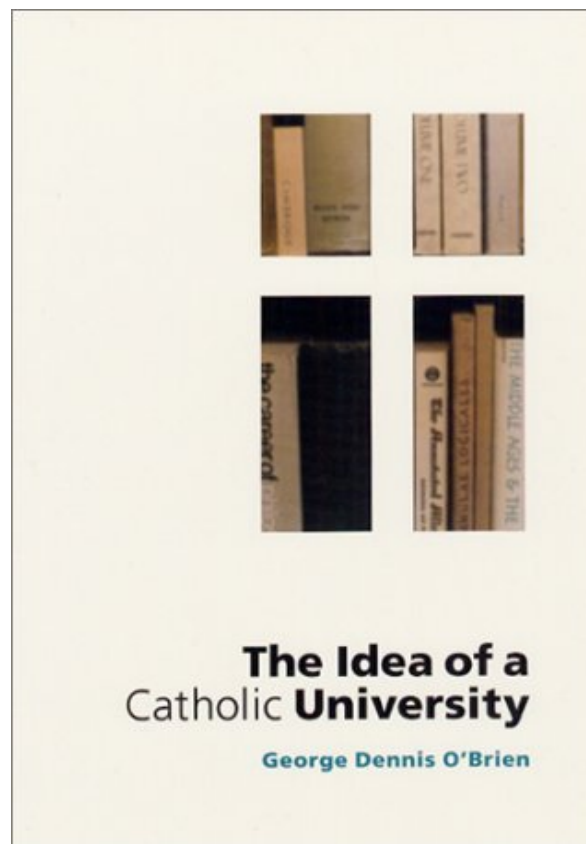
O'Brien notes that the philosophical assumptions of 19th century American colleges embedded in the classical curriculum of Greek, Latin and the Bible were radically different than those that prevail in the contemporary American research oriented universities and colleges. For better and rather for the worse, the 19th century colleges were much closer to the Christian church than their contemporary descendants. The contemporary Catholic college or university is not at all like the 19th century -- largely Protestant -- model, but at its core it is also different than the prevailing 21st century research university model. O'Brien characterizes the Catholic model as "contrarian"; it does not contradict the obvious virtues of the secular research university, it offers a contrary orientation which can accept secular research but encapsulate that effort in a differing and larger vision of the task of higher education.

The marks of a Catholic contrarian view would be as follows: acknowledgment of reality as the radical density of actual existence, the importance of participation as an entrance to actual existence, the belief that actual existence in its historical concreteness is the final road of "truth." The contrasting position of the secular university is as follows: reality is abstract, i.e., knowledge of reality is always about something general, never about some individual existence. Participatory experience is private and outside university scope. Individual existence is too dense, too messy to reveal truth (it is negative to the work of intellect). History is not finally a vehicle opening to any universal "truth."

After all that "metaphysics," we ask, "Is there something practical that might emerge?" Catholic institutions with a few — very few — exceptions with significant financial resources are in a scramble for students. They have to respond to the "customers" and most of the customers are practically oriented: what will get me a good job? This issue can be especially acute for Catholic colleges which continue to serve a disproportionate number of students from lower income households where the issue of a financial pay-off for the cost of private college attendance is acute.

There is nothing at all perverse about directing the course of studies toward "the job." "I'd like to expand the claim in the admissions brochure," O'Brien writes, "to say that St. Swithins directs students to job, career and vocation. The nice thing about this trio of terms is that they may sound the same but are significantly different." Job is directed at first employment. Will my studies get me into the job market? Career is not interested in your first job but in your last job: what do you expect will be the course of your work history: your career? Studies of career are notably lacking in higher education. It would be valuable for business schools not only to study the techniques of accounting but the accounting profession historically and sociologically. What are the career paths for accountants? How many stay with independent auditing firms? How many become company accountants? At the Eastman School of Music, O'Brien recalls, "we were interested not only in training great piccolo players but in giving students an idea of what a career in music entailed. What is the life a professional musician, how are orchestras managed, what should you expect from the American Federation of Musicians, etc."

Finally, the special interest of Catholic institutions should be vocation. It is an area for the metaphysical reasons above that the secular university is less able to address. Vocation goes well beyond job and career. So you got your first job as an accountant or a piccolo player and you made a career out of it. Where were you in the course of the career? Was it a life? It is not at all uncommon for people to come to the end of a career with a sense that they have wasted their life.



The presumed "value" of the career is not a sure guide. "I remember reading the biography of a college teacher of literature who reflected on his career with despair," O'Brien recounts. "No one, neither his students nor his colleagues, finally thought that reading poetry was a deep life task. On the other hand, I was delighted when an insurance salesman regaled me with his life satisfaction in a career which assisted so many people to attain financial security. Pat McPherson, when she was president of Bryn Mawr, used to say that the value of a liberal education — if you really took to it — was that if someone came knocking on the door of your self, there would be someone home. Being at home in job and career is having a vocation. It is the recognition of vocation and fostering that sense which should be the distinguishing mark of Catholic higher education."



A native of Chicago, O'Brien is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate in English of Yale University ('52) and earned the Ph.D. degree in philosophy from the University of Chicago in 1961.

In 1958, he joined the philosophy faculty at Princeton University and in 1961 was named Assistant Dean of the College. Four years later, he joined the faculty of Middlebury College, where he also served successively as Dean of Men, Dean of the College, and Dean of the Faculty.

He became twelfth President of Bucknell University in 1976 serving until 1984. He was appointed the eighth president of the University of Rochester effective July 1, 1984. He retired on July 1, 1994.

His academic honors include a Carnegie Research Fellowship in University teaching, awarded during his studies at Chicago, and an American Council of Learned Societies Fellowship, awarded in 1971. He has been awarded honorary degrees by St. John Fisher, Hobart and William Smith, Middlebury College, Wilkes College, and Siena College.

In addition to *The Idea of a Catholic University*, Dr. O'Brien is the author of *Hegel on Reason in History: A Contemporary Interpretation* (University of Chicago Press, 1975); *God and the New Haven Railway—and Why Neither One is Doing Very Well* (Beacon, 1986); *What to Expect From College* (St. Martin's Press, Fall 1991); and *All the Essential Half-Truths about Higher Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) He is the author of many articles in professional and popular publications on wide-ranging aspects of philosophy, religion, and modern art. He was appointed Vice President for the Commonweal Foundation in March 1994 and is on the Board of LaSalle University in Philadelphia and the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies. In April of 1995 and July 2000 he moderated international seminars in Salzburg on Higher Education Institutions in the 21st Century. He has chaired review and accreditation efforts at many higher education institutions from the U.S. Naval Academy to the American University in Cairo, Yale to the New Bulgarian University in Sofia. In 1996-97 O'Brien was a national Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar.

During his years at Bucknell, O'Brien continued to teach and maintained that practice at Rochester. He retired as President of the University of Rochester on June 30, 1994 and now lives in Middlebury, Vermont, with his wife, Judith. The O'Briens have three daughters.