THE BISHOP JOHN S. CUMMINS INSTITUTE
FOR CATHOLIC THOUGHT, CULTURE AND ACTION

Saint Mary’s College of California

Meeting: Tuesday, March 8, 2011

Present: Bishop John Cummins, Seefurth Chair, Brother Charles Hilken, FSC, Chair, Sally Jamison, Administrative Assistant, Jane Camarillo, Molly Allen, Jose Ruiz, Joe Zepeda, David Gentry-Akin, Carole Swain, Scott Kier, Jeanne DeMatteo, Frances Sweeney, Michael Barram, Marshall Welch

Review of Minutes: In preparing a proposal to present to the committee on ‘Faith and Reason’ courses for Jan Term, there is a need to consider the Core Curriculum revision and address how to connect to Core Curriculum issues and how the proposition fits into new core. Minutes approved with this adjustment.

Finance Report

Discussion of Brothers’ Statement/The Catholic nature of the College

The Brothers’ statement, “How Can the College Continue to Develop Itself as a Catholic Institution of Higher Learning and Contribute to the Catholic Intellectual Tradition?” is well timed in contemporary society given the revival of interest in the transcendent. The dialogue between faith and reason can move forward with confidence today. For an example of young theologians at work, see Paul Crowley, “Tomorrow’s Theologians: A New Generation Imagines the Future,” America, 7 February 2011 (http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=12681).

A decade ago, the College struggled in its discussion of what Ex corde ecclesiae would mean here. Now the Brothers are saying that we need to respond to the implications of the apostolic constitution. Are the Brothers saying that we need to bring Catholic thought into the classroom? Yes, but it goes beyond that. There are more ways than the classroom to communicate Catholic ideas.

The mention of the College staff seems to be just thrown in there. Staff members are not scholars and the statement is pretty much about scholarship.

How long is meant by a generation? Is it twenty years? Forty to fifty years? It probably could be taken as the length of time to turn over an entire faculty.
What is meant by “sensitive” in the statement regarding the discussion of hiring (seventh paragraph)? This is recognition of the impact on current faculty in talk about adding another criterion to searches. Any talk of the value of having educators well versed in the Catholic intellectual tradition (hereafter, CIT) would prompt self-reflection among current members of the community.

Is the Brothers’ statement intended for use by search committees and Human Resources? It can be. The Mission Office has already been working with Human Resources. The College has sought head hunters used for national searches who know something about Catholic institutions and their needs.

Now we look to attract Catholics. But is the real question what candidates know about the CIT?

The sixth paragraph deals with issues that come up in the classroom. Are the same issues embraced outside the classroom? How? We need to consider that the academic setting happens outside the classroom. In this way, there can be an exploration of the kinds of questions brought up in the sixth paragraph, for example, at the V. Monologues.

Is there an intentional exclusion of staff? No. The last paragraph addresses the lived experience on campus.

How does the statement fit with or complement the conversation over Association? The Association circular is cast worldwide and so the experience it addresses is larger than our own. Even so, the two ideas, the CIT and Association, are complementary. The discussion about the relationship between Lasallian and Catholic is worth having. Much progress could be made in understanding the College’s mission statement as a whole in pursuing this discussion.

The Catholic presence on campus would be found and built up best by looking for personal interest more than for personal confession. Divisive litmus tests should be avoided, for example, over the question of abortion.

There has been a popular mindset on campus that holds, “Who cares about Catholic? We’re all Lasallian.” Recall the impact of Brother John Johnston’s talk in which he said there is no separation between the two realities, Catholic and Lasallian, at a Lasallian institution.

The best answer is that it’s both/and when we consider the importance of Catholic and Lasallian (and Liberal Arts). What is the floor of not being a secular institution? It is our emphasis on human development.
Catholic thought proceeds by the analogical principle, which holds faith and reason at the same time.

The Brothers’ statement is prophetic, eloquent, and deeply comforting. We also want to be deeply welcoming. We build up the number of Catholics in order to insure the conversation will always happen. But we can do this without making divisions. The best way forward is to hire for the CIT in an overt rather than covert way.

In ten years, the youngest Brother on the faculty will be retirement age. What are we doing now to have people conversant in the CIT in the future?

In moving forward we have to be alert to who owns the tradition. It is best if being Catholic is understood universally and is not owned by one or another faction within the Church. Recall the evocation of James Joyce last month when describing Catholics, “Here comes everybody.”

There is a pool of Catholic scholars. We can ask though about where they will be coming from, especially in light of the Steinfels essay last month. The department of Theology and Religious Studies is always on the lookout for Catholic scholars. Sometimes the members have had to make hard choices considering criteria of excellence in other areas.

Theology and Religious Studies may be the only department at present that asks these questions. All departments can look for professors trained in the CIT.

Are we looking for Catholics or educators trained in the CIT? We are looking for both. There is merit to having both kinds of educators. Catholics can mentor Catholic students. In the same way that we hire for diversity in order to serve better a diverse student body, we need to hire Catholics in order to serve a student body that is almost half Catholic. Professors and educators knowledgeable about the CIT, on the other hand, bring a needed expertise to a Catholic faculty and staff.

It is harder to look for Catholics. Knowledge of and interest in the CIT is easier to see, especially when reading curricula vitae. But even there it is possible to miss a qualified candidate. Sometimes it is only in the personal interview that interests emerge.

The proposal to read curricula vitae is not meant to be an exclusive means, but only one practical tool and a way through the impasse of not being able to accurately assess what a Catholic hire is.
*Ex corde ecclesiae* is important for what is happening here. It was the stimulus for Catholic higher education to want to do something to insure that Catholic colleges and universities will exist in the future. The apostolic constitution also gave support to the place of the dialogue with the world in Catholic higher education.

Each discipline (in the arts, sciences, and business) has its own merits in the CIT. There aren’t easy rules for the application of the CIT to outside questions. Prudence is the main guideline.

**Chair’s Report**  May issue of *Veritas* will include Archbishop Marchetto’s article “Higher Education in a Global Context” and the Brothers’ Statement.

**New Business**

Outline of the 150th Celebration given by Carole Swain.

Further discussion of description and role of the Montini Fellow. Encouraged to read Shawn Copeland’s materials. It was suggested that Father James Heft would be a better choice for the 150th Celebration Montini Fellow. It was also mentioned that the membership look outside of the religious nominations when choosing a Montini Fellow. A decision is to be made at the May meeting.

The April 12th Cummins Institute meeting will be an inservice with Carole Swain and a discussion of Circular 461.