



June 2023

Approved by the CCMA Executive Board

Introduction & Context

The Catholic Campus Ministry Association exists to “be the voice and promote the mission of the Church among its students in higher education by empowering campus ministers through formation, networking and resources.” Since its inception in 1969, its members have maintained a core belief in the purpose of an organization like CCMA with a sense that *Catholic campus ministry, as a ministry of the Church, benefits greatly when professionals join together in the form of a formal association*. As a result, more students can be reached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and welcomed into the life of the Church.

Nearing the completion of its prior strategic plan (expiring June 30, 2023), the Association now looks to build on that plan and take its next big leap into the future. The past three years have been challenging as colleges and universities have navigated the coronavirus pandemic. Some have emerged stronger, having refocused on what Pope Francis often calls *accompaniment*, the art of walking with students in order to help them grow closer to Christ. Others continue to adjust to the known and unknown effects of the pandemic on students, faculty and staff within the academy.

Pope Francis wrote to young people in *Christus Vivit* (2019), “No matter how much you live the experience of these years of your youth, you will never know their deepest and fullest meaning unless you encounter each day your best friend, the friend who is Jesus.” (150)

This is the work of Catholic campus ministry, within the context of higher education, to invite young adults into an intimate, personal relationship with Christ and to help students enjoy the richness of the Catholic Church. This knowledge of Christ changes everything and has the potential to animate all aspects of the college years and beyond, propelling students into lifelong missionary discipleship. “The missionary disciple has first of all a center, a point of reference, which is the person of Jesus,” said Pope Francis (2018).

Catholic campus ministry does not solely exist for the sake of students. It influences all areas of the academy, enabling the Church to speak into areas of learning, discourse and the holistic preparation for life as an adult member of the Church. As the US Bishops stated in *Empowered by the Spirit: Campus Ministry Faces the Future* (1985), “We are convinced that this ministry is vitally important for the future of Church and society.”

Several initiatives inform this new plan

- The continuing exodus of young people from the Church. Far too many young people drift away from the Church between the ages of 13-23. 79% of former Catholics leave the Church before age 23 (Pew).

- Pope Francis' continued emphasis on *synodality*. The Holy Father continues to invite the Church to learn from those who are not yet engaged in the life of the Church. There is “a great need to listen to and hear one another,” said Pope Francis. (2022)
- The 40th anniversary of Empowered by the Spirit. 2025 marks the 40th anniversary of the US Bishops' pastoral letter on campus ministry.
- The Eucharistic Revival. Launched in part to help the faithful rekindle a eucharistic way of life, the Revival has the potential to impact campus ministry in myriad ways.

These initiatives invite CCMA to ask, “What is the Holy Spirit saying to us *in the here and now?*” In order to answer this question, we invited broad participation from our members and various stakeholders around the nation.

Generous feedback taken into consideration

CCMA members and interested stakeholders were consulted in the strategic planning process. A survey from November, 2022 indicated the following:

- Most members of CCMA take advantage of multiple professional development opportunities throughout a given academic year and appreciate the variety of options available to them.
- CCMA plays a vital role in the Church's work within higher education.
- CCMA's ability to connect professionals in meaningful ways, across demographics, geography and campus types.

Through a prayerful discernment of this feedback from CCMA members and various stakeholders from around the country, the CCMA Executive Board has articulated three pillars for its next strategic plan, each accompanied by a guiding question:

- **Provide Transformative Programs:** in which ways can CCMA create innovative programs that inform each stage of the lifecycle of a campus minister?
- **Champion the Cause of Catholic Campus Ministry:** in which ways can CCMA help the Church to expand to more campuses in the U.S.?
- **Build a Secure Financial Foundation:** in which ways can CCMA build a foundation that ensures that the Association can operate and expand in the future?

Provide Transformative Programs

CCMA has always been known for its thoughtfully designed programs that foster meaningful connections between members. From its annual conference (CALLED) to weekly sessions (Office

Hours), CCMA now desires to look beyond “one-off” programs and focuses on high-impact opportunities for growth.

1. **Priestly formation.** Utilizing priestly formation resources from collaborating organizations, new emphasis will be given to ordained chaplains.
 - a. Offer a CALLED Priest Wraparound experience
 - b. Establish priest mentors for those priests who participate in LAUNCH
2. **Improved LAUNCH program.** Our 1-5th year training initiative, LAUNCH introduces best practices for those beginning their career in campus ministry.
 - a. Establish a mentor component for all participants in LAUNCH (lay and ordained)
 - b. Formalize the connection between LAUNCH and Fall Affinity Groups
3. **7 Skills Initiative.** Based on data gathered in 2022 from campus ministers and chaplains, the 7 Skills Initiative provides a formula and abbreviated curriculum for effective campus ministry.
 - a. Publish three 7 Skills booklets
 - b. Utilize CALLED as an opportunity to showcase the 7 Skills
 - c. Clarify the synergy between the 7 Skills and the National Standards for Catholic Campus Ministry
4. **Annual Salary Guide.** Each Fall, CCMA publishes a salary and benefits guide which is a trusted resource for hiring agents and those seeking employment.
 - a. Improve survey data to 20% of invited respondents
 - b. Track geographical data to salary
5. **Establish a Fellows Cohort.** A formal program would enhance member communication and afford participating members with a supervised experience of professional, collaborative learning.
 - a. Establish a Newman Fellows Program, inviting 10 individuals for the initial cohort

Champion the Cause of Catholic Campus Ministry

As of 2017 ([Source](#)), Catholic campus ministry (i.e. staffing, liturgical offerings, ecclesial presence) only existed on roughly 25% of the nation’s four year campuses. Now is the time for CCMA to harness the power of its network in order to help the Church expand to more campuses.

1. **Collaboration with national missionary organizations.** The largest potential source for future campus ministers exists within the various national missionary organizations currently serving on over 200 campuses in the U.S.
 - a. Support the campus ministry tracks at national missionary conferences
 - b. Offer a presence at the national exit retreats for campus missionaries

2. **Continued participation in working groups sponsored by the USCCB.** Catholic campus ministry benefits from a diverse workforce and the students they serve.
 - a. Host toolkits on the CCMA website that assist campus ministers related to issues of diversity and race
3. **Rewrite of *Empowered by the Spirit: Campus Ministry Faces the Future*.** The US Bishops' seminal document on campus ministry celebrates its 40th year in 2025.
 - a. Write an addendum to *Empowered by the Spirit*
 - b. Host a symposium in order to mark the anniversary of *Empowered by the Spirit*
 - c. Utilize the new edition of *Empowered by the Spirit* in order to gain national attention for Catholic campus ministry

Building a Secure Financial Foundation

In order to provide transformative programs and champion the cause of Catholic campus ministry, CCMA will need a stronger financial foundation. The association has struggled to establish a sustainable fundraising strategy even though its programs have grown and produced reliable sources of revenue.

1. **High school membership.** Continue to offer high school chaplains and campus ministers membership in CCMA such that 25% of CCMA's membership is made up of high school members.
 - a. Secure membership from 120 high school chaplains and campus ministers
 - b. Create a high school "track" at both LAUNCH and CALLED
2. **Affiliate membership.** In 2022, CCMA re-established an organizational membership (Affiliates) for Catholic apostolates and organizations that align with the mission of the Association.
 - a. Double the number of Affiliates (to 45)
 - b. Provide an annual impact webinar in order to address issues related to Catholic apostolates
3. **Director Circle 2.0.** In 2015, CCMA successfully raised capital in order to bolster the Association and recruit new staff. Director Circle 2.0 would help CCMA take the next step, ensuring revenue as a complement to its annual fundraising efforts.
 - a. Raise substantial funds from mission-aligned foundations and individuals
 - b. Articulate an investment policy
4. **Grants.** CCMA desires to expand its ability to secure grants in order to address critical pastoral issues facing the Church within higher education.
 - a. Formalize the grant application process

5. **Exploration of partnerships.** CCMA will continue to explore strategic partnerships to the degree that they support the financial wellbeing of the Association.

Conclusion

This strategic plan is the result of much prayer, attention to data and discussion. As with any strategic plan, it represents a flexible map for the future all within the context of evangelization. To be faithful to the work of Catholic campus ministry is to surrender to God's hopes for those in college and those that serve them.

The ambitious nature of this plan will require focus, discipline and ecclesial determination. The plan's success will require the active participation of all of CCMA's members.

It will not be easy to accomplish but such is the invitation before us- to rise to the challenge. Pope Francis stated in *Evangelii Gaudium*, "*Challenges exist to be overcome! Let us be realists, but without losing our joy, our boldness and our hope-filled commitment. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary vigour!*"

The response that CCMA proposes is evident in the plan. With God's grace and our humble cooperation, it will come to fruition.