

Pathways grant leads to first event for partnering schools aiming to grow Hispanic/Latiné Catholic leaders

By LISA KERN

Representatives from 18 Catholic theological schools across the United States gathered April 30 through May 3, 2023, at Boston College for the first partners' organizational meeting of Haciendo Caminos: Theological Education for New Generations of US Latino/a Catholics. This endeavor is the result of a Phase 3 grant awarded by Lilly Endowment Inc., as part of its Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative, to support a partnership between the University of Notre Dame and Boston College in growing the next generation of Hispanic Catholic pastoral leaders in the United States.

The goals of the project are (1) to reduce barriers and increase support for graduate theological education for Hispanic/Latiné Catholics born or raised in the US, (2) to increase the knowledge of and interest in ministerial professions among this population, and (3) to create a consortium of Catholic higher education institutions forming

pastoral leaders at the graduate level in collaboration with local ecclesial organizations. Through the grant, each of the participating schools have received funds to strengthen and develop networks within the Hispanic/Latiné community.

In addition, schools are currently applying for scholarship funds to be distributed to US born or raised Hispanic/Latiné students. The scholarship program will include a vocations summit to recruit potential students and a summer symposium designed to bring together the scholarship recipients—*Haciendo Caminos* fellows—with Hispanic/Latiné scholars and leaders.

The other institutions working with the University of Notre Dame and Boston College on the *Haciendo Caminos* initiative include: Aquinas Institute of Theology, Barry University, Catholic Theological Union, Catholic University of America, Fordham University, Franciscan School of Theology (San Diego, CA), Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University, Loyola Marymount University, Loyola University Chicago, Loyola University



New Orleans, Mexican American Catholic College, Mount St. Mary's University, Oblate School of Theology, Santa Clara University, St. John's Seminary (Camarillo, CA), and University of the Incarnate Word.

"*Haciendo Caminos* is bringing together some of the leading minds in US Latino/a Catholic ministry and education for collaboration, and we were able to see fruits of that mutual learning right away at our gathering. Partners left with new ideas, insights, and hopes, all born of the dialogue and brainstorming that happened together—en conjunto," said Juan Miguel Álvarez, an MDiv student at the University of Notre Dame and the newly hired project director.

The project leaders—Tim Matovina, professor and chair of Notre Dame's Department of Theology, and Hosffman Ospino, associate professor of Hispanic ministry and religious education and chair of the Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry Department at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry—facilitated the recent event.

"The present and future of Catholicism in this country will largely depend on how we engage and support young Latinas and Latinos in their faith journeys," said Matovina. "Their leadership is a gift to all of us."

"We are uniting efforts and forming a groundbreaking partnership that has the potential to redefine how we think about theological and ministerial formation of

Hispanic Catholic leaders. This is a win-win for everyone," said Ospino.

In addition to testimonies from current Hispanic/Latiné students about their journeys into graduate theological education, the event's agenda included collaborating and networking, fellowship, Mass, and the following presentations:

- *Building a Culture of Sustainability* led by Amanda Retartha (senior director of foundation relations, University of Notre Dame), Carlos de la Rosa (program officer, Porticus North America), and Tito Madrazo (Program Director, Lilly Endowment Inc.)
- *Vocation Summit and Summer Symposium Overview* led by Matovina, Ospino, and Álvarez
- *Ongoing Assessment: Overview of a Research Study* led by Ospino, with a brief presentation by Andrea Blanco (program manager, Latino Pastoral Leaders Initiative, Leadership Roundtable)

"We do not currently have another gathering planned for all leaders from the 18 partner institutions, but the enthusiasm from the Boston gathering was so palpable that many of us expressed a desire to do it again in the future, so I would not rule it out," said Álvarez. "Our work together is just beginning."



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