



From Dream to Reality

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Written for the 20th Anniversary of the Catholic Education Foundation in 2007

The Catholic Education Foundation (CEF), began with a dare. In 1986, Cardinal (then Archbishop) Roger Mahony, mindful of the great tradition of Catholic schools as well as the escalating costs which were making it increasingly difficult for parents to continue to send their children there, challenged a group of Los Angeles business leaders: "Let's do something significant. Let's not get pessimistic." The response was the Catholic Education Foundation.

During the following year, members of the city's business and philanthropic leadership met regularly with the Cardinal to translate this vision into reality. Ronald Boeddeker, William Close, Richard Ferry, William Huston, Kathleen McCarthy, Peter Mullin and Richard Riordan are among those still active in the Foundation.

The purpose of the new Foundation was threefold: to maintain that the quality education offered by Catholic schools continued, to make them as affordable as possible, and to particularly ensure that the poor and disadvantaged were included, regardless of religious affiliation. Richard Riordan served as the Foundation's first president.

The Board considered tuition assistance the first priority, so the Tuition Awards Program (TAP) launched in the 1988-89 school year. Awards would be distributed to students in the five Pastoral Regions according to financial need, satisfactory academic performance and good personal character. The Foundation received 740 applications the first year. Unfortunately this number exceeded the \$250,000 allocated. Trustee Richard Riordan wrote a check for an additional \$250,000 so that the financial needs of all the applicants could be met with a total distribution of \$500,000.

Eighteen months later, the Foundation launched its fundraising campaign. By focusing the attention of prospective donors on the advantages of a Catholic education, particularly for the poor and disadvantaged children living in the inner-city areas of the Archdiocese, the Board set forth to raise an endowment fund. Those initial endowment funds have grown to almost \$140 million today!

Throughout its 20 year history, TAP has continued to be the cornerstone of the CEF's efforts to offer tuition assistance to financially deserving students attending Archdiocesan schools. The Foundation's initial allocation of \$500,000 in 1988 for 740 students has increased to \$8.3 million for the 2007-2008 school year and the number of students throughout the Archdiocese receiving assistance has grown to over 7,000. Over 60 percent of all tuition awards are made to children attending the poorest schools that are subsidized by the Archdiocese.

The Foundation's tuitions awards have grown, but so has the tuition for a Catholic education. In 1987, the average tuition for parish elementary schools was \$847 and \$1399 for Archdiocesan high schools. Today the parent(s) of a child attending a parish elementary school located in the inner-city pays an average of \$2,300 and an inner-city high school student pays \$4,800 in tuition. As a result, the Foundation's elementary school tuition award of \$1,000 and a high school award of \$2,000 cover only about 30 percent of the tuition bill. The balance of tuition is paid by parents, parishes, school fundraisers and other resources.

The number of families eligible for tuition assistance has also grown. From the beginning, the CEF stipulated that to be eligible for a tuition award recipients must come from families living at or below the income guidelines of the Federal Free Lunch Program. Today, based on those guidelines, there are over 25,000 children in the three-county Archdiocese that qualify for tuition awards.

Over the past 20 years, as a result of the vision of Cardinal Roger Mahony, the leadership of the Board of Trustees, the dedication of countless volunteers and the generosity of individuals, foundations and corporation, the Catholic Education Foundation has provided over \$73 million in tuition assistance. This, in turn, means donors have enabled 80,100 students to benefit from the quality academic education and nurturing high moral standards of a Catholic school. However, each year there are still students who do not receive assistance.

In conjunction with the 20th Anniversary of the Foundation in 2007, two significant opportunities were launched in order to meet the needs of the over 25,000 additional students who qualify for assistance each year. First to increase endowment, a Planned Giving Committee of the Board was organized in 2005 and the Legacy Society was established under the chairmanship of Thomas E. Larkin, Jr. in September 2006. At that time, the "20 for 20" campaign was launched with a goal of raising \$20 million in planned gifts to mark the 20th Anniversary of the Foundation. Donors who make a planned gift are included in the CEF Legacy Society.

Second, in order to broaden the Foundation's donor base from which to raise these funds, the Board sought to gain a better understanding of the long-term impact of a Catholic school education on the students and families served. In partnership with Loyola Marymount University, the Foundation began a study of CEF alumni across a broad spectrum of factors including test scores, attrition, graduation rates, etc. The first phase of the study will begin to answer the question: "Is a Catholic education really an advantage for life?"

The Catholic Education Foundation is ready to serve the future generations of parents throughout the Archdiocese of Los Angeles who want their children to have a Catholic school education, but whose budgets do not stretch far enough to pay the full tuition. The Foundation's funding sources are heavily reliant on the generosity of numerous donors who continue to support the mission of the Foundation with grants, pledges, cash gifts, planned gifts and volunteering their time.