

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Report of the University Commission on Gonzaga's Response to the Catholic Sexual Abuse Crisis

Gonzaga University President Thayne McCulloh appointed a University Commission on Gonzaga's Response to the Catholic Sexual Abuse Crisis in April 2019. The Commission's charge was to identify, discuss, and make recommendations to the president regarding a set of formal actions the University should undertake in light of the Catholic sexual abuse crisis and Gonzaga's institutional experience of it. This work is a manifestation of Gonzaga's Jesuit, Catholic, and humanistic mission and embodies the second Universal Apostolic Preference of the Society of Jesus: "To walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice."

The 12-member Commission, co-chaired by Dr. Megan K. McCabe and Dr. Michelle Wheatley, met 14 times over 13 months. Commission members brought a broad range of experience, including litigation on both sides of clergy sexual abuse cases, truth and reconciliation work, tribal relations, childhood trauma, healing, moral theology, and more, including student, staff, faculty and administrative perspectives.

The Commission's work followed media reports that renewed public awareness and concern about abuse within the Catholic Church and fell into three primary phases: Establishing Context, Engaging Community, and Forming Recommendations.

From the beginning, members realized the Commission's work could not be accomplished without listening to the experience, wisdom and aspirations of the University community. Co-chairs and members made presentations to various campus audiences as well as organized small group sessions. All interested persons were invited to provide feedback and input on a dedicated website: www.gonzaga.edu/commission.

Throughout its work, Commission members also shared their own anger and grief over the deep harms of sexual abuse and its cover-up, especially the abuse of children. While some members of the University community assumed the Commission would be an investigative body, the Commission was not charged with an investigative task. They were commissioned by the President to identify, discuss and make recommendations for concrete actions the University, as a learning body, should take in response to sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. The group recognized the complexity of their charge and the need for a thoughtful process. They incorporated habits of reflecting together, and each meeting began with a prayer and an acknowledgement that Gonzaga University resides on unceded homelands of the Spokane Tribe.

Summary of Recommendations

The Commission grouped its recommendations in five main areas: **Academics, Memorials and Liturgies, Mission Identity, Policy and Procedure and Tribal Relations**. The recommendations respond directly to Gonzaga's experience of the sexual abuse crisis as well as to the intersection and related concerns that arose in the Commission's conversations and in the wider Gonzaga community.

Specific recommendations include:

- A memorial honoring all affected by Catholic sexual abuse, to include those abused by Jesuits sent to live on safety plans at Cardinal Bea House
- More formal protocols between the University and the Society of Jesus regarding assignment of Jesuits to Gonzaga
- Greater support for Indigenous and Native students at Gonzaga, which includes funding scholarships and support for students, and fostering open communication
- Funding for faculty research and scholarly activities on this topic

To ensure the successful implementation of approved recommendations, as well as the continuity of the work and discernment reflected in this report, President McCulloh endorsed the Commission's recommendation to create a steering committee to oversee the progress and accountability of specific working groups and to ensure the Gonzaga community receives regular updates. He asked Dr. McCabe and Dr. Wheatley to serve as the steering committee's co-chairs. In a final meeting, Commission members unanimously approved the continuity of leadership.