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**BOARD OF TRUSTEES TO CONSIDER AMENDING GOVERNING DOCUMENTS
TO INCREASE POOL OF CANDIDATES FOR PRESIDENT**

DAYTON, Ohio — The University of Dayton's board of trustees this week will review changes to the University's governing documents that would allow a lay person to serve as president, though preference would still be given to a member of the Society of Mary. A formal vote is expected in January.

Though a historic step for the University of Dayton, it's not a new direction for the nation's Catholic colleges and universities. Almost half — 102 of 223 institutions — are currently led by presidents who don't belong to the founding religious order, according to Ted Witt, information specialist for the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities.

The University of Dayton was founded in 1850 by the Society of Mary — a Roman Catholic order known as the Marianists. They include about 1,600 brothers and priests and a companion order of about 400 sisters in 30 countries, including 45 in various roles on UD's campus. The Marianists operate more than 100 schools, primarily high schools, and two other universities — St. Mary's University in San Antonio and Chaminade University of Honolulu, whose president is a lay woman. UD ranks among the 10 largest Catholic universities in the nation.

UD officials say the move to increase the pool of candidates for president is characteristic of the University's religious order, which values shared leadership and depends upon a largely lay faculty and staff to preserve the University's Catholic, Marianist character. Future presidents would be Catholic but not necessarily belong to the religious order.

"At the University of Dayton, religious and lay people have always worked side by side with no distinction of rank," said the Rev. Eugene Contadino, S.M., who, as rector, works to strengthen the Marianist character of campus and sits on the board of trustees. "A strong sense of community, collaboration and shared leadership permeates this campus. What we're really doing is positioning ourselves to face the future and shape it — with the best possible candidates in higher education for the president's position."

Brother Raymond L. Fitz, S.M., who has served as president of his alma mater since 1979, shared news of the proposal from the Cincinnati Province of the Society of Mary in a letter to faculty and staff this week. His current term ends in 2001.

The University of Dayton has undergone two major governance changes in its history.

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From 1850 to 1952, all of its assets were part of the Cincinnati Province of the Society of Mary. In 1952 UD was established as a separate corporation, but only Marianists served on the board of trustees. In 1970, the members of the corporation — largely Marianists — delegated governing control to a mostly lay board of trustees. The Marianist provincial reserved powers over selling of property, making amendments to governing documents and nominating and removing trustees. Today, the 33-member board includes seven Marianists, not including Fitz, who is an ex-officio member. According to the constitution, at least 20 percent of the board must be members of the Society of Mary.

Brother Joseph H. Kamis, S.M., provincial and a member of the board of trustees, said the Marianists are renewing their commitment to sponsoring the University of Dayton. “The Society of Mary is committed to maintaining the Catholic and Marianist identity of the University and will support this institution financially and with the qualified personnel available for many years to come,” he said.

The Cincinnati Province of the Society of Mary contributes about \$1 million per year to the University of Dayton — about half through salaries earned by Marianists, who have taken vows of poverty. At its peak, about 60 Marianists worked in various capacities on campus in the 1960s, according to provincial records.

Kamis said the amendments to UD’s governing documents will serve to “bring UD into the 21st century by further fostering collaboration with our lay partners.”

It’s a partnership that has impressed the University’s accrediting agency. When the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools this year reaccredited UD, the evaluation team noted UD’s “caring, personalized environment, inspired by the Marianist tradition” as a strength and observed that the Marianist mission, which emphasizes a sense of community, service to society and education of the whole person, has “remained constant” since the University’s founding.

That’s why Contadino said he looks to the future with faith. “We’re managing change, as opposed to change managing us,” he observed. “The pool of vowed religious keeps getting smaller — that’s the reality in Catholic education. In elementary and secondary schools, once staffed almost solely with religious, lay people have responded to the need. It was a natural evolution. The same is happening in Catholic higher education. At the University of Dayton, we have worked hard to maintain our mission and our identity. This is just a new level of collaboration between the Marianists and the other members of our faculty and staff.”