

April 2014

A Historic Encounter: Fr. Adolfo Nicolas Meets Higher Education Presidents and Board Chairs

Editorial Board

Follow this and additional works at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations>

Recommended Citation

Editorial Board (2014) "A Historic Encounter: Fr. Adolfo Nicolas Meets Higher Education Presidents and Board Chairs,"
Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education: Vol. 45, Article 12.
Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations/vol45/iss1/12>

A Historic Encounter

Fr. Adolfo Nicolás Meets Higher Education Presidents and Board Chairs



Fr. Nicolás with Fr. Michael Garanzini, S.J., president of Loyola University Chicago. Photo courtesy of the AJCU.

An extraordinary meeting took place at Loyola University Chicago last October 11, when Father General Adolfo Nicolás met with the presidents and the board chairs of the 28 Jesuit institutions of higher education in the United States. Present too were the major superiors of the nine U.S. Jesuit provinces and other leaders. The meeting was without precedent, and it should have serious implications for these schools.

In his address to the meeting, Father Nicolás praised the educators for their accomplishments, thanked them for their service, and challenged them to shape a worthy future for their schools. He asked

what it means to be an American, Catholic, and Jesuit institution of higher education? This question has been around for decades since the religious communities stopped owning and fully controlling these schools, but discussions were often casual or anguished and answers tentative. Father Nicolás now brings new energy, determination, and urgency to these issues and in so doing looks forward with optimism. It is up to the leaders who heard him to push forward, deciding from among competing values and divergent directions, choosing a future rather than just letting it happen.

An Exciting Moment for Jesuit Higher Education: A Board Chair Responds

By Kathleen Aikenhead

It was a privilege for me, as chair of the board of trustees of Loyola Marymount University, to attend the AJCU meeting in Chicago with Fr. Adolfo Nicolás. I had previously met with him and others in Rome, where I had learned what a humble, holy, and astute man he is ... and that he listens intently! His interest in hearing and learning more from board chairs led to the Chicago meeting.

Two points impressed

me about Father Nicolás's vision of how leaders engage in decision-making.

First, as most of us have experienced, presidents and boards of trustees face tough decisions on a regular basis. Father Nicolás emphasized that their decision making must come from shared values within each campus community. His vision for involving the community in decision making, rather than having a single person decide tough issues, is his

first prerequisite for leaders who make good decisions. If these decision makers and their communities do not share the same values then they cannot achieve the same objectives. This is where universities sometimes have difficulties.

Father Nicolás noted that there are many understandings within individual colleges and universities, and



the broader culture as well, of what it means to be Catholic and Jesuit. Often those holding varying understandings are at odds and view others with suspicion. This makes it harder for leaders to reach decisions from a place of shared values. It is the role of the board to assist the presidents in creating a shared communal vision around our Ignatian principles. At LMU, we just announced a Campus Conversations on our Catholic Identity (CCCI) committee to help integrate the various understandings