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Higher Education Holistic Impact Report 3.0

Commissioned by St. Mary's University

Conducted by YouGov

Special Thanks to the Marianist Trust

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Purpose of the Study

Exploring the Broader Impact of a Catholic Education

The Holistic Impact Report (HIR) is an ongoing national research program examining the long-term outcomes of Catholic higher education. Through a continuing series of nationally representative studies conducted in partnership with YouGov, the HIR compares graduates of Catholic colleges and universities with graduates of secular institutions across a broad range of educational, professional and personal outcomes.

Rather than focusing only on career success, the study explores how higher education shapes meaning and purpose, ethical decision-making, community engagement, work and vocation, and other dimensions of a flourishing life. Through the studies and related research, the HIR provides one of the most comprehensive portraits of the distinctive impact of Catholic higher education in the United States.

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HIR 3.0

Key Findings Summary

Graduates of Catholic colleges and universities report more meaningful lives, greater community engagement, and stronger commitments to ethical principles. They identify a range of important influences, including professors, campus community, and the core curriculum, that shape their lives after graduation.

They also report a stronger sense of vocation in their work, including viewing their career as a meaningful calling, aligning their work with their core values, and understanding how their work serves others. In addition, they report greater engagement with, support for, and preparedness for artificial intelligence, while achieving similar or better economic outcomes.

HIR 3.0

Meaningful Life, Community Engagement, and Ethical Decision Making

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Life is close to ideal:

+7%

more graduates of Catholic colleges agree their life is close to ideal (65% vs. 58%).

The conditions of my life are excellent:

+6%

more likely to agree than grads of secular schools (70% vs. 64%).

If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing:

+7%

more likely to agree they would change almost nothing than graduates of secular schools (50% vs. 43%).

My life has a clear sense of direction:

+5%

more likely to say it's true that their life has a clear sense of direction (74% vs. 69%).

Satisfied with Life:

+5%

more agree that they are satisfied with their lives (77% vs. 72%).

Sense of Belonging:

+13%

more indicated strong sense of belonging on campus (49% vs. 36%).

Volunteered in the last six months:

+7%

more likely to have volunteered in the last 6 months (49% vs. 42%).

Morality in decision making:

+18%

more likely to say the various aspects of morality surveyed are 'extremely relevant' in decision-making.

HIR: Three-Year Averages

Meaningful Life, Community Engagement, and Ethical Decision Making

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The conditions of my life are excellent:

+6%

more likely to agree than graduates of secular colleges.

If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing:

+6%

more likely to agree they would change almost nothing about their lives.

My life has a clear sense of direction:

+5%

more likely to say it's true that their life has a clear sense of direction

Satisfied with Life

+4%

more agree that they are satisfied with their lives

Sense of Belonging

+13%

more indicated strong sense of belonging on campus

Volunteered in the last six months:

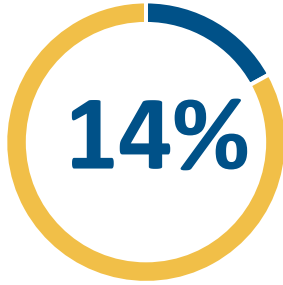
+8%

more likely to have volunteered in the last 6 months

Morality in decision making:

+19%

more likely to say the various aspects of morality surveyed are 'extremely relevant' in decision-making.



Professors

14% more graduates of Catholic colleges say professors are "important" or "very important" (58% vs. 44%)



Campus Culture & Community

Graduates of Catholic colleges are 13% more likely to say that the campus culture/community is "important" or "very important" (48% vs. 35%)



Core Curriculum

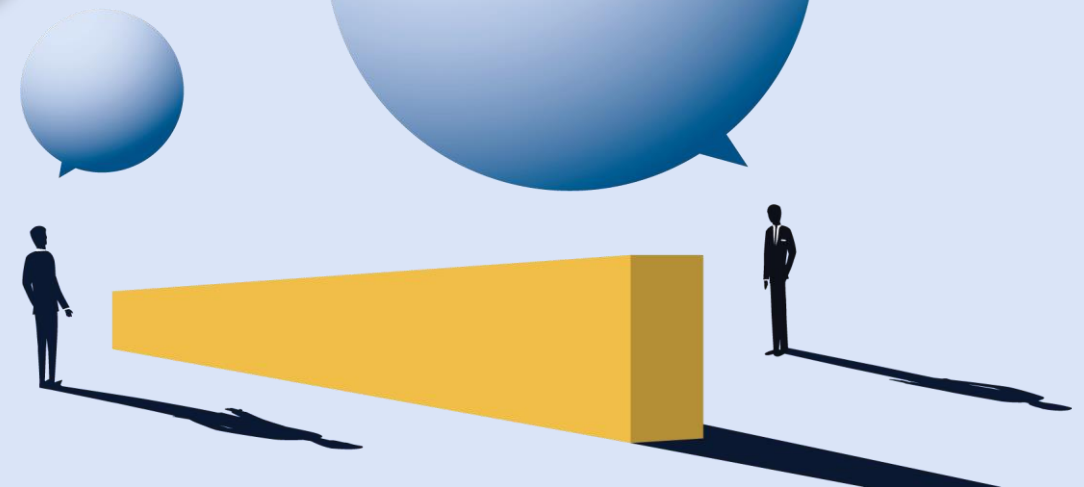
12% more graduates of Catholic colleges say the core curriculum is "important" or "very important" (54% vs. 42%)



Interpretation:

These findings begin to help us understand where graduates locate the most influential elements of their college experience

Important Elements of Education



HIR 3.0: Findings on Work and AI

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I view my career as a
meaningful calling:

+9%

More graduates of Catholic
colleges view their career as a
meaningful calling
(75% vs. 66%).

Understand my work as
serving others:

+15%

more understood how their work
served others
(71% vs. 56%).

My work is aligned
with my values:

+9%

more that their work is
aligned with their values
(79% vs. 70%).

My university helped me
discover my purpose:

+13%

more that their college or
university helped them discover
their purpose
(63% vs. 50%).

Use AI at least once a
day:

+8%

more indicate that they use AI
at least once a day
(44% vs. 36%)

Feel extremely prepared to
use AI:

+5%

more agree that they feel
"extremely prepared" to use AI
(8% vs. 3%).

Support the use of AI:

+12%

more support the use of AI
(48% vs. 36%)

AI has a significant
positive impact:

+6%

More believe AI will have a
significantly positive impact
(36% vs. 28%)

Findings on Work and AI: Two-Year Averages

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more that their college or
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their purpose

Use AI at least once a
day:

+9%

more use AI at least once a day

Feel extremely prepared to
use AI:

+4%

more that they feel "extremely
prepared" to use AI.

Support the use of AI:

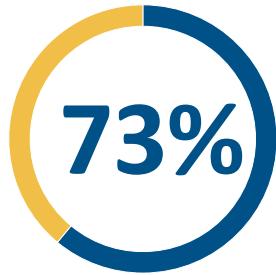
+9%

more support the use of AI

AI has a significant
positive impact:

+6%

More believe AI will have a
significantly positive impact



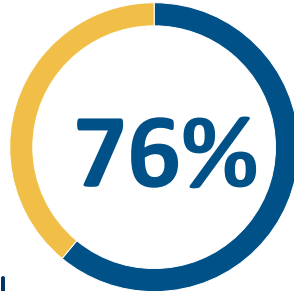
Employed

73% of graduates of Catholic colleges report being employed full or part-time, compared to 67% of graduates of secular colleges.



Income >\$100,000

Graduates of Catholic colleges are 11% more likely to report family income over \$100k compared to graduates of secular colleges (52% v. 47%).



Home Ownership

76% of graduates of Catholic colleges report homeownership, rates comparable to graduates of secular colleges.



Interpretation:

These outcomes on meaningful life and work do not come at the expense of economic outcomes.

ECONOMIC OUTCOMES





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Universal Impact

These findings are observed across demographics, ideologies, political affiliation and location.



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After three studies, we are seeing a remarkably consistent picture of what Catholic higher education contributes to graduates' lives. They produce graduates with meaningful lives and work, who engage their community, and are committed to ethical principles. None of this comes at the cost of their economic outcomes. Graduates of Catholic colleges get jobs and get fulfilling lives.”

- Jason King

Beirne Chair & Director Center for Catholic Studies,
St. Mary's University



Closing Thoughts



Catholic universities across the country have something incredible in common: a commitment to mission and a focus on holistic education. The results our graduates see directly reflect our shared Catholic foundation. St. Mary's University offers an example of how a close-knit community of educators teaching in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition can impact students across their lifetime.

I believe that the education we provide at St. Mary's University and many other Catholic institutions respond to the challenge of educating young men and women to be adept with new technologies while also using their gifts of critical thinking to learn to love and seek the truth."

- Winston Erevelles

President,
St. Mary's University

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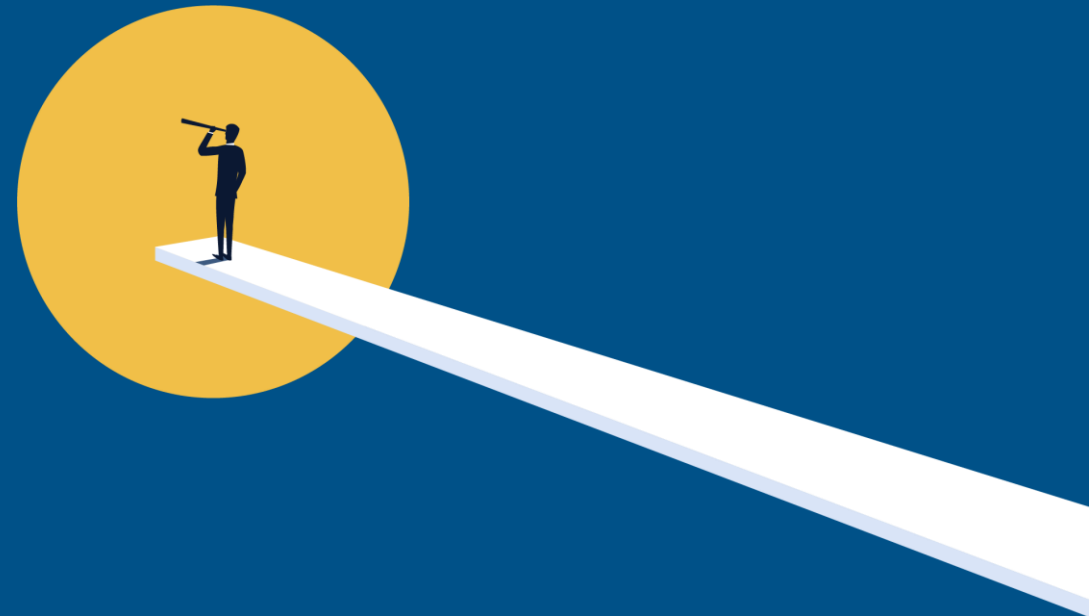
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Study Overview



YouGov

To ensure a robust and objective analysis, St. Mary's University once again partnered with YouGov, a globally recognized authority in market research. By leveraging YouGov's expertise in large-scale survey design and data analysis, this collaboration provides reliable and unbiased insights into the true impact of higher education.

Methodology

YouGov interviewed adults with a bachelor's degree or higher, with the goal of screening for and surveying graduates of both Catholic and secular colleges and universities. Responses were weighted and matched using industry-standard practices to ensure balance across gender, age, race, education level, and political identity.

HIR 3.0 survey sampled 1,000 graduates of Catholic colleges and 1,000 graduates of secular colleges, mirroring the design of the HIR 1.0 and 2.0 to allow for year-over-year comparison. Statistical adjustments were applied to maintain representativeness against U.S. Census and voting data benchmarks.

Respondents

The respondent pool was carefully designed to reflect the national population of college graduates. Sampling frames included stratification by gender, age, race, and education, and were weighted against the American Community Survey (ACS), the Current Population Survey (CPS), and validated with voter and exit poll datasets.

This rigorous approach ensured that both graduates of Catholic and secular schools samples were representative of the broader U.S. graduate population.

Comparative and Longitudinal Insights

Because this is the third iteration of the study, we offer longitudinal averages. This shows not only where Catholic and secular graduates differ but also how those differences appear over time.

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About St. Mary's

A Brief Introduction to St. Mary's Mission & Educational Philosophy

St. Mary's University invites and welcomes men and women of all faiths, and even of no faith, to walk together, talk together and search for truth together. We strive to educate our students to become ethical leaders for the common good, to leave campus with generous spirits and humble hearts, and to view their professional careers as vocational journeys, not just careers.

Graduates leave St. Mary's, not with the narrow goal of personal gratification but aspiration to a life purposely lived: a life of true value.

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Get in Touch





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Thank You

Thank you for your interest in the Higher Education Holistic Impact Report 3.0.

To learn more about St. Mary's University and our mission to educate the whole person, visit www.stmarytx.edu

