

The Good News

300 South George Street, Charles Town, WV 25414 ♦ 1-888-254-4CDU ♦ www.cdu.edu

The mission of Catholic Distance University is to communicate the mind and heart of the Church in a digital world. Using distance education, the university educates teachers and learners worldwide in Catholic theology, the liberal arts, and faith development for the growth of faith, ecclesial service, and leadership for the New Evangelization.

A Publication for CDU Donors & Friends

Fall 2023

From Our President

As I reflect on my first few months at CDU, I am reminded of the many people I have met who say that CDU has made a difference in their lives. While in Rome for an International Federation of Catholic Universities meeting in September, the Dean of Theology of the University of St. Joseph in Macao told me he decided on his priestly vocation after taking a class at CDU with long-time faculty member and former Dean, Rev. Bevil Bramwell, OMI. God came to his encounter through our teaching. While in Austin, Texas, I attended the 32nd annual Red Mass for those engaged in the administration of justice. A bishop in attendance told me that the CDU graduate he hired to serve as Director of Catechesis turned out to be the best he'd ever had in that position; she has been able to reach many effectively. God makes our formation fruitful.

As we move into CDU's next stage of its history, and build its future, we want to fulfill our mission by building on its past and unleashing its full potential for research, teaching, and formation. These are the means through which a university evangelizes, as *Ex corde ecclesiae* reminds us. We want to become a leader in virtual education, to forge the path for the university of the future while safeguarding the *Idea of the University* at a time when many universities are losing their *raison d'être*.

We will seek to reach a wider audience, thematically and geographically, with our unique online offering that has a person-centered focus, academic rigor, and full accreditation, and that seeks to communicate the mind and the heart of the Church. While expanding our theological offerings, we will diversify with degrees that are impactful and in high demand to prepare our students to take leadership roles in fields that are in great need of care and concern for the human person, such as AI, Virtual Reality, and Big Data Design.

Thanks to an excellent faculty, staff, and Board of Trustees committed to CDU's mission, this has been a momentous Fall. In collaboration with the Lilly Foundation, we have begun our expansion by offering bilingual programs in English and Spanish that are helping many discover the richness of the Social Doctrine of the Church with our *AA en Teología con Especialidad en Doctrina Social de la Iglesia*, and the Graduate Certificate in Catholic Social Teaching. In addition, we have



Dr. Maria Sophia Aguirre

been ranked 4th among top online graduate Theology programs by Forbes - CDU being #1 among Catholic programs in this category, and our AA in Liberal Arts has been ranked #17 among online programs in that category by Intelligent.com for 2024. Two new articulation agreements will bring high school juniors and seniors to CDU to earn college credit, enabling them to earn their AA degree or advance their undergraduate degree at an affordable price. We look forward to welcoming our new students as we expand our offerings and geographic reach.

We also added spiritual direction as part of our campus ministry services, and we have created a Center for Research Dissemination and are making plans to promote the research of our faculty members. We want to develop a solid research agenda, a missing ingredient at CDU, fostering collaboration between faculty and students across cultures and countries.

As always, we are grateful for your support and commitment to CDU's work and mission, especially for your prayers! Stay tuned for what is coming, and be ready to fasten your seatbelt as we launch into this new stage of CDU. I invite you to join us in building the university of the future to serve the Church and the world!

CDU Marks 40th Anniversary at Gala!



Michael Warsaw

CDU's 40th Anniversary Gala on November 17 at the Army Navy Country Club in Arlington, Virginia, was a sold-out success. Michael Warsaw, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of EWTN Global Catholic Network, was honored with the Founders Award. We introduced our new President, Dr. Maria Sophia Aguirre, and recognized President Emeritus Dr. Marianne Evans Mount for her 40 years of leadership. Dr. Mount was granted the Grand Cross of the Order of Saint Gregory the Great. This esteemed honor has only been bestowed upon 25 people since its founding in 1831. Dr. Aguirre announced plans to expand program offerings in Latin America and Italy. Dr. Aguirre also excitedly announced the university's name will soon be changed to Catholic International University to reflect the more globalized approach to higher Catholic education.

We are grateful for record-level support. A special thanks to our Gala Sponsors. Visit cdu.edu/gala for a recap of the wonderful evening and a full list of our generous sponsors.

Thank you for sustaining CDU's mission. Please remember CDU in your planned giving.





CDU Honored with Top Rankings for Undergraduate Degree Programs



Catholic Distance University recently received top rankings for its AA and BA degree programs. In August, Forbes Advisor ranked CDU #4 in “Best Options for Theology Bachelor Degrees Online” for 2023. In October, Intelligent.com ranked CDU #17 in “Best Online Associate in Liberal Arts Degree Programs” for 2024. These accolades confirm the great value and high quality of a CDU education.

Lifelong Learning Offerings

Upcoming Apologetics seminars:

- Proclaiming the Reality of God: Compelling Evidence of God’s Existence (January 15-February 5, 2024)
- Making the Case for Christ (April 5-May 6, 2024)
- Why Would a Loving God Allow Evil, Pain, and Suffering? (June 16-July 8, 2024)

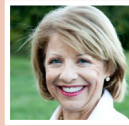
New independent study courses:

- *Christ the Priest: The Letter to the Hebrews* introduces important details of the Jewish priesthood of the Old Covenant and explains its fulfillment in Christ the High Priest.
- *Introducción al Catecismo* is an introduction to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in Spanish. This course may be applied to the non-credit Certificado Básico del Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica.

To register for seminars and independent study courses, visit <https://www.pathlms.com/cdu>.

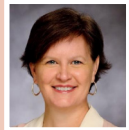


Trustee News



President Emeritus **Dr. Marianne Evans Mount** was reappointed to the Board of Trustees. As a founding leader of Catholic Distance University, she was president from 2008 to 2023 and led CDU to become the global online university it

is today, accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and the Association of Theological Schools. As an innovative and published Catholic leader in the field of education, Dr. Mount currently serves as a consultant to the Vatican’s Congregation for Catholic Education.



Amy Burns Smith joined the Board Trustees in October. She is a global marketing and communications executive with extensive strategic experience leading and consulting for Fortune 500 corporations, the military, state and federal government, and academia.

Service, Federal Reserve, NASA, and the National Science Foundation. As Director of Communications for the U.S. Army’s Program Management Office in Iraq, she was awarded the Joint Civilian Meritorious Award for outstanding service supporting humanitarian projects.

Mrs. Smith has served in senior roles at Raytheon, Burson-Marsteller Public Relations, Clemson University, The Coca-Cola Company, Intel, SAP, American Express, the U.S. Treasury, the U.S. Secret

Smith earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from Clemson University, a Master of Public Service Administration from Texas A&M, and a Master of International Management degree from the Thunderbird School of Global Management at Arizona State University.



Dr. Michael Pencina joined the Board of Trustees in October. He is Vice Dean for Data Science at the Duke University School of Medicine. Dr. Pencina is a leader in developing and implementing quantitative science strategies pertaining to education and training, laboratory, and clinical and data science. Dr. Pencina is a Professor of Biostatistics and Bioinformatics and Director of Duke AI Health. Previously, he

was Director of Biostatistics at the Duke Clinical Research Institute.

Dr. Pencina is an internationally recognized risk prediction model development and evaluation authority. He serves as Deputy Editor for Statistics at *JAMA-Cardiology* and Associate Editor for *Statistics in Medicine*. Dr. Pencina received his PhD in Mathematics and Statistics from Boston University in 2003. He holds master’s degrees from the University of Warsaw in actuarial mathematics and business culture.



Trustee **Susan Malone** was sworn in as a Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army, Christine Warmuth, during an investiture ceremony at the Pentagon on July 13, 2023. Mrs. Malone, who was recently promoted to the rank of General, will provide a vital link between the Army and the Nevada communities it serves.

Rev. Thomas Ferguson; Mr. John F. McCabe, Esquire; Mr. Robert J. Smith, Esquire; and Dr. Margaret Melady retired from the Board of Trustees after serving the maximum 9 years of consecutive service. We are grateful for their dedication, support, and expertise. Both Smith and Melady are extending their service in key roles as Trustees Emeritus.

New Academic Programs Serve More Students

The first cohort of the Spanish-language **AA degree in Theology with a Concentration in Catholic Social Teaching** began classes in August, and a second cohort began in late October. This program equips students with an understanding of the teachings of the Church in relation to the common good, the dignity and transcendence of the human person, principles of the moral life, and the relationship between faith and reason. We are grateful to the Lilly Foundation, our supporters, advisors, and faculty members who made this new program a reality.

The new 12-credit **Undergraduate Certificate in Catholic Social Teaching**, taught completely in Spanish, is now enrolling students. Students will learn the principles of Catholic social teaching, study its biblical and magisterial sources, and become familiar with the See, Judge, Act methodology that the Church uses in different pastoral settings.

The **Early College Program**, which launched in September, serves qualified high school students who wish to earn college credit. Qualified juniors and seniors are eligible to earn transferable college

credit at a 50% discount. The program is especially attractive to Catholic homeschool families seeking to enroll their teens at a Newman Guide institution.

CDU recently updated its partnership agreement with the **Angelicum Academy**, which runs an online Great Books program for high school students. Now, juniors and seniors from the Angelicum Academy can transfer 30 credits earned from the Academy to CDU’s online AA degree program and complete the remaining 30 CDU credits needed for their AA degree at a 50% discount. Up to 30 additional credits may be transferred by Angelicum Academy Great Books Program students wishing to pursue an online BA degree with CDU, leaving only 30 more credits needed for their BA degree.

This program offers high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to earn a fully accredited degree from a respected Catholic university at a significant discount – and the credits count twice, toward high school and college! In the words of TAA President Pat Carmack, “We believe this will prove to be a huge development in Catholic education in the U.S.”





CDU Grapevine Notes



Margaret Stark, M.A., is a Ph.D. candidate at The Catholic University of America, where she earned her M.A. in Philosophy and works as a professor. She has served as the Book Review Editor for the *Review of Metaphysics*, and is currently the Book Review Editor for North America for the *New Yearbook on Phenomenology*. She also served as co-director of the 2022 Husserl Circle. Stark will now teach two undergraduate courses at CDU: *PHIL 370. The Nature of Nature: An Introduction to a Catholic Philosophy*, and *PHIL 340. See for Yourself: an Introduction to Epistemology*.

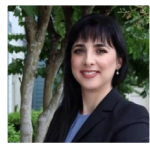


Clare-Thérèse Heyne, S.T.L., is an educator, author, spiritual director, & Catholic women's retreat foundress and president. She holds a Licentiate in Sacred Theology in Spiritual Theology from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, Italy, and is working toward a Ph.D. An educator for over 13 years serving at the elementary through graduate school levels, she currently serves in the Diocese of Covington, and is the author of two books in Spiritual Theology and two more to be published in 2024. She will teach *Applied Catholic Spirituality* at the undergraduate and graduate levels (SPIR 301 and 501).



Father John McNerney, M. Litt, S.T.B., Ph.D., joined the theological college community in 2022 as a member of the formation faculty and Director of Basselin Scholars. He served at The Catholic University of America as Visiting Research Scholar in the Department of Politics and the first Distinguished Michael J. Novak Scholar, as a Fellow of the Art and Carlyse Ciocca Center for Principled Entrepreneurship, a Röpke-Wojtyla Fellowship Scholar, and a Faculty Scholar at the Institute for Human Ecology.

His expertise are in the development of the philosophy of the human person and its consequences for business life, and Catholic social thought. He actively conducts research and is the author of numerous books and essays; two new books will be published this year. Father McNerney has joined the CDU faculty to continue his research and teach Philosophy.



Stefany Cortes joined the staff as Director of Marketing and Communications in October. She is a regional communications professional and MBA graduate with over 10 years of experience working at global companies with international and diverse teams in complex matrix organizations. Stefany lives in Houston, Texas.



Ron Aizer joined the staff as Chief Financial Officer. He is a senior finance executive with vast experience in financial management for large organizations that include USG (USAID, DOE), the World Bank, Multilateral Development Banks, and foreign governments. He is a Partner at Stone Trail Partners, LLC, and improves performance by integrating strategic, operational, and financial planning, measuring performance, and implementing change. Ron and his wife, Maggie, live in the Washington, D.C., metro area.



In late August, **Shannon Griffin** joined CDU as the Research and Strategic Development Specialist. She assists in the development and execution of the strategic plan and supports the research agenda, particularly President Dr. Maria Sophia Aguirre's economic development work in Honduras and Guatemala. Shannon studied economics and finance, philosophy, and Spanish as an undergraduate at The Catholic University of America, where she also earned her Master's degree in Integral Economic Development Management and met and worked with Dr. Aguirre. She is grateful to be working for a Catholic university with a vision.

Thank You!

We are humbled and encouraged by your support and prayers. Together, we will reach all nations, the underserved Church, and God's children in the peripheries with the truth and beauty of our Faith through online Catholic education. We could not do it without you! Stay connected! To update your contact information, visit <https://cdu.edu/stay-connected/>

Excellent Faculty

Professors Awarded Doctoral Degrees



Rev. Dr. Avelino Gonzalez-Ferrer recently earned a doctorate in Sacred Theology from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, Italy. Rev. Dr. Gonzalez-Ferrer is a Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Washington and former Vatican official for the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. He teaches *CST 500. Foundations of Catholic Social Thought*.



Dr. Brandon Harvey recently completed a doctorate in the Great Books of Western Civilization with a concentration in Philosophy and Religion at Harrison Middleton University in Tempe, Arizona. In addition to his educational achievement, he is currently piloting a new course he developed, *ENGLISH 40*, a new self-paced writing tutorial for undergraduate students.

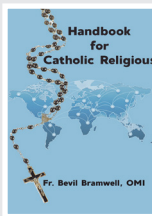
Dr. Elizabeth Shaw Speaks at Colloquium



Interim Provost Dr. Elizabeth Shaw is an Associated Scholar of the Hildebrand Project (<https://hildebrandproject.org/>), which promotes the thought of Christian personalist Dietrich von Hildebrand. Dr. Shaw gave a response to a paper presented at a colloquium on the philosophy of Dietrich's wife and fellow philosopher, Alice von Hildebrand, November 2–4, at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Dr. Shaw discussed Alice von Hildebrand's philosophical and other scholarly work in honor of the 100th anniversary of her birth and the first anniversary of her death. The purpose of the colloquium is to expose Hildebrand's philosophy to a wider audience, bring people together for a convivial discussion of philosophical themes found both in Hildebrand and the perennial philosophy of which she is a part, and build community among scholars interested in the realist and personalist traditions in philosophy, theology, political thought, and the arts.

Father Bevil Bramwell Publishes New Book



Professor **Rev. Bevil Bramwell's** new book, *Handbook for Catholic Religious*, will be published by En Route Books and Media later this year. A problem for Religious in the 21st century is that they are trying to pray, live, and work in an age that is antagonistic to such a life. In this book, Father Bramwell addresses the existential challenges that face serious Religious every day.

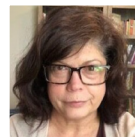
Professor Honored as Eucharistic Fellow in Crucial Year of Eucharistic Revival



Theology Professor **David Bonagura, Jr.**, was named a 2023–2024 Cardinal Newman Society Research Fellow for Eucharistic Education. His fellowship focuses on the importance of teaching the Eucharist within all levels of Catholic education and integrating that teaching across the curriculum. CDU is recognized in the Society's Newman Guide for faithful Catholic education.

Professor Bonagura has three master's degrees in religious studies, adolescence education, and the classics, and is a regular contributor to *The Catholic Thing*. He is the author of *Steadfast in Faith* (Cluny Media, LLC, 2019) and *Staying with the Catholic Church* (Scepter Press, 2021), and translator of *Jerome's Tears: Letters to Friends in Mourning* (Sophia Institute Press, 2023). He also serves as religion editor of *The University Bookman*.

Library Expands Resources and Services



Stephanie Garrett

The Library is now operating in both English and Spanish. Students and faculty can access e-books and e-journals from Digitalia Hispánica, a multidisciplinary database that features over 50,000 full text titles from 400 Latin American and Spanish publishers.

Library Director Stephanie Garrett is currently serving as the Faculty Advisor to Student Life. Under her direction, the weekly Student Life Office Hour hosts a speaker series featuring a faculty member presenting on a topic of his or her choice. Professor David Bonagura was the inaugural speaker, presenting on "The Logos: The Center of Benedict XVI's Theology." The Student Life Office Hour will host one Discussion Night each term. Discussion Nights are open to CDU students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

Visit the Discussion Night's event page at <https://library.cdu.edu/discussion-nights> to register to attend and view recordings of past events.

"Whatever you did for the least of my brothers and sisters, that you did to me." MT 25:40

CDU's social initiative in prison education continues to bear fruit. Our digital prison ministry has served more than 1,771,444 free lessons since launching 5 years ago and 659,000 lessons in the last year. Our 79 courses, available in English and Spanish, are accessible in 377 prisons. For our brothers and sisters who prefer, we have added 60 daily miracles audio files from the Hallow app. The innovative Gatekeepers reentry program on the digital prison platform is achieving phenomenal success. Our prison ministry continues

to blossom with new students, new partners, and new supporters. CDU is especially grateful for our partnership with the Order of Malta Federal Association, which awarded CDU a 2024 grant that will financially support our digital prison ministry production, and whose prison ministry team advises and supports content and the pen pal program. Not all prisons offer digital education opportunities, so we are updating our correspondence program to serve more than eight courses per week.