

**The Relationship Between the Funding Models of Catholic High Schools and  
Seminary Enrollment**

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## **Abstract**

The United States is facing a decline in the number of ordained priests. According to Breitenstein, (2014), “America's Catholic population is rising by one percent annually but seminary enrollment is flat forcing hundreds of parishes to close or consolidate. If this trend continues, there may not be enough priests to minister to the Catholic population throughout the United States. This mixed method study included a quantitative survey to collect data on the type of funding of Catholic high schools and the number of high school graduates who entered seminary in 2017. The online Quintessential Instructional Archive (QUIA) survey was sent to 737 principals of Catholic high schools. Usable data were collected from 73 principals from Catholic high schools on the type of funding and the number of students who entered the seminary post-graduation. Fewer than 10% of the sample responded to the survey. Data for the hypothesis for the quantitative portion of the study was not analyzed due to the unreliability associated with the return rate.

Qualitative data included the results of interviews with five seminarians from tuition funded high schools and five seminarians from stewardship funded high schools regarding their perceptions of why they entered the seminary (e.g, initial call to a vocation, type of encouragement, and type of funding for their Catholic high school education). Results from the qualitative portion of the study indicated the initial call to the priesthood occurred during early elementary years. In addition, seminarians indicated they received many and different types of encouragement to enter the seminary. Seminarians also reported the need for different funding to support Catholic school

education. Study findings may aid diocesan and Catholic school leaders in making important decisions related to increasing the number of future seminarians.

## **Dedication**

This study is dedicated to my husband who has been a solid source of quiet but subtle motivation in the pursuit of my doctorate. He truly understands my passion for Catholic education and the benefits it has on the formation of our children. I will forever be grateful to the Diocese of Wichita who through stewardship funded education has provided our children with a spiritual and educational foundation that will be a source of strength and guidance throughout their entire lives.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Priests are needed to perform sacramental duties including baptism, confirmation, marriage, reconciliation, communion, anointing of the sick and ministering to lay people. Between 1965 and 2009, bishops in the Roman Catholic Church in the United States have been faced with a growing priest shortage (Hoegeman, 2012). A decline in the number of young men entering the seminary has resulted in fewer ordained priests throughout the United States (Mickens, 2015). Futurechurch (2010), an organization that has been advocating for Roman Catholics for 25 years, stated in an Open Letter that half of the 19,302 active priests in the United States would be eligible for retirement by 2019. Ziegler (2011) stated the Catholic Church in the United States has been experiencing two recent trends: an increasing number of parishioners and a decreasing population of priests. As presented in Table 1, the number of Catholics increased by 20 million between 1965 and 2014, while during the same time period the number of priests decreased by 9,960. As a result, many parishes have no resident priests, leaving some priests responsible for pastoring two or more parishes (Ruhl, 2015).

Table 1

*Catholic Demographics in the United States in 1965 and 2014*

Catholic Group	Year	
	1965	2014
Catholics	46.3 Million	66.6 Million
Parishes	17,637	17,483
Diocesan Priests ( <i>n</i> )	35,925	26,265
Diocesan Priests (%)	94%	68%
Diocesan Priests in Active Ministry	33,770	17,900
Parishes with no Priest	549	3,496
Ordinations to the Priesthood	994	494

*Note.* Adapted from “Survey Finds Serious Flaws in Diocesan Financial Management,” by J.

Ruhl, 2015, *National Catholic Reporter*, Retrieved from:

<https://www.ncronliRughne.org/news/faith-parish/survey-finds-serious-flaws-diocesan-financial-management>.

It has been understood since the mid 1500’s that before a man can enter the seminary, it is expected that he experience a calling to the vocation of priesthood. Catholics believe that it is in the Church and through the communion with all the baptized, that a Christian realizes his vocation and receives the grace of the sacraments that will sustain him on the way. The Center for Applied Research of the Apostolate (2016) indicated that the path Catholics take in developing a vocation is very complex. However, Drake (2012) found that enrollment in a Catholic school is a strong indicator as to whether or not a young man will consider a vocation to the priesthood through entering the seminary. Catholic schools are a major part of a pipeline that provides a strong impact on vocations (Gray, 2014a). Catholic schools encourage and foster an environment that is conducive to a young man’s consideration to enter the seminary to become a priest (LaPonsie, 2017). However, the rising cost of tuition to attend a Catholic

school is causing many schools to close thus reducing the number of students who could potentially enter the seminary (Sentell, 2013).

The National Catholic Educational Association (2018a) reported that between 2008 and 2018, 18.1% of Catholic schools in the United States closed or consolidated and the number of students declined by 19.2%. According to Fraga (2016a), this is a trend that began as early as 1965 as illustrated in Figure 1.

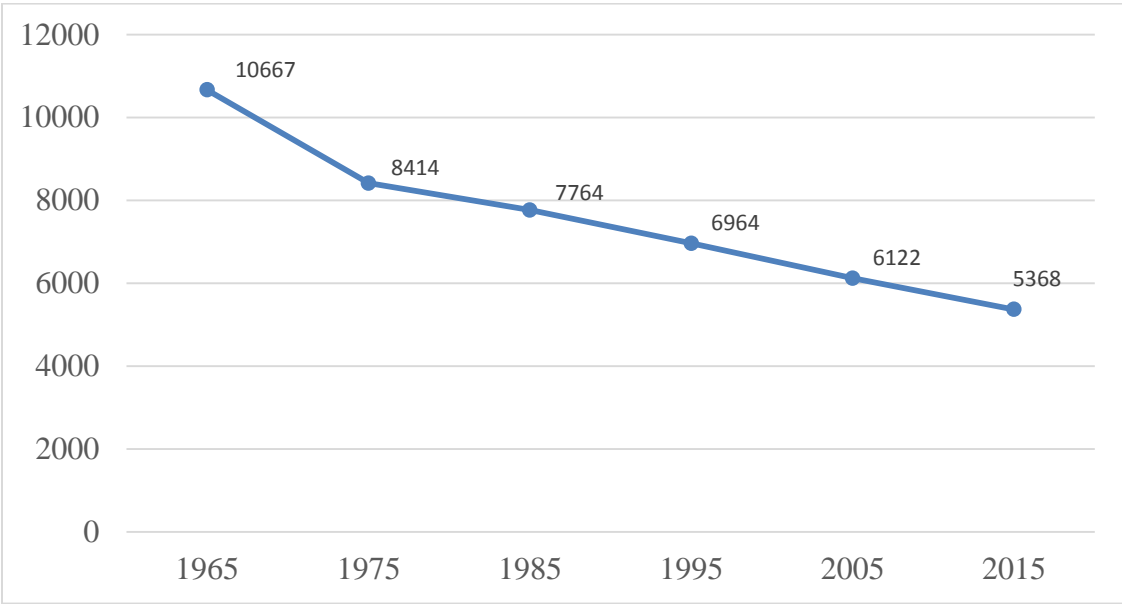


Figure 1. Catholic school closings or consolidations 1965-2015. Adapted from “Closings Show Uphill Battle for Catholic Schools,” by B. Fraga, 2016a. *Our Sunday Visitor*. Retrieved from <https://www.osv.com/OSVNewsweekly/ByIssue/Article/TabId/735/ArtMID/13636/ArticleID/19159/Closings-show-uphill-battle-for-Catholic-schools.aspx>

Attending a Catholic school is becoming increasingly difficult due to the financial challenges parents face. According to Meyer (2007), Catholic school administrators must become expert fundraisers, marketers, promoters, lobbyists, and miracle workers in order to survive. One rationale for the drop in enrollment may be the increasing cost of tuition. In 2013 the average Catholic secondary school freshman tuition was \$9,622 (Bath, 2013).

Elementary school tuition (K-8th grade) climbed 69% over 10 years prior to 2013 and for Catholic high schools there was a 136% tuition increase (Bath, 2013). To combat this decline in Catholic school enrollment, Petrisek (2016) stated that new models of Catholic education financing other than the tuition-based model were needed.

Since rising cost is the primary reason for declining enrollment, some schools have gone to a model where the burden of a Catholic education is not solely the responsibility of the parents, rather it is shared by parishioners who may or may not have school-age children. In the Wichita, Kansas Diocese, this type of support is called the stewardship funding model. In these schools, enrollment has increased over the past thirty years resulting in more children attending Catholic schools. According to the Catholic Diocese of Wichita Kansas (2017), “since 1985, Catholic school enrollment nationally has dropped 30 percent, while enrollment in the Diocese of Wichita has increased 28 percent (p. 2).”

The Catholic Diocese of Wichita Kansas (n.d.) described the stewardship model for funding education as,

Stewards develop their gifts and share them with others generously, sacrificially and willingly, particularly through their parish. That means the ministries of the parish, including Catholic schools, are the responsibility of the entire parish, not just those who use them. In the stewardship way of life, Catholic schools are parochial; they belong to the parish. They are not private schools that are owned and operated by those who use them. Therefore, every school family is encouraged to be an active parish steward. (para. 3)

The Catholic Diocese of Wichita Kansas has embraced the stewardship model and is committed to having parishes make every effort to make a Catholic education, from kindergarten through high school, available to active parish members without being charged tuition (Catholic Diocese of Wichita Kansas, 2018). In addition, all non-Catholic students wishing to attend Catholic schools are eligible to do so by paying tuition.

The stewardship funded model makes Catholic education accessible for more Catholic students by charging no tuition while non-stewardship funded schools must charge tuition which can result in lower enrollment (Invest in Education Foundation, 2016). Out of 190 dioceses in the United States, Wichita is the 131<sup>st</sup> largest in terms of total Catholic population but the sixth largest in terms of number of graduates who became seminarians (Center for Applied Research of the Apostolate, 2016).

## **Background**

Finding candidates to enter the seminary has always been difficult. Sadowski (2017) stated the desire to enter religious life is grounded in a deep love of God that is developed through prayer. The critical elements that must be necessary for an individual to enter the priesthood are referred to as the Four Pillars of Formation. These include (a) human formation (recognizing those unique gifts and talents each candidate presents as a man), (b) academic formation (learning the deep and profound mysteries of faith), (c) spiritual formation (to be a priest is to be a man of prayer), and (d) pastoral formation (applying all that is studied and learned into the daily life of future parishioners) (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005). Diocesan school administrators and principals must develop programs designed to provide an atmosphere which aids in the

cultivation of human, academic, and spiritual formation. Diocesan Catholic schools that have experienced an increase in the number of men who enter the seminary after high school can serve as an example to those who continue to struggle to find candidates. Half or more new priests in 2014 attended Catholic schools making Catholic schools a pipeline that provides a major source for recruitment of seminarians (Gray, 2014b).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Breitenstein (2014) stated that America's Catholic population was increasing in numbers by 1% annually, but seminary enrollment was flat. Gray (2014b) and Zeigler (2005) established Catholic schools provide a pipeline to the seminary yet many are facing financial hardships resulting in higher tuition rates and fewer students. No studies have investigated the relationship between the funding models of Catholic high schools and the number of Catholic high school graduates who pursue studying for the priesthood. Studies have been conducted on those who have been ordained to the priesthood regarding perceptions of the factors and experiences that influenced their decision to become a priest. Perceptions of the factors and experiences that influenced a seminarian's decision to study for the priesthood must be understood.

### **Purpose of the Study**

A decline in the number of seminarians has resulted in a reduction in the number of Catholic priests. This study examined the relationship between Catholic high school funding models (stewardship or tuition) and seminary enrollment. Additionally, this study evaluated seminarians' perceptions of the factors and experiences that influenced their decision to enroll in the seminary.



### **Significance of the Study**

The results of this study may be of interest to Diocesan leaders such as Bishops, Vocations Directors, Priests, Catholic school Superintendents, Principals, Parishes, and Catholic parents. Bishops, vocation directors, and priests can benefit by understanding how to better allocate resources, superintendents and principals could modify curriculum and activities to support Catholic culture, parishes and parents could provide guidance and support for those discerning entry into the seminary. This study can benefit change in Catholic schools to prepare the next generation of seminarians. An increase in the number of seminarians is necessary to grow the number of priests needed to shepherd the growing number of Catholics. Additionally, the current research study adds to the body of knowledge regarding the relationship between funding models used by Catholic high schools and the potential effect on the number of Catholic high school graduates who enter the seminary.

### **Delimitations**

“Delimitations are self-imposed boundaries set by the researcher on the purpose and scope of the study” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 134). The following delimitations applied to this current study:

- Only two funding models (stewardship and tuition) from United States Catholic high schools were examined.
- Of the 1212 Catholic high schools throughout the United States, access to 737 were available through online accounts and only those principals were invited to participate.

- Many seminarians from seminary colleges throughout the United States were invited to participate. However only 10 were selected to participate in a structured interview protocol.

### **Assumptions**

“Assumptions are postulates, premises, and propositions that are accepted as operational for purposes of the research” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 135). This study was based on two assumptions. First, the Catholic high school principals accurately reported data from their school’s official 2017 annual financial report. Second, the seminarians interviewed were honest with their responses to interview questions.

### **Research Questions**

“Scholars have reiterated the fact that research questions are shaped by the purpose of a study and in turn form the methods and the design of the investigation” (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, p. 207). This study was guided by the following research questions:

**RQ1.** To what extent is the number of graduates who attend the seminary different between stewardship funded Catholic high schools and tuition funded Catholic high schools?

**RQ2.** What are seminarian’s perceptions about the factors and experiences that influenced their entry into the seminary?

### **Definition of Terms**

This section provides the definitions used in the study that do not have a common meaning. The terms are included to avoid the possibility of the study being misunderstood.

**Seminary.** A seminary is a special school providing education in theology, religious history, etc., primarily to prepare students for the priesthood.

**Ordination.** According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2018a) ordination is defined as the sacramental ceremony in which a man becomes a deacon, priest, or bishop and enabled to minister in Christ's name and that of the Catholic Church. There are three ordinations in the Sacrament of Holy Orders: diaconate; priesthood; and episcopal. The ordination ceremony includes various rituals, rich in meaning and history, (e.g., prostration, laying on of hands, anointing of hands, giving of the chalice and paten, sign of peace).

**Stewardship.** According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2002), stewardship is defined as the response of an individual's call to discipleship; a lifelong way of life whereby one responds to the ministry and mission of the local and universal church sharing the Gospel of life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Schmalz (2009) explained the concept encompasses the entire Catholic Church community and all its ministries.

Each school family is asked to sign a pledge to tithe 8% of their income to their parish and to attend Mass weekly, [additionally] each parishioner is also asked to tithe 8% to the parish. Each parish also gives 10% of its income to the diocese, and the diocese subsidizes poorer schools. (para. 17)

**Tuition.** The National Catholic Educational Association (2018b) defined tuition as fees paid that constitute a portion of the actual per pupil expense for instructional services.

## **Organization of the Study**

The current study is presented in 5 chapters. Chapter 1 included the introduction, background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, delimitations, assumptions, research questions definition of terms, and organization of the study. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature regarding the declining ratio of number of priests to the number of Catholics, the stewardship way of life and its history, trends in enrollment in tuition funded K-12 Catholic schools, trends in stewardship funded Catholic k-12 schools and reasons why young men enter the seminary. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used to conduct the study which includes the research design, selection of participants, measurement, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, limitations and summary. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study including the presentation of quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (narrative) data. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study, discussion of findings related to literature findings, conclusions, practical and theoretical implications, recommendations for further research, and concluding remarks.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of the Literature**

Gray (2010) stated the Catholic Church in the United States has been experiencing two recent trends: an increasing number of parishioners and a decreasing population of priests. Catholic Schools are a pipeline for more individuals to enter the priesthood (Gray, 2014a). Catholic school enrollment has dropped from 5.2 million in 1960 to 2.3 million in 2006 (Meyer, 2007). This chapter provides a review of the trends in priest shortages to serve an increasing Catholic population in the United States, the stewardship way of life and its history, trends in enrollment in tuition funded Catholic K-12 schools, trends in enrollment in stewardship funded K-12 Catholic Schools, and reasons why young men enter seminary.

#### **The Declining Ratio of Number of Priests to Number of Catholics**

The Catholic population in the United States is on the rise growing from approximately 56.8 million in 1980 to 79.7 million in 2014 (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate [CARA], 2016). Meanwhile, since the 1980's, the number of priests in the United States has dropped 10% to 12% per decade, and the decline is expected to continue (Hoge, 2005). Even though the number of ordinations has increased slightly over the years, the numbers are not sufficient to replace priests who have died, retired, or left (Mickens, 2015). The crisis in the shortage of vocations is expected to continue.

The growing population of Catholics has shifted in many geographic areas, but especially in the southwest with an influx of immigrants from Latin America, Asia, and Africa. The South saw an increase of 27% from the 1970's when only 16% of Catholics in the United States lived south of the Mason-Dixon Line (Fraga, 2016b). At the same

time, the Diocese of Richmond, Virginia, also attributed much of its recent growth to immigration. During the last 10 years this diocese has experienced an increase in the Asian population and a nearly double Hispanic population growth (Fraga, 2016b).

Between 1966 and 2005, many diocese throughout the Midwest have experienced an alarming decline in the percentage of active priests (FutureChurch, 2014). Table 2 illustrates the percentage of difference in the number of seminarians throughout selected areas in the United States between 1966 and 2005.

Table 2

*Number of Seminarians throughout the United States in 1966 and 2005*

Diocese	1966	2005	% Difference
Wichita, KS	165	97	-41
Burlington, VT	181	68	-62
Brooklyn, NY	1039	428	-59
LaCrosse, WI	318	101	-68
St. Louis, MO	555	390	-30
Dubuque, IO	427	117	-73
Little Rock, AK	128	59	-54
Las Cruces, NM	27	15	-44
Stockton, CA	48	24	-50
Cheyenne, WY	59	45	-24

*Note.* Adapted from “Priest Shortage at a Glance,” by Futurechurch, 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.futurechurch.org/future-of-priestly-ministry/optional-celibacy/priest-shortage-at-glance-us-statistics>

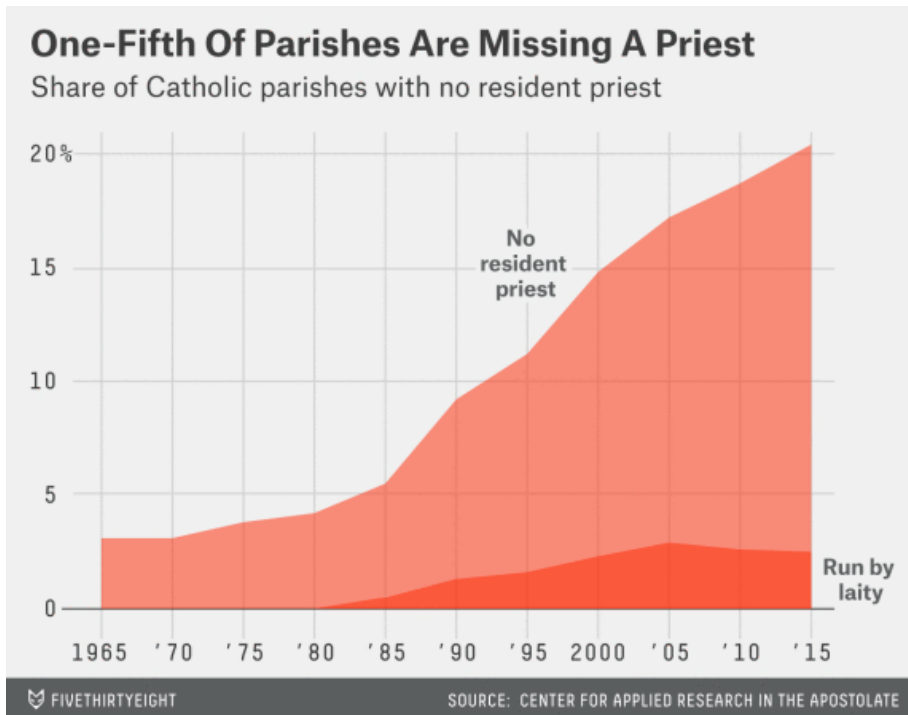
“In 1970, there were more than 59,000 Catholic priests in the United States. In 2016, numbers had dwindled to just above 37,000” (Burgess, 2017, para. 20).

Additionally, in an article by Huba (2017) CARA Senior Research Associate Mary Gautier stated,

The annual number of diocesan ordinations, while holding steady over the past 20 years, would need to be two or three times more to keep up with parish demand. It's only about a third to a half as many as we would need to compensate for the larger number of priests that are dying and retiring. (para. 4)

Even in diocese where ordinations have increased, it is not enough to keep pace with those retiring. In the Diocese of New York, over the past 40-50 years, the number of ordinations is far lower than the number of priests who become inactive (Rezac, 2017). In 2016, the Archdiocese of Hartford was facing hard decisions about closing or merging Catholic churches. A steep drop in the number of priests is one reason driving consolidation efforts. Altimari and Otero Sisson (2016) stated, “The archdiocese currently has 192 priests, but within five years, 22% of them will be 75, the age at which they are eligible to retire” (para. 23).

This crisis has led to an increasing number of parishes without a priest. Figure 2 illustrates the increasing percentage of parishes that did not have a resident priest from 1965 through 2015.



*Figure 2.* Number of parishes missing a priest. Adapted from “Number of Parishes Missing a Priest,” by L. Libresca, 2015. Retrieved from <https://fivethirtyeight.com/datalab/pope-francis-us-visit-catholic-priest-shortage/>

Masses offered for the departed, masses offered for the living, and masses offered for private intentions have been significantly reduced because of the priest shortage. Fewer masses offered literally means a world with less grace (Williams, 2016). Not only does the priest shortage affect the number of masses, but it also reduces the various other ministries performed by priests including visiting the sick, providing spiritual direction, and administering sacraments such as confession, communion, anointing of the sick, marriage, baptism, and burial.

The absence of ordained clergy who can say Mass can be viewed as a much more serious problem. McCarthy (1998) stated that this shortage of priests is the largest crisis to the future mission of the church since the Reformation. This opinion was supported nearly 20 years later when Muth (2016) argued that cultural trends show there actually is



a need for more priests to evangelize, thus renewing the spiritual formation of our society.

### **Stewardship Way of Life and Its History**

In the Catholic Diocese of Wichita Kansas (2018), stewardship is defined as the grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God's gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor. Parishioners respond to that gift by giving first fruits in:

- Spending time with God in prayer - individually, communally, and as a family
- Sharing talents by serving in the parish and community
- Giving treasure sacrificially, proportionally, and generously (Catholic Diocese of Wichita Kansas, 2018 p. 1).

In order to fully understand stewardship, it is necessary to trace its history. On November 8, 1965, the Second Vatican Council promulgated by Pope Paul VI (1965) published the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* which stated that modern conditions such as the advancements of science and technology, increasing populations, and other factors had led the church to realize that its functional existence would be in serious peril without the activity of the laity. In the first chapter of this document the idea of stewardship was first articulated beyond scripture. The church believed the Holy Spirit sanctified the people of God through ministry and the sacraments thus giving the faithful special gifts according to how God wills. Pope Paul VI (1965) reiterated that these individuals, administering grace to others just as they have received it, must in turn be good stewards of this God-given grace. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2018b) further explained that once one realizes and accepts these gifts, each has

the right and duty to use them in the Catholic Church and in the world for the purpose of building up the Catholic Church.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) (2002) issued a pastoral letter on the role of stewardship in parishes throughout the United States. It began with an invitation of each parishioner to answer the call to a vocation to respond by living a stewardship way of life. Stewardship was compared to being a responsible adult, “as the owner of a household turns over responsibility for caring for the property, managing affairs, making resources yield as much as possible, and sharing the resources with others. The position involves trust and accountability” (USCCB, 2002, p. 25).

Archbishop Leonard Blair (2017), Chairman of the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, stated that evangelization is the Catholic Church's deepest identity bringing the good news of the gospel through catechesis and stewardship. An initiative called, New Evangelization, was an effort to foster the deepening of faith, belief in the gospel message, and proclamation of the gospel. In a paper written by the USCCB (2004), Catholic schools were proclaimed to be at the very heart of this initiative. They were instruments of grace where the gospel comes alive daily and where children and families can encounter and re-engage in the Catholic faith.

### **Trends in Enrollment in Tuition Funded K-12 Catholic Schools**

As a result of constitutional provisions for separation of church and state, Catholic schools are not allowed to receive any direct federal funding (Boston, 2001). Thus, the financial responsibility for funding Catholic schools falls partially on parishes and diocesan communities, but mostly on parents who choose to both pay tuition and simultaneously support public education through taxes. Prior to the late 1900's schools

were run by brothers, nuns, or priests. These individuals received minimal wages resulting in minimal operational costs. However, the decline in religious vocations, expensive technological advances, and changing educational needs has resulted in an inflation of the per pupil costs (Egan, 2000). In the ten years prior to 2015, the median tuition was up by nearly 52% with the average tuition in Catholic high schools being \$9,622 (Marcus, 2015). Wilmington Trust in New York studied non-public schools and found that as tuition rises for private schools, families can no longer afford to pay it (Marcus, 2015).

Rising tuition costs in the United States have caused many Catholic schools to close or merge. According to the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) (2016), since 2006, 1,511 schools were reported closed or consolidated leaving a decline of 1,064 schools with 409,384 students. This has resulted in a 14% decline in the total number of schools and a 17.6% decline in the total number of students. Citing the rise in tuition as a major factor, the Archdiocese of Cincinnati experienced a decline in enrollment over a five-year period (2010-2015) going from 43,641 in 2010-11 to 42,107 in 2014-15 with an overall 19.5 % decline since the 1996-97 school year (Sparling, 2015). Despite the efforts of officials to improve enrollment and reduce the increases in the cost of education, the St. Louis Archdiocese was forced to close John F. Kennedy Catholic High School (Associated Press, 2016). Sentell (2013) added that the rising cost of tuition to attend a Catholic school is causing many schools to close. Three schools in Chicago were forced to close at the end of the 2015 – 2016 school year due to a decline in enrollment and financial difficulties (Kennedy, 2016). Catholic Schools have experienced enrollment and financial difficulties as they strive to keep their doors open.

Despite their efforts, many are forced to close. The number of Catholic schools fell from 8,146 to 6,980 between 2000 and 2010 with combined primary and secondary school enrollment declining 22% from 2,647,301 to 2,065,872 (Ziegler, 2011).

### **Trends in Enrollment in Stewardship Funded K-12 Catholic Schools**

Ziegler (2011) reported the Catholic Church in the United States has suffered a dramatic decline in its education mission. However, not all dioceses have experienced a downward trend in enrollment. In a case study published by The Fordham Institute, O'Keefe (2008) reported that the Diocese of Wichita Kansas was experiencing something different explaining that they use the stewardship model to fund the education of Catholic students. This model includes giving a proportionate share of a parishioner's time, talent, and income making it possible for all active Catholics to attend Catholic schools tuition free. This focus on stewardship was the result of the initial efforts of Fr. Thomas McGread in the late 1970's who believed that if each member of his parish committed to living the stewardship way of life, there would be enough support to make Catholic education free to any active member who wished to attend the school. Schmitt (2013) stated that in 1985, Bishop Gerber committed the entire Diocese of Wichita to stewardship and, by 2002 every parish in the diocese was engaged in stewardship making every school free of tuition. Parishioners in other parishes throughout the country noted an increase in the number of students attending Catholic schools as a result of this stewardship model (Schmitt, 2013). No other diocese in the United States offers free tuition. However, some individual Catholic schools such as St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin in Pennsylvania do offer free tuition (Kandra, 2008).

## **Reasons Why Young Men Enter the Seminary**

There are many reasons a young man may choose to enter the seminary and each has his own testimony. Aguaro (2013) stated, “They can all describe in great detail how they felt ‘called’ to become priests, something they sometimes also refer to as ‘ministry’ or ‘ordination to the Holy Priesthood” (para. 1). Other young men have noted life experiences that contributed to their decision to enter the seminary. Fr. David Carter recalled that his experiences as an altar server and attending religion class helped him develop a deep love for the Eucharist and created a strong desire to help people find peace within their hearts and save their souls (Terheydon, 2013). Fr. Eric Bowman first felt the call at a very young age shortly before 1<sup>st</sup> grade (Archdiocese of Cincinnati, 2010). Similarly, Fr. James Reutter first felt the call to the priesthood as a young boy receiving First Communion (Archdiocese of Cincinnati, 2010). Burgess (2017) reported that Betzen, a young man who was ordained to the priesthood in 2015, first felt the desire to enter the seminary by being spiritually inspired when going to Eucharistic adoration. Being in the presence of the bread that Catholics believe is the actual presence of Jesus Christ inspired him to pursue the priesthood (Burgess, 2017). According to a study conducted by Kramarek and Gaurtier (2017) 42% of the 2017 class of ordained priests reported first feeling the call to the priesthood in elementary school and 23% reported the calling during high school.

Encouragement to enter the priesthood likely comes from many different sources such as priests, friends, parents, or teachers. In a study by Kramarek and Gaurtier (2017), “82 percent reported being encouraged to consider the priesthood by someone in their life most frequently, the parish priest, friend, or another parishioner” (p. 4). Attending a

Catholic school provides additional encouragement to many seminarians. According to a national survey of the ordained class of 2017, priests were much more likely than Catholics in general to have attended Catholic school where they had greater opportunity to be exposed to religion (Kramerk & Gautier, 2017). Some Catholic high schools offer youth ministry programs that provide experiences that help young men grow in faith and realize their calling (Olofson, 2017). Sundardi (2014) stated that the influential factor of religious experiences during the high school years assists in developing a strong motivation to the priesthood.

### **Summary**

There has been a declining number of Catholics priests needed to minister to the growing number of Catholics in the United States. Chapter 2 summarized literature that described the declining number of priests to number of Catholics, stewardship way of life and its history, trends in enrollment in tuition funded K-12 Catholic schools, trends in enrollment in stewardship funded K-12 Catholic schools, and reasons why young men enter the seminary. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used to conduct the study including the research design, selection of participants, measurement, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, limitations, and summary

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

The first purpose of the current study was to determine if there was a relationship between the type of funding of Catholic high schools (stewardship vs tuition) and enrollment in the seminary. A second purpose was to examine the perceptions of seminarians regarding the factors or experiences that influenced their decision to enroll in the seminary. This chapter summarizes the methodology including the research design, selection of participants, measurement, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, limitations and summary.

#### **Research Design**

A mixed methods design incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data was used in the current study. Quantitative archival data were obtained from Catholic high school principals throughout the United States. The independent variable was the tuition model (stewardship or tuition) used in the diocese. The dependent variable was the number of students who graduated from Catholic high schools and enrolled in a seminary. The qualitative data came from structured interviews with seminarians answering open ended questions regarding factors and perceptions that influenced entry into seminary. These interviews allowed the researcher to analyze the results and further explore rationale for possible discoveries (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) stated, “Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 4). Utilization of this research method allowed for the exploration and understanding of the perceptions of the underlying influences on the decision to enroll in the seminary.

## **Selection of Participants**

In 2016, 1212 Catholic high schools existed in the United States (CARA, 2016). The researcher used purposive sampling as the method to define the research sample. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) defined purposive sampling as “a sample based on the researcher’s experience or knowledge of the group to be sampled” (p. 175). The target population for the quantitative data collection included principals of 737 Catholic high schools who were available by email invitation to participate in the research study. This purposive sample of emails was purchased from Ganley’s Catholic Schools in America to achieve greatest geographic distribution. The purposive sample who participated in the qualitative portion of the study included five seminarians who attended tuition funded Catholic high schools and five seminarians who attended stewardship funded Catholic high schools and were currently enrolled in the seminary. The seminarians responded to an email asking for volunteers that was sent by diocesan secretaries or college registrars to individuals who were currently enrolled in seminaries throughout the United States.

## **Measurement**

A mixed method approach was used which included a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. A quantitative survey was used to measure the variable of the funding models of Catholic high schools for the 2016 -17 schoolyear and the number of young men who enrolled in the seminary. An original survey to gather school data was constructed and is described below. The survey was constructed to ensure validity. The qualitative method was employed with a structured interview protocol. The interview was created, reviewed, and approved by advisors in the doctoral program and is detailed below. The instruments were developed based upon the researcher’s experience with



Catholic school finance, a review of literature on Catholic school funding models, and assistance by advisors with research experience.

**Survey instrument.** The quantitative survey was designed by the researcher. The first item on the survey was the name of School. The second question asked what percentage of the 2016-2017 annual budget was supported through tuition. The third question was what percentage of the 2016-2017 annual budget was supported through the stewardship of feeder parishes. The final question was how many graduates entered the seminary in 2017. The variable that determined the type of funding model was a two-category model. The high school was categorized as a stewardship school if it received any money from a feeder parish or as tuition dependent if no financial support came from a parish.

**Survey validity and reliability.** Validity refers to the extent to which something measures what it was constructed to measure (Creswell, 2014). According to Johnson and Christensen (2008), “a pilot should be conducted using a minimum of five to ten participants and the participants should be similar to those being surveyed in the research” (p. 208). The survey was piloted by five diocesan administrators to determine if the questions would provide the desired information. After their review, they found the questions to be valid.

A reliability analysis was not needed because a scale was not constructed from the survey items. The researcher used single-item measurement.

Most commonly used single-item measures can be divided into two categories: (a) those measuring self-reported facts... and (b) those measuring psychological constructs, e.g., aspects of personality... measuring the former with single items is

common practice. However, using a single-item measure for the latter is considered to be a “fatal error” in research. If the construct being measured is sufficiently narrow or is unambiguous to the respondent, a single item may suffice (Sackett & Larson, 1990, p. 631).

The individual items used in this research were self-reported facts that were sufficiently narrow and unambiguous. Therefore, reliability was not an issue for the measurement in this survey instrument.

**Interview.** A structured phone interview was chosen to explore the variables addressed in this study’s qualitative research questions. For the qualitative instrumentation used in this study, interview questions were developed to generate open-ended responses from the interviewees. The researcher asked additional follow-up questions to expand on responses from the seminarians.

1. When did you first feel called to your vocation?
2. Describe the time in your life when you confirmed your vocation and the type of encouragement you received.
3. Describe the type of encouragement you received while attending Catholic high school?
4. Describe how your Catholic high school education was funded?

A follow-up question for seminarians who attended tuition funded high schools included the following:

Do you feel your high school encouragement would have been different if it was a stewardship funded high school?

A follow-up question for seminarians who attended stewardship funded high schools included the following:

Do you think you would have been able to attend a Catholic high school if you had to pay tuition?

**Trustworthiness.** Trustworthiness consists of efforts by the researcher to address credibility issues similar to the quantitative issues of validity and reliability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Trustworthiness consists of credibility as to whether the findings are accurate and believable from the standpoint of the researcher, participants, and reader. Dependability refers to the extent that the findings can be replicated. Confirmability means the information is objective, and transferability refers to the extent that the findings of this study can be transferred to a phenomenon of similar context (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the interviews in qualitative research, the interview transcriptions are shared with the respondents for transparency and verified for accuracy of the responses. The process is known as member checking (Creswell, 2014). The recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher. The researcher then emailed the transcriptions to the seminarians. The seminarians reviewed and edited as necessary and returned the transcripts to the researcher. If any inaccuracies were present, the seminarians noted them and the researcher corrected the transcripts.

**Researcher's Perspective.** Qualitative research presents the possibility of bias. Miyazaki and Taylor (2008) stated, "Researcher interaction bias could affect results in almost any data collection method that involves human interaction between researchers and their subjects of study" (p. 780). There were several factors that may have

influenced the researcher's data collection and analysis. One bias is that the researcher had been a life-long Catholic. Secondly, the researcher had worked in stewardship funded schools for 28 years. The researcher's sibling is an active priest in the Diocese of Wichita and attended a stewardship funded grade school. Another bias was that the researcher's children attended stewardship funded Catholic schools which would not have been possible had they been tuition funded due to affordability. Finally, the researcher had lived in the Diocese of Wichita. A high number of men from this diocese have entered the seminary from 1997 to 2017.

The researcher was aware of the potential for bias yet believed that the interview questions asked would provide insight into seminarians' perceptions of major influences on their decision to enter the seminary. Questions 3 and 4 allowed for follow up questions which were used to provide clarity and to avoid the possibility of bias. A suggested validity strategy Creswell (2014) mentioned was for the researcher to provide a self-reflection and explain any known potential preferences that may affect the study. The researcher acknowledged that the nature of the qualitative collection and analysis may be subjective. To minimize subjectivity, the researcher recorded the interview and conducted a member check on each interviewee's transcription. The researcher made every effort not to allow previous life, education, religion, and family experiences to interfere with data collection and analysis.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

An Institutional Review Board (IRB) request was submitted to Baker University on October 5, 2017 (Appendix A). The Baker University IRB approved the request on

November 2, 2017 (Appendix B). After IRB approval, the researcher initiated the study on January 9, 2018.

Prior to collecting data, an online survey was designed using a software tool known as Quintessential Instructional Archive (QUIA) (Appendix C) to gather responses from individuals who were emailed access to a link. Catholic high school principals across the United States were sent an email January 9, 2018 (Appendix D) that included an invitation for them to participate in the study and a letter encouraging participation by the Superintendent of the Diocese of Wichita, Bob Voboril. The link (Appendix E) included access to a survey with 4 questions. Catholic high school principals who volunteered to participate clicked on the link, input the password (study) and responded to the survey questions. Participation in the survey was completely voluntary and principals understood they gave consent for use of the data in the study by electing to submit responses. A reminder email with the link to the survey was sent two weeks after the initial email on January 27, 2018 (Appendix F). Survey responses were recorded in a spreadsheet by QUIA. The survey data collection period was closed on February 17, 2018.

Structured interviews (Appendix G) with follow-up questions were conducted over the phone, and recorded by an audio recording device. Each of the participants in the structured interviews were emailed a consent form before the interview stating an understanding that the interview would be recorded and transcribed, and that the interview would be viewed only by the researcher and any comments would be confidential (see Appendix H). The participants emailed the signed consent forms, as an attached pdf, back to the researcher prior to the interviews. All structured interviews

were then recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Each participant's name was coded, such as TF1, or SF1, for interviewees' anonymity. Consent forms were stored in a secure office drawer in the researcher's residence. Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. All phone interviews were conducted one-on-one and recorded using an audio recorder. The researcher then transcribed each recorded interview into password-protected documents that were stored on a secure database. Using a member check to ensure the accuracy of responses, a follow up email including the interviewee's transcripts was sent to each interviewee. The interviewees were asked to review the transcripts and make any necessary corrections. The structured interviews along with member checks began on February 6, 2018 and ended on March 7, 2018.

### **Data Analysis and Synthesis**

According to Lunenburg and Irby, the researcher "should carefully consider each of [the] research questions or hypotheses" (2008, p. 200) as well as contemplate the most appropriate test to use for the research analyses (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). The following questions were addressed in this study. Research question 1 is listed below with a hypothesis and the analysis used. Research question 2 is listed with the analysis used.

**RQ1.** To what extent is the number of graduates who attend the seminary different between stewardship funded Catholic high schools and tuition funded Catholic high schools?

**H1.** There is a difference in the number of graduates who attend seminary between stewardship funded Catholic high schools and tuition funded Catholic high schools.

An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to address RQ1. The two sample means were compared. The level of significance was set at .05.

**RQ2.** What are seminarian's perceptions about the factors or experiences that influenced their entry into the seminary?

The researcher recorded phone interviews and prepared a transcript that contained word for word written renditions of the questions and answers. The transcripts were returned to the seminarians to approve for accuracy. Next, the researcher coded the transcripts by locating excerpts that had relevant concepts, themes, events, and examples (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The coded transcripts marked with the same codes were combined to generate themes. The summaries were labeled according to the pseudonyms given to each seminarian.

### **Limitations**

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) described research limitations as conditions that are not under the control of the researcher. One limitation in this study was the secondary Catholic high school principals' return of the online survey. An adequate return of surveys is needed to provide statistical reliability at the .05 level. Incomplete surveys were not included in the analysis. A second limitation which may have applied to the interviews with seminarians was their ability to communicate. Seminarians not fluent in the English language may have had difficulty communicating answers to interview questions.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 described the mixed method research design used in this study detailing the research design, selection of participants, measurement, survey instruments used,

researchers perspective, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, and limitations. This research method allowed for further exploration and understanding of the perceptions of the underlying influences on the decision to enroll in the seminary. Chapter 4 presents descriptive statistics, quantitative data analysis, qualitative content analysis, results of hypothesis testing, and a summary of the analysis of structured interviews.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

The purpose of the current study was to examine the relationship between the funding models of Catholic high schools and seminary enrollment. A second purpose was to examine seminarians' perceptions of the factors and experiences that influenced their decision to enroll in the seminary. Presented in this chapter are the key findings obtained from a survey of principals of stewardship and tuition funded Catholic high schools and phone interviews with current seminarians who attended stewardship funded and tuition funded Catholic high schools. Chapter 4 summarizes the descriptive statistics, quantitative data analysis, and the results of the qualitative content analysis.

#### **Descriptive Statistics**

A survey was emailed to 737 Catholic high school principals throughout the United States. There were 84 respondents. Usable data were received from 73 high school principals. Ten seminarians from seminary colleges throughout the United States were interviewed between February 6, 2018 and March 7, 2018.

Five interview participants who attended stewardship funded Catholic high schools and 5 interview participants who attended tuition funded Catholic high schools were asked 4 questions and follow up questions to provide further explanation or clarification. Paper copies of transcripts were reviewed and marked with a highlighter to identify common words, phrases, common themes, and ideas. Tables were designed to illustrate number of similarities and differences in the content analysis responses and paragraphs were constructed to report the information presented.

#### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

The researcher used Microsoft Excel to analyze the quantitative responses from the survey. The responses from the QUIA survey included the percentage of the 2017 annual budget that was supported through feeder parish financial support; the percentage the 2017 annual budget that was supported through tuition; and the number of graduating men who entered the seminary in 2017. Question number 4 on the survey was used to address the following research question.

**RQ1.** To what extent is the number of graduates who attend the seminary different between stewardship funded Catholic high schools and tuition funded Catholic high schools?

**HI.** There is a difference in the number of graduates who attend seminary between stewardship funded Catholic high schools and tuition funded Catholic high schools.

The quantitative survey results did not render an appropriate number of responses that would provide statistical reliability. Of those principals who were sent the survey (n=737) fewer than 10% (n=73) provided usable survey data resulting in a 9.9% return rate. Therefore, the sample size was too small to provide reliable results from the *t*-test analysis for HI. The hypothesis testing was not conducted.

Table 3 illustrates the number of seminarians disaggregated by percentage of stewardship funding. Those principals who reported 0 % stewardship were counted as tuition funded schools. According to the table, 38 schools reported 0 seminarians, 5 reported 1 seminarian, 2 reported 2 seminarians, and 1 reported 6 seminarians – for a total of 15 seminarians graduating from the 46 schools reporting only tuition funding. The principals from the 27 schools who reported a range of 1% to 90% of the annual

budget funded through stewardship reported 6 graduates enrolling in a seminary. More individuals who attended tuition than stewardship funded Catholic high schools entered the seminary.

Table 3

*Number of Seminarians Disaggregated by Percentage of Stewardship Funding*

Stewardship %	Number of Seminarians					Total
	0	1	2	6		
0	38	5	2	1		15
1	5	0	0	0		0
3	1	0	0	0		0
5	0	1	0	0		1
6	0	1	0	0		1
8	0	1	0	0		1
10	1	0	0	0		0
14	1	0	0	0		0
20	3	0	0	0		0
21	1	0	0	0		0
25	3	0	0	0		0
27	1	0	0	0		0
30	2	0	0	0		0
50	1	0	0	0		0
55	1	0	0	0		0
75	1	0	0	0		0
78	0	1	0	0		1
84	0	0	1	0		2
90	1	0	0	0		0

## **Qualitative Content Analysis**

The following information is based on phone interviews with five seminarians who attended tuition funded Catholic high schools and five seminarians who attended stewardship funded Catholic high schools. The five seminarians who attended tuition funded Catholic high schools are identified as TF1, TF2, TF3, TF4, and TF5. The five seminarians who attended Stewardship funded Catholic high schools are identified as SF1, SF2, SF3, SF4, and SF5.

**RQ2.** What are seminarian's perceptions about the factors or experiences that influenced their entry into the seminary?

Qualitative data were analyzed and synthesized using a content analysis approach, as presented in Chapter 3 to address RQ2. Seminarians were asked questions to determine their perceptions about the factors or experiences that influenced their entry into the seminary. The transcripts were returned to the seminarians for a member check and corrections were made by the researcher. The researcher coded the transcripts by locating excerpts that contained relevant concepts, events, and examples. The coded excerpts marked with the same codes were combined to generate themes. The summaries were labeled according to the pseudonyms assigned to each seminarian. The following paragraphs summarize common themes for each interview question.

**Interview Question 1.** When did you first feel called to your vocation? Six of the 10 seminarians (SF1, SF2, SF4, SF5, TF1, and TF3) reported they felt the first internal movement toward becoming a priest between age 5 and 10. SF5 stated, "I wanted to be a priest for as long as I can remember when I was 5." TF3 and SF4 both responded that the first call to a vocation to the priesthood was around second grade during First

Communion preparation. According to TF3, “Looking back, I can trace it to my first communion in second grade.” SF4 said, “I think probably in second grade at first communion preparation at my grade school.” SF3, TF2, TF4, and TF5 responded that they did not feel the calling until later in either middle school or high school. An example of seminarian responses about feeling the calling later in life was from SF3, “Well, I ran from it in the seventh grade but it wasn’t really until my sophomore year.”

**Interview Question 2.** Describe the time in your life when you confirmed your vocation and the type of encouragement you received. Nine of the 10 respondents reported they received confirmation of their call to the vocation to the priesthood while in high school. TF3 stated he was a freshman in high school when he received confirmation, TF4 explained that he was a junior in high school, and SF2 reported he was a senior in high school. TF5 did not feel the confirmation in high school, but rather later while in college. He stated, “Mostly in college but I thought it was a cool thing in the seventh grade.”

The second part of question 2 illustrated in Table 4 has delineated coded responses based on the sources of encouragement disaggregated by the funding model. Points of encouragement came from various sources such as priests, teachers, friends, parents, sisters, and the parish congregation. Seminarians who attended both types of funded high schools reported their parents were the most frequent source of encouragement to enter the seminary. The next two most frequent sources of encouragement reported by seminarians from the tuition funding model were priests and teachers. The stewardship funding model seminarians reported the same number for all

three sources: parents, priests, and teachers. Table 4 illustrates who provided encouragement to become a priest disaggregated by funding model.

Table 4

*Qualitative Themes: Sources of Encouragement Disaggregated by Funding Model*

Source of Encouragement	Funding Model		Total
	Tuition	Stewardship	
Priests	2	4	6
Teachers	3	4	7
Parents	4	4	8
Friends	1	3	4
Parish	1	2	3

**Interview Question 3.** Describe the type of encouragement you received while attending Catholic high school. Table 5 illustrates the responses to question number three regarding the source of encouragement seminarians received while attending Catholic high school disaggregated by funding model. Sources of encouragement included the high school chaplain, teachers, friends, or activities provided by the school that may have influenced their decision to enter the seminary.

Four seminarians from stewardship funded high schools reported encouragement from the high school chaplain while no seminarians from the tuition funded high schools articulated this choice. SF4 responded, “There were a number of priests like (anonymous) who was the chaplain at the school who were really big in encouraging me and helping me through my discernment.” SF5 said, “Again, having a personable chaplain and being able to just walk into his office at any time and just go in and talk

about a vocation to the priesthood.” ST3 offered that his strongest encouragement was from the chaplain for the high school as well as a men’s group he belonged to.

Of the 10 seminarians, six (SF1, SF2, SF3, SF4, SF5, TF2), stated receiving encouragement from their teachers with five of the six having attended a stewardship funded high school. SF1 replied, “Teachers especially were very influential and at least fostered the call.” SF2 noted, “Teachers, friends, and family encouragement all around in all aspects of my life. According to SF3,

The sisters [who were also faculty of the school] very clearly responded to the vocation of consecrated life and gave a great example that a vocation isn’t supposed to keep us within the reins of God’s hands in that He was going to control us the rest of our lives.

SF4 disclosed, “(anonymous) my religion teacher. He really encouraged us to discover Christ and through our transition to college encouraged us to continue our faith.” TF2 offered, “Maybe three or four of the seven theology faculty were supportive in general.”

Six of the 10 seminarians, (SF1, SF3, SF4, SF5, TF4, TF5), agreed feeling encouragement as a result of faith-based activities offered at the high school such as Mass, retreats, vocation talks, or visits from other seminarians. Of those six, four seminarians attended a stewardship funded high school and two attended a tuition funded high school. SF1 reported, “A call to the priesthood is fostered through people but also by the sacraments and teaching about the faith in classes.” SF3 reported, “Having the seminarians come back for all school Masses and knowing those from the group who went off to the seminary were a good influence.” SF4 reported, “And of course the guys from a group I belonged to were supportive and prayed with me and walked me along the

way.” SF5 answered, “We had a vocation week, we would draw pictures about vocations and then the required retreats that we did every year with our class where we had to talk about vocations.” Two seminarians from each funding model high school (SF3, SF4, TF3, TF5) answered receiving encouragement from their friends. TF4 offered,

The only thing I did do was I went on a sophomore retreat that was a couple of hours long and twice I went on the junior year retreat which was an overnight as well as the senior year retreat.

TF5 summarized, “Mass on Friday, Stations of the Cross. For me and my Catholic friends, that’s just what we do.”

Table 5

*Encouragement Received from Catholic High School Faculty, Staff, Students, and Activities Disaggregated by Funding Model*

Source of Encouragement	Funding Model		
	Tuition	Stewardship	Total
High School Chaplain	0	4	4
Teachers	1	5	6
Peer High School Friends	1	2	3
Activities	2	4	4

**Interview Question 4.** Describe how your Catholic high school education was funded? Five of the seminarians interviewed attended schools that required tuition paid for either by parents or another family member such as a grandparent and five of the seminarians attended a high school that was funded by stewardship. When asked interview question 4, TF4 stated, “Every student had to pay tuition. It might have been \$4000.00 when I started but is up to \$12,000.” TF1 reported, “It was tuition based and



my grandparents supported both myself and my 2 cousins through high school.”

Responses from TF2, TF4, and TF5 were similar. These three seminarians agreed they were required to pay a set amount of tuition to attend the school.

An example of a response from a seminarian who attended stewardship funded Catholic schools was made by SF5 who stated, “My parents and many parishioners tithed 8% to 10%. Then my parish could provide an education for free at my grade school, and then the parish would pay the high school a certain amount, so I could attend there.”

Similar to the response that SF5 gave, SF1, SF2, SF3, and SF4 shared that their education was paid for through the stewardship of their parish.

**Follow-up Question 1 for Tuition Funded Model Seminarians.** In order to gain a deeper understanding of the seminarians’ perspective follow-up questions were added. The follow up question for seminarians who attended tuition funded Catholic schools was: Do you feel your high school encouragement would have been different if it was a stewardship funded high school? A theme emerged suggesting that the level of engagement or investment in the student’s education would be stronger for the parish, the students, and those who wish to attend a Catholic school which could potentially expand the possibility for more young men to consider the vocation to the priesthood. This question was presented to tuition funded Catholic school seminarians because the responses of the seminarians who attended stewardship funded Catholic schools indicated the seminarians received more encouragement from faculty, staff, teachers, and friends. TF1 reported,

I would say that it is very obvious to me that the Wichita seminarians are very easily and happily ready to go back to support their school in their diocese and I

think that's not always something that I see in seminarians from my diocese. I think that alone speaks to the fact that they are happy with the education and faith they received and they in turn want to support that. They feel that it's something worthwhile.

TF2 reported, "I don't think that high school really did much for me. Rather it was more about the relationships I formed with some of the guys I met in college that sustained me and supported me through my vocation." TF3 reported,

Yes, definitely to have more people involved that would enable a lot more guys to think about where they are called to the priesthood or not. It seems since the whole parish is involved they would be a lot more open to encouraging vocations to the priesthood or religious life because of the investment they have already given.

TF4 reported,

It's tough to say. I can say that my grade school was doing very well in that there were waiting lists and a strong desire of many to go because of the academic rigor on top of the Catholic identity of the grade school. With the finances supported, I'm not sure I can understand the questions.

TF5 reported,

Culturally it would be different because now the richer families go there or those who were really dedicated to their faith would do whatever they could to send their children there. If anyone could go there would be more of a cultural mix and that would increase vocations.

### **Follow-up Question 2 for Stewardship Funded Model Seminarians.**

Seminarians from stewardship funded Catholic schools were asked the following follow-up question: Do you think you would have been able to attend a Catholic high school if you had to pay tuition? The following responses provided a theme suggesting that if the seminarian's parents had to pay tuition in order to attend the Catholic school, it would have posed a hardship on their family or attending a Catholic school would not have been an option. If a Catholic high school was not an option, an additional follow up was asked to determine whether or not the seminarians would have considered entering the seminary.

SF4 answered, "I know mom and dad would have worked their hardest to get us into a Catholic school but definitely don't know if we would have been there without the help of the parish." SF2 stated, "There is no way. I don't think I would be looking at being ordained in three and a half months if I went to a public school." SF1 said,

I know in my family personally we did not have any money. I would have struggled to go to a public school and there is no way I could have gone to a Catholic school without the support of the parish.

The emphasis on vocation awareness and faith formation was stronger in the stewardship funded high schools than in the tuition funded high schools. SF1 and SF5 reported that vocations awareness was strong as a result of a group he belonged to, vocation weeks, retreats, visits to the adoration chapel and the availability to receive the sacraments. TF2 commented that he wished his high school would have made the Catholic faith a center piece rather than a show piece. TFI, TF2, TF3, and TF4 all indicated that their high school had more of a college preparatory focus and that the

Catholic faith took a back seat. TF2 went so far as to suggest that his school did not have a chaplain because the administration feared they would have to let him teach. TF3 stated, “Catholicity is present but I wished it would have been more present.” TF4 reported that the majority of students in his school attended because of the reputation of having strong academics and not because it was Catholic. Regarding the Catholic identity, he continued by saying, “it’s definitely something that is lacking at that high school.” SF1 reported that some of the classes he took set his heart on fire talking and learning about the faith. SF2 seminarian shared that he fully intended not to live out his faith in high school but as a result of good teachers, friends, and sisters, he was made to fall in love with his faith again. SF5 when recalling discussions about the culture of vocations he’s had over the past eight years with classmates and professors stated that they think Wichita is a few steps forward in that it’s normal for a guy to consider priesthood and seminary even right out of high school. He specifically commented on a conversation with a classmate from Texas who said it was pretty much unheard of for a guy to go right into seminary out of high school because his school was just a college preparatory school that happened to be Catholic.

### **Summary**

Chapter 4 contained the results from the analysis of responses to a quantitative survey comparing seminary enrollment between high schools with two different funding models – stewardship vs tuition. The quantitative survey results were not deemed reliable due to a low response rate. This chapter also provided a content analysis of qualitative interview transcripts related to the perceptions of seminarians who attended stewardship funded and tuition funded high schools, about when they were called to their

vocation, the encouragement they received, when they made the decision to enter the seminary, the encouragement they received from their Catholic high school, and how their Catholic high school was funded. For deeper insights regarding funding and encouragement to enter seminary follow up questions were included. Chapter 5 includes a study summary, findings related to literature, and conclusions.

## Chapter 5

### Interpretation and Recommendations

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the study including an overview of the problem, the purpose statement, research questions, and methodology. Additionally, this chapter addresses the major findings of the current study and findings related to literature. The chapter also provides implications for action, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

#### Study Summary

The following section provides a summary of the study. The summary includes an overview of the problem relating to the declining number of seminarians in the United States. Second, an explanation of the purpose of the study is provided. The third section presents an overview of the mixed methodology which utilized surveys of Catholic high school principals and interviews of seminarians.

**Overview of the problem.** America's Catholic population continues to rise, but seminary enrollment is not increasing (Breitenstein, 2014). Catholic schools provide a pipeline to the seminary yet many are facing financial hardships resulting in higher tuition rates and fewer students (Gray, 2014a). It is important to find out if there is a relationship between funding models of Catholic high schools and the number of graduates who are entering the seminary.

**Purpose statement and research questions.** A decline in the number of seminarians has resulted in a decline in the number of Catholic priests. This study examined the relationship between Catholic high school funding models (stewardship or tuition) and seminary enrollment. Additionally, this study evaluated seminarians'

perceptions of the factors and experiences that influenced their decision to enroll in the seminary.

**Review of the methodology.** The mixed method research design was used in the current study. An online QUIA survey was sent to 737 principals of Catholic high schools asking them to provide information about the percentage of the annual budget supported either by stewardship or tuition funding and the number of graduates who matriculated to a seminary post high school graduation. Survey responses were received from 73 participants. In the qualitative portion of the study, five seminarians who attended a stewardship funded high school and five seminarians who attended a tuition funded high school were interviewed via phone. The researcher recorded the phone interviews and prepared a transcript that contained word for word written renditions of the questions and answers. The transcripts were returned to the seminarians to approve for accuracy. Next, the researcher coded the transcripts by locating excerpts that contained relevant concepts, events, and examples. The transcripts marked with the same codes were combined to generate themes. The summaries were labeled according to the pseudonyms given to each seminarian.

**Major findings.** Hypothesis testing was not conducted on the data generated by the QUIA survey due to the low number of responses. However demographic data indicated that more individuals from tuition rather than stewardship funded Catholic high schools entered the seminary. Qualitative results revealed that nine out of 10 seminarians felt the initial call to the priesthood during their early elementary years and was confirmed as early as eighth grade and as late as the freshman year in college. The second major finding was that types of encouragement seminarians received when they

shared their decision to enter the seminary varied depending upon the type of funding model used in the diocese. Seminarians from stewardship funding Catholic schools reported the top three types of encouragement came from priests, family, and parents while seminarians from tuition funded Catholic schools came from parents. A third major finding was that four out of the five seminarians from stewardship funded Catholic high schools would not have been able to attend had their family been required to pay tuition. A difference in Catholic culture between the tuition based Catholic high schools and stewardship based Catholic high schools emerged as the fourth major finding. Seminarians who reported a stronger Catholic culture through various activities experienced more encouragement for their decision to enter seminary. The Catholic culture of the two types of funded high schools appeared to differ in that the emphasis on vocation awareness and faith formation was stronger in the stewardship funded high schools than in the tuition funded high schools which were more academic based.

### **Findings Related to the Literature**

Similar to the research by Kramerek and Gautier (2017) and the Archdiocese of Cincinnati (2010), the current study supported the findings of the call to the priesthood during the early elementary years. Kramerek & Gautier (2017) indicated that the majority of seminarians received encouragement to enter seminary from someone in their life such as a parish priest, friend, or another parishioner. Interviews with seminarians in the current study also found the source of encouragement to enter seminary came from priests, friends, or others in their life. Sparling, (2015) found that many seminarians would not have been able to attend a Catholic high school without tuition support. All five of the seminarians who attended stewardship funded Catholic high schools in the



current study corroborated Sparling's findings. The rising cost of tuition to attend a Catholic school is causing many schools to close thus reducing the number of students who could potentially enter the seminary (Sentell, 2013). Olofson (2017) found Catholic high schools that offer ministry programs and provide experiences to help young men grow in faith and realize their calling is related to Catholic culture in denominational high schools. The fourth major finding in the current study supported Olofson's finding. Seminarians who attended tuition funded Catholic high schools reported a college preparatory focus while seminarians who attended stewardship funded Catholic high schools reported a strong Catholic culture.

### **Conclusions**

The United States is experiencing a shortage of priests needed to serve the Catholic population that can only be addressed by increasing the number of seminarians (McCarthy, 1998). Catholic schools have been found to be a pipeline for vocations (Gray, 2014a). The effectiveness of Catholic schools in fostering vocations should be studied. Seminarians have reported first experiencing the call in early elementary and confirming that call in high school (Kramerek & Gautier, 2017). The vast majority of seminarians in the current study reported receiving a call to the priesthood during attendance at a Catholic elementary school. The current study also verified that attending a Catholic high school was a significant factor related to seminary enrollment. Seminarians reported receiving encouragement to enter the priesthood from priests, teachers, parents, friends, and parishioners. All of the seminarians who attended a stewardship funded high school indicated it would have been difficult to attend a Catholic school without the significant financial support this funding model provided. Interview

participants who attended a stewardship funded Catholic high school reported a greater Catholic culture focus than seminarians who attended a tuition funding model high school. The latter reported a greater college preparatory focus. The findings of this study may be of interest to diocesan and Catholic school leaders. A factor related to seminary enrollment is Catholic school attendance. For some seminarians attending a Catholic school would have been unlikely without a significant reduction in tuition. This study found different types of encouragement for pursuing a vocation to the priesthood among seminarians who attended stewardship vs tuition funded Catholic high schools. In addition, seminarians reported stewardship funded Catholic high schools to have a greater emphasis on 'Catholic culture' than tuition funded Catholic high schools.

There is a critical need for additional priests to serve the needs of a growing Catholic population throughout the United States. The results of this study may be of interest to diocesan and Catholic high school leaders as they reflect upon the role the type of funding supporting a Catholic education (stewardship vs tuition) plays in the lives of individuals who pursue seminary study. The following section provides implications for action, recommendations for further research, and concluding remarks.

**Implications for action.** This mixed method study was designed to inform diocesan and Catholic school leaders in their decision-making process related to the impact funding models (stewardship vs tuition) have on individuals who pursue seminary study. Findings from the current study indicate Catholic schools need to create support systems for those who may consider a vocation to the priesthood that includes parents, teachers, priests, parishioners, and students. This type of study can provide meaningful

data for diocesan and school leaders to aid in addressing the current and future priest shortage.

**Recommendations for future research.** The findings from the current study related to funding models (stewardship vs tuition) support recommendations for further research. The first recommendation is to replicate the survey but with an increased number of respondents to increase statistical reliability. The second recommendation is to conduct a survey that allows participants to provide information about all of the most common funding models (e.g. stewardship, tuition, scholarship, sponsors). A third recommendation is to conduct a longitudinal study to determine whether or not trends exist in types of pre-seminary Catholic school funding models that may be related to seminary matriculation.

Additionally, the qualitative portion of the current study should be replicated and include more seminarians to determine factors related to the call to a vocation and individuals who provided encouragement. A study could also be conducted that focuses on seminarians perceptions about Catholic culture and what variables define this construct in Catholic high schools.

There could be additional studies in dioceses that are experiencing high numbers of graduates entering seminary. Specific schools that have experienced success should be studied to determine what variables have contributed to post high school enrollment in a seminary. There is a gap in the research relating to strategies, activities, and initiatives in Catholic schools to increase the number of Catholic high school graduates enrolling in the seminary.

**Concluding remarks.** The United States is facing a decline in the number of ordained priests (Mickens, 2014). Seminary enrollment has become flat resulting in many church closings or consolidations of parishes. There currently are not enough priests to minister to the Catholic population throughout the United States (Breitenstein, 2014). In a nation where the Catholic population is increasing (CARA, 2016) steps must be taken to increase the number of men pursuing the priesthood. Catholic school education and the importance of funding and enhancing Catholic culture are major factors that support vocations. The results of the current research study may aid diocesan and Catholic school leaders in making important decisions related to the formation of future seminarians.

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## Appendices

**Appendix A. IRB Application Form**





## IRB Request

Date October 12, 2017

IRB Protocol Number \_\_\_\_\_  
(IRB use only)

### I. Research Investigator(s) (students must list faculty sponsor)

Department(s) School of Professional and Graduate Studies

Name	Signature	
1. <u>Eva M. Harmon</u>	<u>Eva Harmon</u> <small>Digitally signed by Eva Harmon Date: 2017.10.12 15:10:04 -0500</small>	Principal Investigator
2. <u>Terry Behrendt</u>	<u>Terry W. Behrendt Ed.D.</u> <small>Digitally signed by Terry W. Behrendt Ed.D. Date: 2017.10.12 15:09:18 -0500</small>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check if faculty sponsor
3. <u>Margaret Waterman</u>	<u>Margaret Waterman</u> <small>Digitally signed by Margaret Waterman Date: 2017.10.12 09:57:44 -0500</small>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check if faculty sponsor
4. _____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Check if faculty sponsor

Principal investigator contact information

Phone 316.208.9144

**Note: When submitting your finalized, signed form to the IRB, please ensure that you cc all investigators and faculty sponsors using their official Baker University (or respective organization's) email addresses.**

Email EvaMHarmon@stu.bakeru.edu,

Address 522 Limuel,  
Wichita, KS 67235

Faculty sponsor contact information

Phone 316.773.1175

Email tbehrendt@cox.net

Expected Category of Review:  Exempt  Expedited  Full  Renewal

### II. Protocol Title

The Relationship between the Funding Model of  
Catholic High Schools and Seminary Enrollment

### III. Summary:

The following questions must be answered. Be specific about exactly what participants will experience and about the protections that have been included to safeguard participants from harm.

A. In a sentence or two, please describe the background and purpose of the research.

**Catholic school enrollment is down and the number of seminarians graduating to serve parishes needs is not addressing existing and future projections of retiring priests in the Catholic parishes. This research will investigate if funding models for Catholic high schools has a relationship to the number of high school graduates who enter seminary.**

B. Briefly describe each condition, manipulation, or archival data set to be included within the study.

**An on-line survey will be emailed to about 600 Catholic high schools to determine the percentage of funding support from feeder parishes during the 2015-2016 school years and specific details including the number of graduates who entered seminary. This collected archival data from the Catholic high schools will be followed up with structured interviews of seminarians to explore relationships between funding models of Catholic high schools and those who enter seminary.**

### IV. Protocol Details

A. What measures or observations will be taken in the study? If any questionnaire or other instruments are used, provide a brief description and attach a copy.

**A request will be emailed to Catholic high schools along with a link to an on-line survey that principals will voluntarily respond to. The Catholic schools' archival data will be collected, placed in a spreadsheet, and analyzed. Seminarians who attended tuition-based and seminarians who attended stewardship-based funded high schools will voluntarily respond to structured interviews to explore the possible correlation between high school funding and entrance into seminary. (See copy of on-line survey and seminarian questionnaire attached)**

B. Will the subjects encounter the risk of psychological, social, physical, or legal risk? If so, please describe the nature of the risk and any measures designed to mitigate that risk.

**No, there is no psychological, social, physical or legal risk for participants. A number will be used to provide anonymity to participants. Only the researcher will know which schools and seminarians responded and that information will not be a part of the analysis. The returned surveys and structured interview responses will be maintained in locked storage to assure anonymity and following the dissertation defense the identifiers in the data collected will be deleted/shredded.**

C. Will any stress to subjects be involved? If so, please describe.

**No, there will not be any stress to subjects.**

**Not applicable**

D. Will the subjects be deceived or misled in any way? If so, include an outline or script of the debriefing.

**No, subjects will not be deceived or misled in any way.**

**Not applicable**

E. Will there be a request for information which subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive? If so, please include a description.

**No personal information will be requested from the Catholic schools in the on-line survey. Seminarians may provide personal information during the interview but their anonymity will be protected by the researcher. Answers to questions like when did you first feel called to enter the seminary, may have personal responses.**

F. Will the subjects be presented with materials which might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading? If so, please describe.

**No materials will be presented that might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading.**

**Not applicable**

G. Approximately how much time will be demanded of each subject?

**An estimated fifteen minutes could be spent on completing the on-line survey by the high school principal or secretary. Approximately forty-five minutes will be needed for the structured interview and another fifteen minutes for the follow-up member check by the ten seminarians.**

H. Who will be the subjects in this study? How will they be solicited or contacted? Provide an outline or script of the information which will be provided to subjects prior to their volunteering to participate. Include a copy of any written solicitation as well as an outline of any oral solicitation.

**Approximately 600 Catholic high school principals from across the United States will be invited, via e-mail, to voluntarily participate in a brief on-line survey and share historical school data. Seminarians will volunteer to interview with the researcher regarding their perceptions of why they entered the seminary. The e-mail, survey, letter to participates, and structured interview questions are attached for IRB member review.**

I. What steps will be taken to insure that each subject's participation is voluntary? What if any inducements will be offered to the subjects for their participation?

**All on-line participants will be informed that they can choose not to complete the survey or submit their responses. Those who are interviewed can choose to participate or not and their participation is strictly voluntary. For both groups their participation is completely voluntary. No inducements will be offered for their participation.**

J. How will you insure that the subjects give their consent prior to participating? Will a written consent form be used? If so, include the form. If not, explain why not.

**Consent will be given by school principals/secretaries to participate in the study when electing to participate in on-line survey through submission. Participating seminarians will be provided a letter that they sign indicating agreement to participate prior to the structured interview.**

K. Will any aspect of the data be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with the subject? If so, please explain the necessity.

**No identifiers with the subjects will be in any permanent record. Only the investigator will retain documentation from respondents. All information will be maintained in locked storage by the researcher.**

L. Will the fact that a subject did or did not participate in a specific experiment or study be made part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher, or employer? If so, explain.

**The fact that a subject did or did not participate in the study will not be made part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher or employer.**

M. What steps will be taken to insure the confidentiality of the data? Where will it be stored? How long will it be stored? What will be done with the data after the study is completed?

**The documentation will remain with the investigator in locked storage for the duration of the study. Upon successful completion of the dissertation, the documentation will be shredded or deleted from the researchers password protected computer.**

N. If there are any risks involved in the study, are there any offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society?

**There are no risks involved in the study. Subjects will not be identified in the study.**

**Not applicable**

O. Will any data from files or archival data be used? If so, please describe.

**Yes but only as summative data and with no identifiers to maintain participating schools and seminarians anonymity.**

**Appendix B. IRB Approval Letter**

*Baker University Institutional Review Board*

November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017

Dear Eva Harmon and Terry Behrendt,

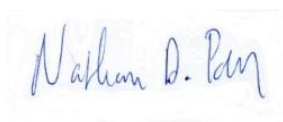
The Baker University IRB has reviewed your project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.

Please inform this Committee or myself when this project is terminated or completed. As noted above, you must also provide IRB with an annual status report and receive approval for maintaining your status. If you have any questions, please contact me at [npoell@bakeru.edu](mailto:npoell@bakeru.edu) or 785.594.4582.

Sincerely,



*Nathan Poell, MA*  
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee  
Scott Crenshaw  
Erin Morris, PhD  
Jamin Perry, PhD  
Susan Rogers, PhD

## Appendix C. QUIA Survey

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

The Relationship Between the Funding Models of Catholic High Schools and Seminary Enrollment

The following survey:

1. Name of School
  
  
  
  
  
2. What percentage of your 2016-17 annual budget was supported through tuition?
  
  
  
  
  
3. What percentage of your 2016-17 annual budget was supported through the stewardship of feeder parishes?
  
  
  
  
  
4. How many of your graduates went on to Seminary.  
2017 \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix D. Email to Principals**

Dear Principal,

My name is Eva Harmon and I am a doctoral student at Baker University in Baldwin, Kansas. I am currently working on my dissertation which is entitled, The Relationship between the Funding Model of Catholic High Schools and Seminary Enrollment.

This study will include an analysis of historical data from the school year 2016 and 2017. Please consider completing the survey by clicking on the survey link below and inputting the secret word [study]. Included in this email is a letter of support from Mr. Robert Voboril, Superintendent of the Diocese of Wichita.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me by phone ([316-208-9144](tel:316-208-9144)) or email ([eharmon2016@gmail.com](mailto:eharmon2016@gmail.com)).

I appreciate your time and effort.

Survey link: <http://www.quia.com/sv/825716.html>

Secret Word- Study

Thank you for your assistance with this important study,

Eva Harmon  
Doctoral Student

**Appendix E. Letter from Bob Voboril**



Catholic School Office  
CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WICHITA

424 North Broadway • Wichita, Kansas 67202  
PHONE: 316-269-3950 • FAX: 316-269-2486  
WEB SITE: [www.CatholicDioceseOfWichita.org](http://www.CatholicDioceseOfWichita.org)

March 6, 2017

Dear Catholic School Principal,

As you may know, the Catholic high schools of the Diocese of Wichita are operated in a unique manner. For thirty years now, our high schools have not charged tuition to any practicing Catholic. Instead our high schools are funded through the financial stewardship of the parishioners of the Diocese. Last year, this stewardship totaled more than \$12 million.

We are continually evaluating the effectiveness of our stewardship model, but as you can imagine, it is difficult to make comparisons when no one else uses our model quite this way. So we are grateful that Eva Harmon, one of our principals, chose as her doctoral thesis topic an investigation of the impact of stewardship and tuition on religious vocations.

Eva has developed a brief survey for you to complete. This survey is going to diocesan high schools in a four state region. I would be most grateful if you would complete this survey and return it to Mrs. Harmon so that we can further our understanding of the impact of stewardship.

Respectfully,

Bob Voboril  
Superintendent of Catholic Schools

**Appendix F. Follow-up Email**

Dear Principal,

I am currently working on my dissertation which is entitled, The Relationship between the Funding Model of Catholic High Schools and Seminary Enrollment. On January 9th I requested that you fill out a survey to help me with my research. If you have already done so, thank you. If not, I ask that you consider completing the survey below in order for me to complete my project. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me by phone ([316-208-9144](tel:316-208-9144)) or email ([eharmon2016@gmail.com](mailto:eharmon2016@gmail.com)).

Survey link: <http://www.quia.com/sv/825716.html>  
Secret Word- Study

Thank you for your assistance with this important study,

Sincerely,

---

Eva Harmon

## **Appendix G. Structured Interview Questions**

### Structured Interview Questions

1. When did you first feel called to your vocation?
2. Describe the time in your life when you confirmed your vocation and the type of encouragement you received.
3. Describe the type of encouragement you received while attending Catholic high school?
4. Describe how your Catholic high school education was funded?

### Follow-up Question for Tuition Funded Seminarians

Do you feel your high school encouragement would have been different if it was a stewardship funded high school?

### Follow-up Question for Stewardship Funded Seminarians

Do you think you would have been able to attend a Catholic high school if you had to pay tuition?



**Appendix H. Consent Form**

Dear Seminarian,

Thank you for your participation in this study. As part of the IRB process, we are asked to provide consent or permission to use this data in my study. By signing this consent form, you understand that this interview will be recorded and transcribed. In addition, the interview will be viewed only by the researcher and any comments are confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_Signature \_\_\_\_\_Date

Seminarian

\_\_\_\_\_Signature \_\_\_\_\_Date

Researcher

This document will be stored in lock storage by Eva Harmon and following the dissertation presentation this consent form will be shredded.