By Katherine Talalas
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Few documents of the Second Vatican Council have impacted Catholic education as greatly as “Gaudium et Spes,” said a panel of speakers Feb. 2.

“No other document gives us the crucial role of Catholic higher education in the church,” said Massimo Faggioli, an assistant professor of theology at the Center for Catholic Studies at St. Thomas University in St. Paul, Minn.

Faggioli was one of three speakers on a panel that addressed the topic “Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Advancing the Insights of ‘Gaudium et Spes’.” He was joined by Maryann Cusimano Love, associate professor of international relations at The Catholic University of America in Washington, and Father Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities USA.

The panel discussion came on the second day of the annual conference of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, held Feb. 1-3 in Washington.

“Living the Vision of ‘Gaudium et Spes’ in Catholic higher education was the overall theme of the meeting. “Gaudium et Spes,” the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, was the last document of Vatican II to be promulgated, in December 1965.

The document, whose Latin title means “joy and hope,” was intended to lay out the church’s relationship to a rapidly changing society. According to the panel it has a great deal to teach Catholic educators.

In fact, “the document reads as if it could have been written yesterday by Pope Francis” said Cusimano Love.

So what insights does the document have to offer Catholic universities? Firstly, “Gaudium et Spes” can be implemented in the personal vocations of professors and academics. Cusimano Love encouraged educators to be what she called ‘pracademics,’ bringing the practice of the Catholic Church into (their) research and teaching practices.

Secondly, “Gaudium et Spes” calls for civic engagement and advocacy by universities, which are considered political actors. “If we are not in the public square, there is a huge voice that is missing,” said Father Snyder.

Lastly, “Gaudium et Spes” asks universities to produce graduates who can “interpret the signs of the times,” as described in Chapter 16, Verse 3 of the Gospel of St. Matthew.

Romero Lecture at Rutgers March 21

Maryann Cusimano Love will discuss the current work of Catholic Peacebuilders around the world in a lecture entitled “Make Us Instruments of Peace: Peacebuilding in the 21st Century” on Friday, March 21 at the Rutgers University Camden Campus, located at 303 Cooper Street in Camden.

The lecture is being sponsored by Romero Center Ministries, one of the Ministries of St. Joseph’s Pro-Cathedral.

By sharing stories from around the world — including communities in Columbia, Rwanda and the Philippines — Dr. Cusimano Love, an associate professor of international relations at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., will help illustrate how to contribute to peace in local communities.

The event begins with a speaker reception at 5:30 p.m. and registration at 6:30 p.m. An opening prayer and introduction will follow at 7 p.m., with the keynote lecture by Dr. Cusimano Love at 7:30 p.m.

For more information or to purchase a ticket visit http://www.romero-center.org/ministries/lecture/.
Open My Eyes March 29

Open My Eyes, an all-day event offering college students the opportunity to deepen their faith, grow in community, and hear powerful speakers, will take place on Saturday, March 29 at Rowan University, Chamberlain Student Center, Glassboro.

Sponsored by the Diocese of Camden’s Office of College Campus Ministries, the event begins at 10 a.m. with registration, and includes a keynote address from Ennie Hickman of Adore Ministries in Houston, Tex; breakout sessions; outdoor stations of the cross; and concludes with a 4:30 p.m. Mass at the Church of St. Bridget. Hickman’s talk will focus on “Inspiration for the Journey.” Missionary Hickman has traveled the U.S. and abroad for nearly two decades. He is host of the summer conferences at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio.

Presenters for the breakout sessions are Father Robert Sinatra, chaplain for Catholic Campus Ministry at Rowan University; Father Kevin Mohan, parochial vicar at Our Lady of Peace, Williamstown; Nina Camaioni, campus ministry assistant at Rowan; Joseph Saffioti, teacher at St. Michael the Archangel School in Clayton; and Eduardo V. Flores, associate professor of physics at Rowan University.

Parking will be available in university parking lots.

The event is open to the college classes of 2014-18. For information or to register, go to https://openmyeyes.eventbrite.com, or contact Greg Coogan, director of the Office of College Campus Ministries, at Gregory.coogan@camdendiocese.org, or 856-583-6122.

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Outgoing president: Holy Family University keeps focus on Christ

By Lou Baldwin
Catholic News Service

PHILADELPHIA — Sister Francesca Onley, who has been at the helm of Holy Family University for 32 years, is easily the longest tenured university president in the Philadelphia area.

Earlier this year she announced she’ll retire in June. She’ll be turning 81 and “it’s time,” she said.

Today few people hold the same position for more than three decades. And not many spend their entire working life in the same complex within a few miles of their childhood home.

Born in the Mayfair section of the city, Sister Francesca, then Patricia Clare Onley, attended St. Matthew School and then went on to Nazareth Academy High School, where her teachers were members of her future religious congregation — Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

A few months after her 1950 high school graduation, she entered the community. She was 17 years old. She was given the religious name Francesca for St. Frances of Rome, who also was the patron saint for St. Franciszka Siedliska, founness of the Holy Family Sisters.

Her younger sister, Joan, followed her into the congregation, taking Michael as her religious name.

At the time, the order had two main apostolates: education and health. Sister Michael, now retired, ultimately became a radiologist, while Sister Francesca was assigned to education.

After her religious formation, Sister Francesca was assigned in 1953 to teach at Nazareth’s grade school; she took college courses in the evening and Saturdays.

In 1959, she earned a bachelor’s degree in education and business from what was then Holy Family College; it opened in 1954 on the same campus as Nazareth Academy.

In 1965, she went on to teach in the high school division, and later became assistant principal and then principal in 1972.

She was named assistant to the president of Holy Family College in 1981 and the following year became president.

Along the way, she earned a master’s degree in secondary education and business from Marywood College (1968) and a doctorate in higher education administration from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale (1986).

Under her watch, the once undergraduate-only Holy Family College expanded to university status in 2002 and now offers a doctoral degree in education, criminal justice, counseling psychology, human resource management and information systems management.

Most recent figures show enrollment has increased to approximately 3,000. When she became president, the school had 1,281 students — only about 500 of them were full-time day students.

If you ask Sister Francesca of what she is most proud, it is not the things the university has done. It is the things that have never changed.

“We are still able to live out our mission to children and young people and even older people of working families who are able to move ahead in their employment because of education,” she said. “Our congregation’s main focus is ministry to families, and I think we do that very well here at Holy Family, by being here for people.”

During her tenure, the college acquired more property to open a satellite campus in Newtown and other sites in Bensalem and South Philadelphia.

Holy Family was among the first of the Catholic women’s colleges to become coed. “They did that in the 1970s and it was a smart move,” Sister Francesca said in an interview with CatholicPhilly.com, the news website of the Philadelphia Archdiocese.

Just as it was in 1954 when Holy Family College opened its doors, the school under Sister Francesca’s leadership remains solidly Catholic to the core.

Baldwin writes for CatholicPhilly.com, the news website of the Philadelphia Archdiocese.
SAT changes and college admissions

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — When major changes to the SAT college admissions test were recently announced, some college admissions officers didn’t give the news much thought.

That may have been because a) it was their busiest time of year, sifting through final college applications or b) because they have already done away with using the SAT scores in their application process.

For Ann McDermott, director of admissions at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass., it was all of the above.

McDermott — who was in the final stages of selecting the school’s class of 2018 when College Board officials announced the change March 5 — told Catholic News Service she applauded the proposed test revisions. “Anything that helps decrease test anxiety and makes it less stressful, I think, is a marked improvement,” she said.

The main changes to the college entrance test include: making the essay optional; not penalizing students for wrong answers; and doing away with the test’s more obscure vocabulary words.

The revised tests will include passages from documents such as the Declaration of Independence or “Letter From a Birmingham Jail” by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

College Board officials said the update — the first change to the test since 2005 — was needed to make the exam more representative of what high school students study and the skills they need to do well in college.

The new exam will be ready for students and their No. 2 pencils, or computers — another change — in 2016. It also will return to a 1,600-point scale.

McDermott noted that Holy Cross, which historically reported SAT scores optional for its applicants in 2006, said the school places a stronger emphasis on the four years of choices a student makes — in grades and extracurricular activities — than specific test scores.

One criticism of the SAT has been that students from wealthier families do better on the test because they can afford expensive test preparation classes.

In response, the College Board announced it will partner with the nonprofit Khan Academy to provide free test preparation materials for the redesigned SAT. It also will provide fee waivers for income-eligible students to apply for colleges.

In 2009, officials at Assumption College, also in Worcester, announced the school was no longer requiring prospective students to provide SAT or ACT standardized scores. In the announcement, the school’s vice president for enrollment management said that more than 800 colleges and universities had adopted similar test-optional admissions.

In 2007, Dominican-run Providence College in Rhode Island also made submission of college entrance exams scores optional for applicants.

College leaders urged to learn from students’ social media use

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — It’s probably no surprise to anyone in academia that their students are very comfortable navigating their way around social media.

What they may not have seriously considered is taking a page, online of course, from their students’ use of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

During a Feb. 2 workshop at the annual conference of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, there was some uncomfortable shuffling in seats, as Catholic college presidents — many of whom already use Twitter, Facebook and even blog — were told that they will never really be able to keep up with the explosion of social media use and they also could potentially learn something from what their students are doing online.

Ana Martinez Aleman, chair of Lynch School of Education at Boston College, initially put school leaders at ease, stressing that students primarily use social media as a form of self-expression. “It’s not rocket science to figure this out,” she added.

That’s what happens through all this shared self-expression that school leaders and development directors were urged not to dismiss. Martinez Aleman pointed out that students are building weak and strong ties on social media — making connections with people they barely know and maintaining connections with those they have deep connections with such as family members and old friends.

“We care about this because we want both those conditions to be happening,” she said, emphasizing that college communities want to build strong ties off campus with alumni and college friends but also need to establish ties with people not directly connected with the campus, particularly as they look for new donors.

Martinez Aleman noted that college officials who initially viewed social media solely as student space still have a lot of catching up to do in maintaining their online presence, figuring out how professors should interact online with students and how to use these tools to engage students in the classroom.

Elliot King, communication chair at Loyola University Maryland, similarly noted that social media platforms provide an entirely new way of reaching students that changes the teacher’s role of merely broadcasting information to sharing it on more of a peer level.

And just because it might engage students more to use Twitter or Facebook in class doesn’t mean that these platforms are trouble free. King noted that these tools bring up issues of how much information teachers want to share with students and conversely how much they want to hear in online conversations with student groups.

King said he knows there is skepticism about using social media, which he said is nothing new since people are always somewhat uncomfortable with new technology and were even afraid of it.

Neumann University will host a conference on Catholic philosopher G.E.M. Anscombe’s contributions to the Catholic intellectual tradition on March 14-15.

In its 2001 obituary of Anscombe, The Guardian wrote: “Elizabeth Anscombe, who has died aged 81, was considered by some to be the greatest English philosopher of her generation.”

She was professor of philosophy at Cambridge from 1970 to 1986, having already, as a research fellow at Oxford in the 50s, helped change the course of moral philosophy.

He urged school leaders not to let their discomfort with these new ways of teaching and communicating or even controlling conversations to “prevent us from the effort” of joining in and moving ahead with the ever-ubiquitous social media.

“We have to work this out,” he said in closing, leaving school leaders with plenty of homework.

Conference on Elizabeth Anscombe

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In its 2001 obituary of Anscombe, The Guardian wrote: “Elizabeth Anscombe, who has died aged 81, was considered by some to be the greatest English philosopher of her generation.”

She was professor of philosophy at Cambridge from 1970 to 1986, having already, as a research fellow at Oxford in the 50s, helped change the course of moral philosophy.

Also influential in philosophy of mind, she pioneered contemporary action theory, and the pre-eminent philosopher Donald Davidson called her 1957 monograph Introduction to the best work on practical reasoning since Aristotle.”

Conference sessions will focus on topics such as Catholic Moral Theory, Double Effect, Souls and Persons, and Marriage and Women. One discussion will delve into Anscombe’s 1958 article entitled Modern Moral Philosophy.

Christopher Lydon, the school’s associate vice president for admission and enrollment planning, told CNS at the time that Providence wanted to return to its original mission of making college a viable option for a new generation of immigrants. Lower-income students, he said, often cannot afford the hours of SAT prep classes that their peers can take to get higher scores.

The school’s policy change didn’t hurt application numbers either. In the first year it dropped the SAT requirement, 1,000 more students applied.

Alyssa McCloud, vice president of enrollment management at Seton Hall University in South Orange, N.J., got a preview of the upcoming SAT changes during a webinar for college officials a few hours before the public announcement was made.

She told The Associated Press that the test’s optional essay portion should help decrease some students’ anxiety about the test.

Seton Hall, run by the Archdiocese of Newark, N.J., is one of many U.S. colleges that doesn’t use the SAT essay score in its admission decisions.

“Overall, I think the changes are very positive,” she said.

“First of all, there is a lot of anxiety for students taking the test,” she said. “We are excited about that change.”