

(For Immediate Release – November 13, 2017)

Saint Joseph's College Board of Trustees takes next step in re-creating Saint Joseph's

As everyone knows, the current Board of Trustees made the very difficult decision to suspend operations at Saint Joseph's College on February 4, 2017. Since then, the Board has worked diligently, first, to help the students transfer to other institutions as seamlessly as possible, and secondly, to provide severance to the faculty and staff as generously as resources would allow.

Along with these efforts there has also been the establishment of the Phoenix Project, with the goal of recreating the college while remaining true to its mission of Catholic education with a financially sustainable model. The Board Debt Reduction Committee, previously called the Wind-Down Committee, has addressed the many issues associated with suspending operations, and has also been making progress toward resolving college's debt.

Much has been accomplished over the last eight months. The first two priorities of the Board, tending to the students, faculty and staff have been completed. The Phoenix Team is in place, generating ideas and possibilities for the future, and debt reduction negotiations are advancing. While the current situation is challenging, the rebirth of Saint Joseph's is gaining momentum and the Board is doing everything possible to keep that momentum going. In the view of the Board, the next step is to recreate the Board itself to lead Saint Joseph's into the future. To this end, a new Board of Trustees for Saint Joseph's College will be formed in the coming months. All current lay members of the Board have agreed to vacate their positions to facilitate this transformation and allow new thinking to guide the future.

While the 24 lay members of the board have come to the end of their service to SJC as members of the Board of Trustees, their love for the college continues.

Many have expressed their willingness to continue to share their expertise and experience when called upon by the new Board. “They have served with dedication and valor through the most difficult events of the College’s history,” said Benedict Sponseller, who served as Chairman of the Board.

The decision of the lay members to proactively step down had been discussed for months, as many members of the Board expressed the need for a new Board that could implement a transition from a new perspective, allowing it to re-invent itself through the efforts of the Phoenix Project. Remaining on the Board, to maintain the legal corporate status of the college and to guide it through this transitional stage, are the five Missionaries of the Precious Blood and Bishop Timothy Doherty of the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana. The college was established by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in 1890 and they are committed to rebuild the Board to meet the needs of the new Saint Joseph’s that will emerge.

Fr. Larry Hemmelgarn, Provincial Director of the Missionaries noted that, “We owe the departing members of the Board a great debt of gratitude for all of their work and the courage to make extremely difficult decisions. This is especially true of Chairman Benedict Sponseller and Vice Chair Stephen Ruff, both of whom have donated countless hours of their time, expertise and passion to the college.”

All members of the Board serve voluntarily and receive no remuneration for that service. They have given generously of their time, talent and treasure and deserve thanks from the College that they have labored to serve. “Without a doubt, without exception, they are people who really love SJC. The decisions that have been made this year have been extremely difficult for all,” said Fr. Hemmelgarn. “I am personally grateful for their commitment to the mission of the school, which lives on. Throughout the 127-year history of the college, the Board of Trustees has worked largely behind the scenes, making decisions on complex issues for the good of the College. There have been many tough calls, none tougher than this year. But Board members all took part in those discussions and decisions with courage. They can leave the Board knowing that, while we’ve lived and continue to live through challenging days, they have put forth their best efforts for the school they loved.”

Remaining on the Board will be C.P.P.S. members Fr. Steve Dos Santos, Fr. William O'Donnell, Fr. Mark Peres, Fr. William Stang and Fr. Hemmelgarn. "We are staying on because we believe in the mission of the school and are committed to doing everything possible to see it re-emerge through the Phoenix Project," said Fr. Hemmelgarn.

In addition to Bishop Doherty, three new lay members have joined the Board to help guide Saint Joseph's as it moves into the next stage of its history. They are:

- **Mara Davis**, a 1978 SJC graduate who, with her husband, Mike Davis (son of SJC Professor Mike Davis) is very involved with local businesses in the Rensselaer, Ind., area, including a seed corn company, AgVenture, Inc., and a restaurant, the Old Colonial Inn, where she is the operating manager. Ms. Davis is the daughter of SJC graduate Joe Pindell, Class of 1953.
- **Peter J. Ippolito**, President and General Manager, Midwestern Division, The Sherwin-Williams Company. Mr. Ippolito, a 1986 SJC graduate, has had a long and distinguished career with Sherwin-Williams, a leading paint and coatings manufacturer that supplies its products and services around the world. His wife, Margaret (Peg) Schumann-Ippolito, is also an SJC graduate.
- **Ned J. Tonner**, a litigation attorney with offices in Rensselaer and Indianapolis. Mr. Tonner has maintained a private law practice for the past 25 years in addition to serving as City Attorney for Rensselaer and as a public defender. He is an SJC Fellow and was formerly an adjunct professor with SJC's MBA program. Mr. Tonner and his wife, Shari, live with their four children in Indianapolis.

The new Board will help carry the College into its new life. The Phoenix Project, led by Fr. Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S., continues to work with the Debt Reduction Committee and to explore possible new avenues for a reimagined Saint Joseph's College. The Phoenix Project team reports to the Board; the Board is responsible for reviewing and approving plans that are proposed by the Phoenix Project concerning the future of the college.

The Board's bylaws require a nine-member Board. There was a consensus among the former Board members that the most workable size would probably be 12-15. The initial goal was to identify three new lay members, and it is anticipated that three to six additional members will be identified over the next year-who will represent the various constituencies of Saint Joseph's. The Board will rely on input from alumni and others as they grow the new Board.

The qualities sought among the new Board members include a commitment to Catholic education; experience in the fields of business, finance and education; creativity and common sense.

"You have to love a challenge, be committed to Catholic education, committed to serving the underserved, and excited about finding ways to accomplish that," Fr. Hemmelgarn said "You have to be passionate about wanting to improve the lives of young people. New Board members will be asked to envision a new model for catholic education – because that's really what we're working at doing."

(End of Release)

[About Saint Joseph's College: Saint Joseph's College, a Catholic liberal arts college, is in a state of transition. Due to insurmountable financial challenges, the College suspended academic operations at the end of the spring semester 2017. While this action will change Saint Joseph's College, this is not the end of our legacy. While there is much to be done over the coming months and years, a devoted staff is aggressively seeking a new path forward which will enable us to continue carry on the legacy and mission of our beloved College. We are actively seeking partners to aid us in creating a robust, innovative, and financially sustainable business model which will enable us to serve our mission in an impactful way for generations to come. Information about ongoing activities may be sent to SaintJoe@SaintJoe.edu, mailed to Saint Joseph's College, 1027 S College Ave, Rensselaer IN 47978 or by phone at 219.866.6000]