Diocese of Orange Catholic Schools Partners with Loyola Marymount University's School of Education to Support Distance Learning Options for Students and Educators During School Closures

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Loyola Marymount University's School of Education has helped transition the Diocese of Orange's 41-campus, 18,000-student school system online in 72 hours **Garden Grove, Calif., (April 16, 2020) —** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange Catholic Schools has launched a comprehensive online learning system for 18,000 students across Southern California through an innovative partnership with Loyola Marymount University School of Education's iDEAL (Innovation in Digital Education and Leadership) Institute. The Diocese of Orange's partnership with LMU was implemented within three days, delivering tools, resources, best practices and professional development opportunities all aimed at ensuring teachers have the support they need to provide a quality off-campus education during these unprecedented times. "Our comprehensive online learning program and innovative partnership with LMU has empowered our talented educators to deliver a world-class Catholic education to all our students, regardless of the distance that now separates them," said Dr. Erin Barisano, superintendent of Catholic schools for the Diocese of Orange, who announced that school buildings would be closed and student-related activities cancelled on March 16. "With support from the Diocese—including the unique collaboration with the LMU iDEAL Institute for focused professional development—our Catholic Schools launched its online program just three days from the school closure announcement." In recent years, the Diocese of Orange has invested deeply in its schools, supplying students and educators with modern digital learning tools. Improvements include: large-scale connectivity upgrades, blended-learning programs and modern IT infrastructure enhancements. These improvements have helped increase student success while enabling the school system to respond quickly to the needs of a dedicated distance-learning program in critical times such as these. Dr. Barisano continued, "The intent is not to replace the experience students would have in the classroom, but to support them with continued learning while away from campus. Our goal is to provide students with academic excellence, individualized learning, faith development, and a strong sense of community during this time of uncertainty." To ensure students and educators don't fall behind, the distance learning program includes:

- Multiple remote learning platforms
- 1:1 technology for students
- Complimentary iPads or Chromebooks to facilitate online learning (as needed)
- Daily video messages from grade-level teachers
- Flexible learning time to facilitate working parents
- Virtual elementary and middle school tutoring from local Catholic high school students

With a team of professional learning developers and a variety of solutions, trainings and services, LMU iDEAL Institute enabled Orange County's parochial educators to make the rapid switch to dedicated online education. Parent survey feedback after a few weeks of the new model have been resoundingly positive and parents are happy with the program. St. Bonaventure Catholic School parent Melissa Hunnicutt is grateful for the distance-learning initiative and how the use of technology is being applied to enhance learning experiences for her children. "My kids saw no break in their education," said Hunnicutt. "They are seeing structure, familiarity, and high-standards. They're completing so much

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work on new digital platforms and I'm so grateful for that." Nearly all school districts in California have been closed in response to the coronavirus outbreak, and will remain closed for the rest of the academic term, Gov. Gavin Newsom said. Nationwide, over half the states in the country have also closed their public schools or ordered them to close in the coming days. "Schools across the Southland are racing to provide an effective remote learning education platform for their students due to the coronavirus pandemic," said Shannon Tabaldo, founding director of the iDEAL Institute and director of digital curriculum integration and development for LMU School of Education. "Being able to implement modern pedagogical practices, co-creative solutions, and professional tools to help Diocese of Orange educators meet the academic needs of their students and families has been very rewarding. Thanks to their preparedness, we were able to mobilize very quickly. I'm incredibly proud of that." Per the Diocese of Orange Department of Catholic Schools, campuses are expected to remain closed through the remainder of the academic year in order to ensure the safety of students, teachers, and the community. Superintendent Barisano will work with public health officials to reassess the need for school closures and provide further guidance in the weeks ahead. All diocesan schools will continue to follow the recommendations of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Orange County Department of Education, and the Orange County Health Care Agency. About the Diocese of Orange With 1.3 million Catholics, 57 parishes, five Catholic Centers, and 41 schools, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange is one of the largest, most diverse and fastest-growing faith communities in the United States. The Diocese empowers Catholics across Orange County to have an active life of faith that is integrated and woven into the fabric of their daily lives through the community and sacramental life of the Church. Under the leadership of Bishop Kevin Vann, the Diocese works to establish and support dynamic, vibrant parishes and schools, and welcome all to live the Gospel with faith, joy, charity and unity. Christ Cathedral, the spiritual home of the Diocese, was dedicated in July 2019. Learn more about the Diocese of Orange at https://rcbo.staging.wpengine.com About Loyola Marymount University Loyola Marymount University, the University of Silicon Beach, is ranked No. 64 among top national universities by U.S. News and World Report, placing LMU among the top five Jesuit universities in the country and in the top six private universities in California. Founded in 1911, LMU is a Catholic, Jesuit and Marymount university with more than 6,500 undergraduate students and more than 3,000 graduate and law students. LMU offers 61 undergraduate majors and 55 minor programs, along with 49 master's degree programs, three doctorate programs and 13 credential/authorization programs. LMU's intercollegiate athletics teams compete in the West Coast Conference with 22 Division I and varsity sports. # # # Contacts Meehan Business Advisers Andrew Meehan, (949) 285-0759 ameehan@meehanbusinessadvisers.com Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange County and Christ Cathedral Tracey Kincaid, (714) 282-3075 tkincaid@rcbo.org

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