I want to begin my remarks by reminding us that with we are living in a change of age—those rare eras in human history like the Renaissance/Enlightenment. The rapidly growing pace of change and disruption of the frameworks that underlie our modern culture are generated by new knowledge and understandings about human nature and learning, religion, science, technology, the universe, history, and human behavior.

Our current "change of age" requires every major human institution and organization to rethink and redesign its core work and practices. Catholic education is no exception.

Taking this context into account, we have agreed that this conference calls us to explore and better define what we mean by “Catholic” and by “School.”

We need the help of the universities in forming teams of leaders who are focused on the actual teachings of Jesus and the Church. I have found Albert Nolan’s work to be helpful in this area.

Nolan, a 75-year-old South African Dominican Theologian, wrote in his most recent book, *Jesus Today*, that Jesus would be most unhappy with the state of much of what passes today for Christianity. Nolan describes the signs of our spiritual hunger: the craving for a genuine spirituality, the crisis of greed and individualism and excessive consumption, the rigidity of dogma that erodes human progress, and the worship of the ego and the erosion of community.

It is not surprising that our church culture and the cultures of other religions often display human imperfections. Thus the importance that “Catholic” focus on the teachings of Jesus and the Church, not be confused with mindsets that equate “Catholic” to older cultural norms such as nuns in habits, male dominance, and some mid-20th century church governance structures.

We need the help of the universities in defining “School.” Because we are in a change of age, the entire world is in the process of redefining “school.” David Prasse can give any of us a quick list of the elements of effective 21st centuries schools. These include clear standards; effective use of formative assessment, data based decision making, professional learning communities, and instructional models based on research in neuroscience. “School” needs to be continually updated as our knowledge and culture evolve. A Catholic school must be excellent in this way in order to be genuinely Catholic.

My school received a great deal of help from Tim Cook and Creighton University and the Jesuit, Christian Brother, Mercy, and other networks in developing a clear and compelling Catholic charism for a diocesan school that lacked a clear and compelling brand and memorable taglines. In an inclusive community 18-month process, we developed the following charism:
Finding God in all things call us to
Community in diversity,
Strength of character,
Kinship with creation,
Social justice,
Joy.

It is the best thing we have done for our school--more powerful than the refurbishing of facilities and improved academics. In fact, it has helped guide all that we do.

An example of the rapid evolution of “school” is the term “digital natives” Margaret Curran referred to in her school in Orlando. Most of them have been born in the 21st century. They have brains that are significantly different from all of us in this room. We know from experience and increasingly from research that the large majority of kids born after 1990 have brains which our environments have shaped for visual stimuli. Researchers estimate that our current K-12 students remember 90% of what they see, that digital converts like ourselves, remember 60%, and that people who have not adapted to digital technology remember as little as 10%. Our schools were largely designed for listening. All of us are working hard to design learning for the visual presentation of information.

We need help from the universities in formation in these two areas. In the last few months I have been using the metaphor “Cloud Computing” to describe the gathering resources and ideas from the “cloud” that permeates the world we live in. That cloud (like email we could get from Google instead of using our own servers) has a rapidly growing web of resources, ideas, information and skills that we must connect to be excellent in the areas of “Catholic and School.”

I would recommend three books that would help us articulate the issues. Each can help us shape new and better ideas:

*Jesus Today*, Albert Nolan, O.P.
*Disrupting Class*, Clay Christenson and Michael Horn
*Socialnomics*, Erik Qualman (quick read that helps us develop more accurate mindsets)

It is becoming clear that the Catholic high schools of the future will have to be both great schools with multiple types of instruction, and community centers for adolescent development. The current models we have inherited from the 20th century K-16 are financially unsustainable, like health care-our costs are primarily for employee driven expenses and going up faster than the CPI. We must find ways to improve graduation outcomes and lower or contain costs. Colleges can help us in this area with research and training.

Thank you.