

Press Release

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Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology (SHSST) has received a grant of nearly \$1,000,000 from Lilly Endowment Inc. to provide exemplary specialized formation for a universal Church.

The grant is being made through Lilly Endowment's Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative. It is a three-phase initiative designed to help theological schools across the United States and Canada as they prioritize and respond to the most pressing challenges they face as they prepare pastoral leaders for Christian congregations both now and into the future.

Sacred Heart will realign its structures in order to provide improved specialized formation. As the grant proposal outlined: "Today, the Catholic Church is experiencing rapid change due to globalization, lack of vocations, and the need for increased lay involvement and priests who excel at multi-parish leadership, in response to what Pope Francis calls "not...an epoch of change, but a change in epochs." Gone are the classes of 20-year-old men entering the seminary; now our vocations are of all ages, countries and backgrounds. Creating specialized formation that includes intentional experiential learning components for identified affinity groups will better meet seminarians where they are and also better prepare them for their future ministries." The main strategies for achieving this pivot will be:

- Creating an affinity group structure and highly customized curriculum for specialized formation including continuing education "toolbox" workshops, site visits, and experiential learning opportunities. These will be offered to constituencies ranging from seminarians to deacons, priests, religious, bishops and lay ministers.
- Taking Sacred Heart's very successful Master of Arts program for laity (called Cor Unum) to other dioceses. More than an academic degree, pastoral, human and spiritual formation are offered in a cohort model to build up networks of lay ministers within dioceses.
- Strengthening internal capacities and participating in the Higher Learning Commission Assessment Academy.

Very Rev. Raúl Gómez-Ruiz SDS, PhD, President-Rector of Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology expressed gratitude and excitement upon receiving the grant. "Receiving this award positions SHSST at the forefront of responding to the emerging needs of the Church for generations to come through our ability to offer exemplary, specialized formation in ministry for a universal Church. Over the course of the next five years, we will be able to improve how we deliver on the four dimensions of formation (intellectual, pastoral, spiritual, and human). The award creates opportunities for our faculty and staff, composed of talented and dedicated colleagues, to shine even more. And it offers us the opportunity to provide greater service to the Church and the community."

Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology is one of 84 theological schools that are receiving a total of more than \$82 million in grants through the second phase of the Pathways initiative. Together, the schools represent evangelical, mainline Protestant, nondenominational, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic and Black church and historic peace church traditions (e.g., Church of the Brethren, Mennonite,

Quakers). Many schools also serve students and pastors from Black, Latino, Korean American, Chinese American and recent immigrant Christian communities.

“Theological schools have long played a pivotal role in preparing pastoral leaders for churches,” said Christopher L. Coble, the Endowment’s vice president for religion. “Today, these schools find themselves in a period of rapid and profound change. Through the Pathways Initiative, theological schools will take deliberate steps to address the challenges they have identified in ways that make the most sense to them. We believe that their efforts are critical to ensuring that Christian congregations continue to have a steady stream of pastoral leaders who are well-prepared to lead the churches of tomorrow.”

Lilly Endowment launched the Pathways initiative in January 2021 because of its longstanding interest in supporting efforts to enhance and sustain the vitality of Christian congregations by strengthening the leadership capacities of pastors and congregational lay leaders.

About Lilly Endowment Inc.

[Lilly Endowment Inc.](#) is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly, Sr. and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. Although the gifts of stock remain a financial bedrock of the Endowment, it is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with the founders’ wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of [community development](#), [education](#) and [religion](#) and maintains a special commitment to its founders’ hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana. The primary aim of its grantmaking in religion, which is national in scope, focuses on strengthening the leadership and vitality of Christian congregations in the United States. The Endowment also seeks to foster public understanding about religion and lift up in fair, accurate and balanced ways the contributions that people of all faiths and religious communities make to our greater civic well-being.