

Maryland's Catholic colleges continue to spend, make do with less

By Elizabeth Lowe

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Loyola University Maryland, Notre Dame of Maryland University, both in Baltimore, and Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, the three Catholic colleges in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, are operating on tight budgets as they face the financial pressures of today's economy.

"Higher education institutions throughout the U.S. are facing an uncertain future," Jesuit Father Brian F. Linnane, president of Loyola University Maryland, wrote in an April 8 email to the Loyola community. "As a result of the difficult economic climate, we can no longer expect families to pay large tuition increases as they have in the past, and we face a greater demand for financial aid."

In that email Father Linnane announced the decision to cut 22 currently vacant staff and administrative positions, as well as lay off 15 employees.

"This decision to eliminate positions affects us deeply as a community," he wrote, "and that is why we have taken so many other measures as a result of the New Way of Proceeding Initiative before considering this one."

Loyola's New Way of Proceeding Initiative, which began in January 2013 and ends in June, aims to increase operational efficiencies and identify new revenue opportunities, said Terrence Sawyer, Loyola's vice president for administration and co-chairman of the initiative.

After the initiative ends, the "concept of continued assessment of how efficient we're being" will continue, Sawyer said. "We need to ensure that when we spend university resources we're doing so in the most efficient manner possible. We always had that in mind, but there is a heightened sense of urgency."

Loyola is also working to reduce costs by assessing how it purchases goods and services, such as food, office supplies and power, and ensure that it's receiving competitive pricing, said Sawyer, who noted the majority of college's revenue comes from tuition.

Like Loyola, Mount St. Mary's University has also made institutional cuts.

In 2012, the Mount announced it would discontinue men's soccer and men's and women's golf, three of its Division I athletics teams, after the 2012-13 academic year

to reduce its athletics budget. A full time coach's position was also eliminated.

"Getting rid of three of our Division I teams was a cost-cutting exercise," said Dr. Thomas H. Powell, president of the Mount. "In some ways you pay the price because you lose the students who were here to play Division I sports. Athletics can't be immune."

While the Mount continues to fill vacant positions, and even hire additional faculty because of its growing enrollment, it may not do so in the future, Powell said.

"It's a struggle to make ends meet continuously," he said. "There's not a lot of reserves when we're running the university. We are tuition dependent."

Powell continuously works to attract donors.

"There is some limit to what we can charge," he said. "We're all approaching that limit or we're there. I need to make sure it's affordable for parents."

Unlike Loyola and the Mount, Notre Dame of Maryland University has not intentionally eliminated vacant positions or those that are currently filled, said Pat Bosse, the university's vice president for institutional advancement.

Notre Dame has been "extremely cautious and conservative" with its spending, Bosse said. "We have a history of spending every nickel three times. We're used to it."

"Everybody is so attune to the fact that finances are tight," said John Keenan, Notre Dame's acting vice president for finance and administration. "The culture here has been pretty conservative and prudent."

Cost of full-time, undergraduate tuition for one year

Loyola University Maryland: \$42,690

Mount St. Mary's University: \$33,674

Notre Dame of Maryland University, Women's College: \$31,910

NOTE: Tuition figures do not include fees, room and board or financial aid packages

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