

USCCB/CCA History

Historical Narrative

In 1964, the first endeavors in the accreditation of programs and the certification of chaplains was initiated by the bishops of the United States under the efforts of Msgr. Harrold A. Murray, Director of the Bureau of Health and Hospitals, one of the departments of the national body of bishops that was called the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC). In 1964, Msgr. Murray began to establish a professional association of Catholic chaplains who would assist in the formulation of standards for board accreditation of chaplaincy training programs and certification as chaplains. He began this work with the assistance of other interested bishops and priests.

The NCWC Administrative Board also recognized the need for training programs for chaplains and for the articulation of accreditation and certification standards. In 1965, the year that marked the close of the Second Vatican Council, the NCWC approved the establishment of a professional organization called the National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC). Msgr. Murray was the first NACC Executive Director who received financial support for the operation of the NACC from the NCWC.

In 1966, the name of the NCWC was changed to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops-United States Catholic Conference (NCCB-USCC). The United States Catholic Conference referred to the body of bishops and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops referred to the administrative offices of the conference.

Development of the National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC)

In 1968, the NCCB office structure was reorganized, and the development of the training and certification of chaplains, partially financed through the members of the NACC, was placed in the NCCB Division of Chaplain Services, Department of Health Affairs. Msgr. Murray remained the director of this department and of the NACC. He formed a board of examiners (BOE), which was responsible for accrediting training programs for chaplains and certifying these ministers. During the next four years the BOE, with some consultation from the NACC members whose fees subsidized the BOE, designed a curriculum for chaplaincy training and wrote accreditation and certification standards.

The NACC began to function as a professional organization with regular publications, annual conventions, educational opportunities and skill workshops for their members, and communication with the American College of Chaplains (ACC), the Catholic Health Association (CHA), and the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE). The educational opportunities provided NACC members enabled them to develop a training program called Clinical Pastoral Education, a program originally designed by the ACPE for the training of chaplains.

In 1972, the offices of the NCCB were reorganized again and the NACC and BOE functioned under the NCCB Department of Social Development and World Peace.

In 1973, a significant change took place with the NACC certification policy. Membership categories for certification were extended to lay persons and vowed religious. The following year, the BOE began accepting applications from lay women, men, and vowed religious to be certified as chaplains under the membership category of pastoral associates. The letter

from the NCWC President to the NACC Executive Director was clear that the NCCB-USCC approved the certification of all competent and qualified members of the NACC. During the first 10 years of the NACC's existence, its growth and development as a professional organization had great significance for the ministry of chaplaincy. For many years, chaplaincy was viewed as an outpost assignment, an assignment not actively sought after by priests. Over time, chaplaincy became understood as the very special ministry that it is. The chaplains themselves began to see their ministry and contribution to the mission of the Church in a new light.

In 1979, the NCCB Administrative Board informed the NACC that the NACC, as well as other organizations subsidized under the departments of the NCCB, that they would no longer be subsidized under the offices of the NCCB. Staff persons for the organizations of specialized ministers were asked to leave the NCCB headquarters and form separate corporations. As with the NACC, the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) and the National Conference of Catechetical Leadership (NCCL) emerged from this decision and continue to exist today with financial support from their members.

In 1980, the NACC was relocated to an office in St. Francis Seminary, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and then to a room in the Archbishop Cousins Center, the former archdiocesan minor seminary. Rev. Timothy Toohey was the first NACC Executive Director followed by Sr. Helen Hayes, OSF, and Rev. Joseph Driscoll. As the members of the NACC attempted to work with the BOE, chaplains became more and more invested in their ministerial identity.

In 1982, due to the rising cost of bringing members of the BOE to Washington for meetings, the NCCB Administrative Board decided to transfer costs of staffing the BOE to an agency outside of the NCCB. The NCCB considered the option of withdrawing its endorsement from the certification and accreditation process, in favor of placing this agency within the NACC, but rejected the idea. The NCCB was clear in its decision to continue the endorsement of the bishops for accrediting CPE programs and certifying specialized ministers. The bishops were equally insistent that an accrediting commission be incorporated separately from the NCCB and recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDOE).

A Time of Transition

The NCCB Associate General Secretary called a transition committee of BOE and NACC members to devise a plan for the eventual formation and function of what would become the USCCB Commission on Certification and Accreditation (USCC/CCA). The USCC/CCA was to be the "official agent of the NCCB for the certification of persons in specialized ministries and accreditation of training programs." This organization would come into being following ratification by the NCCB-USCC. The requirements for recognition by the USDOE played a significant role in determining the function and policies of this newly formed accrediting commission.

The NACC and the BOE tried to work together on the Transition Committee to bring about needed changes in accreditation and certification standards, policies, and procedures. The certified chaplains viewed the certification requirements of the BOE as arbitrary. Since most of the members of the BOE came from the eastern regions of the United States, two-

thirds of the country was not represented. Examiners with no experience of chaplaincy were considering the credentials of individuals for certification as chaplains. The NACC members were firm in their convictions that they should have the right to define their own certification and accreditation standards and to design certification procedures where discernment could begin with NACC members in geographic regions. They believed that their own certified members were in a better position to understand the competencies needed to be effective chaplains and to design regional processes to discern readiness for certification functions of the USCC/CCA in relation to the bishops and the professional organizations were outlined.

Bishop Thomas J. Murphy, NACC Episcopal Advisor and a member of the NCCB Administrative Board, with skillful facilitation wrought a degree of consensus among the three constituencies regarding the decisions of the conference of Bishop, the USDOE requirements for the USCC/CCA to function as a recognized accrediting agency, and the concerns of the NACC. After many meetings, oftentimes confrontational, the accreditation and certification functions of the USCC/CCA in relation to the bishops and the professional organizations were outlined.

The USCC/CCA would become a permanent commission for the NACC. The USCC would fund the commission annually and would continue to accredit CPE and ministry formation programs and to approve the certification standards and procedures for specialized ministers. Local bishops would endorse candidates to the USCC/CCA Board of Directors for three-year terms renewable once on the board and the NCCB president would appoint them to the board. The president of the USCC would also appoint a bishop liaison as a member of the USCC board of directors. The NACC would determine certification standards for the certification of chaplains and submit them to the USCC/CCA for approval and professional organizations would submit certification standards for their area of specialized ministry to the USCC/CCA for approval. Other organizations that wished to submit certification standards for by arch/dioceses would also submit certification standards and procedures for approval by the USCC/CCA. Candidates for certification by organizations would obtain endorsement from their local bishops before certification.

Development of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Commission on Certification and Accreditation

In 2001, the NCCB/USCC changed its name to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCC), and the name of the USCC/CCA was changed to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Commission on Certification and Accreditation (USCCB/CCA).

The USCCB/CCA incorporated as a not for profit organization in the state of Missouri in 1983. The operations of the USCCB/CCA took place within an office partitioned off from the printing department in the lower level of the Catholic Health Association (CHA) building in St. Louis, Missouri.

In 1987, the USDOE recognized the USCC/CCA as an accrediting agency. When legislation in 1995 made accrediting agencies gatekeepers of federal funds granted students, the USCCB/CCA no longer met the USDOE's regulations for recognition since students in

USCCB/CCA-accredited programs do not request money directly from the government for their formation and training.

With all of the changes in the structure of the USCCB offices and the changing functions of the NACC and BOE, precedents were established for the relationship of the USCCB/CCA and future professional organizations of specialized ministers. Groups of specialized ministers would organize or reorganize into professional organizations that would qualify for a listing in *The National Catholic Directory*. Organizations such as the National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM) came into being as new specializations for lay ecclesial ministers developed in the Church. The Conference of Bishops gave a board of reviewers for accreditation, first the BOE and now the current USCCB/CCA, the mandate to grant accreditation to formation programs and to approve certification standards and procedures for specialized ministers.

This fairly brief and factual recounting of the development that took place from the BOE and the NACC to the birth of the USCCB/CCA is not to minimize or discount the painful aspects of their relationships. Letters, memorandums, reports, and articles in the NACC newsletter, the *Camillian*, testify to the many frustrating attempts to communicate values, to arrive at acceptable agreements, and to reach an understanding when proposals were not accepted. As was true of previous structural changes, financial realities were a factor for the change. Always, however, the underlying issues of the discussions and debates were the concern for quality pastoral care and the recognition that theological education, skill development for ministry to the sick, and professionalism were demanded of certified chaplains.

USCCB/CCA Board of Directors

To date, 45 members of the laity, religious, priests, and bishops have been appointed to the USCCB/CCA Board of Directors from every region on the United States. Candidates are nominated to the board by those affiliated with the USCCB/CCA. Board members are selected for their ability to contribute to the ministry of the USCCB/CCA in the accreditation of ministry formation programs and the approval of certification standards and procedures for specialized ministries.

Mission of the USCCB/CCA

The mission of the USCCB/CCA is derived from the mandate found in the report that the Most Rev. Thomas J. Murphy presented to the bishops: “The USCC Commission on Certification and Accreditation will be the official agent of the USCC for certification of persons in specialized ministries and accreditation of raining programs.” The Most Rev. James W. Malone, then USCCB President, following Bishop Murphy’s report to the Conference, published the following endorsement: “The USCC Commission on Certification and Accreditation is an expression of the concern that the Catholic Bishops of the United States have for people whose circumstances require special spiritual care. By maintaining and developing the quality of Catholic pastoral education, it has guaranteed to the Church ministers who may serve God’s people with competence and mature faith. The United States Catholic Conference is happy to support the Commission’s effort to provide such ministers with recognized training and approbation.”

USCCB Bishop Liaisons with the USCCB/CCA

From the beginning of the USCCB/CCA, the USCCB president has appointed bishop liaisons as equal members on the USCCB/CCA Board of Directors. Bishops who have served as liaisons with the conference are the following: Most Rev. Adam Maida; Most Rev. John J. Leibrecht; Most Rev. Edward T. Hughes; Most Rev. Gerald A. Gettelfinger; Most Rev. George V. Murry, SJ; Most Rev. Allen Vigneron; and Most Rev. John M. Quinn.

Accrediting Ministry Formation and Clinical Pastoral Education Programs

From the time of its formation through July 2004, the USCCB/CCA has appointed 354 accreditation site reviewers, some of whom have reviewed more than a dozen programs, in reviewing the clinical pastoral education and ministry formation programs sponsored by arch/dioceses, health care institutions, seminary institutes, and universities. To date, the USCCB/CCA has sponsored 130 site reviews and has collaborated with the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) in the review of jointly accredited CPE programs. The USCCB/CCA publishes the names of accredited programs in an annual directory.

Approving Certification Standards and Procedures for Ecclesial Ministers

The USCCB/CCA approves the certification standards and procedures submitted by professional organizations of ecclesial ministers. The board first approved standards for the NACC in 1984, the Apostleship of the Sea in 1986, the National Conference of Veterans Affairs Catholic Chaplains in 1987, the American Catholic Correctional Chaplains Association in 1989, the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry in 1990, the Catholic Campus Ministry Association in 1992, the National Catholic Conference of Airport Chaplains in 1994, the National Association for Lay Ministry in 1994, and the National Conference of Catechetical Leadership in 1996. Certification standards are revised and reviewed by the USCCB/CCA every seven years. The NACC program standards are incorporated into the USCCB/CCA accreditation standards and used for the review of clinical pastoral education programs.

After USCCB approval to hire a Director of Certification in 2002, the work of assisting arch/diocesan office directors and the Minnesota State Catholic Conference with the preparation of certification standards and procedures has increased. The following have had their certification standards and procedures approved: the Archdiocese of Cincinnati Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry to certify youth ministry leaders and advanced youth ministry leaders; three offices of the Archdiocese of Detroit: the Office for Faith Formation/Catechetics to certify directors of religious education, the Office for Youth Ministry to certify directors of youth ministry, the Office for Pastoral Ministries to certify pastoral ministers; three offices of the Diocese of Lansing: the Office of Catechesis to certify parish catechetical leaders, the Office of Youth Ministry to certify coordinators of youth ministry, and the Office for Lay Ecclesial Ministry to certify pastoral associates/ministers and pastoral coordinators; the Diocese of Rockville Centre Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry to certify coordinators of youth ministry; and two offices of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston: the Office of Continuing Christian Education to certify parish catechetical leaders and the Office of Youth Ministry to certify youth ministry leaders.

Collaborative Efforts in Formulating Certification Standards

In 1996, the National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM), the National Conference of Catechetical Leadership (NCCL), and the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) pledged to collaborate on further articulating competency-based certification standards for lay ecclesial ministers by writing certification standards that would be common to all three organizations. Representatives and certification chairs of the three organizations have been meeting annually to develop projects helpful for those responsible for the certification of ecclesial ministers. They were joined by representatives from the NACC and the Education Committee for the Permanent Diaconate. In 2003, the USCCB/CCA Board of Directors approved the certification standards submitted by NALM, NCCL, and NFCYM for catechetical, pastoral, and youth ministry leaders. In 2004, these organizations published a document of the approved standards entitled the *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*.

The USCCB approves the certification standards and procedures submitted by arch/diocesan offices and a state Catholic Conference. In 2004, the board approved the certification standards and procedures for catechetical and youth ministry leaders using these standards to describe compliance with the USCCB/CCA certification standards submitted by the Minnesota Catholic Education Association (MCEA). The work of the MCEA represented the Arch/Dioceses of Crookston, Duluth, New Ulm, St. Cloud, St. Paul/Minneapolis, and Winona.

Collaboration with the USCCB Office of Education

In 2001, Sr. Glenn Anne McPhee, OP, USCCB Secretary of Education, facilitated a review by the USCCB Committee on Education of the revised USCCB/CCA *Accreditation Handbook for Clinical Pastoral Education Programs*, the *Accreditation Handbook for Ministry Formation Programs*, and the *Resources for Ministry Formation Program Directors Preparing for Accreditation*. In 2003, the USCCB/CCA published these handbooks incorporating the suggestions of the Committee on Education. Currently, the USCCB/CCA is revising the USCCB/CCA *Certification Handbook* into individual certification handbooks for specialized ministers and submitted them also to the USCCB Office of Education.

Staff of the USCCB/CCA

The first USCCB/CCA Executive Director, Sr. Anita Lapeyre, RSCJ, moved accreditation files from the NCCB office in Washington, D.C., to St. Louis, Missouri, where space for the office was allocated in the basement of the Catholic Health Association headquarters next to the print shop. Sr. Katherine Gray, SNJM, was hired by the board as the second executive director who worked in this office with part-time secretarial services from the Kelly Secretarial Service. In 1991, the board hired Dr. Kay Sheskaitis, IHM, as Executive Director, to continue to facilitate the work of the USCCB/CCA, with part-time secretarial assistance. With additional funding from the USCCB, a full-time Director of Certification was hired in the fall of 2002, Jean Marie Weber.

Two part-time office staff persons assist the directors in the work of the board and office. Lilia Vega is the office bookkeeper and Christine Frymark is the office secretary.

Locations of the USCCB/CCA National Office

In 1995, when the lease with the CHA in St. Louis was not renewed, the office was relocated to a classroom in the Archbishop Cousins Catholic Center in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In 2000, the office was relocated to the Marian Center for Nonprofits (formally St. Mary's High School for girls) in St. Francis, Wisconsin when the room was no longer adequate for the functions of a national office. This move gave the executive director a small office adjacent to what was formally a classroom and sufficient electrical capacity to allow for computers and a copier.

Dr. Kay Sheskaitis, IHM
Executive Director
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