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In wake of Obama flap, colleges seek new policy on inviting politicians

John L. Allen Jr. | Jun. 17, 2009 NCR Today

Though the U.S. bishops don?t have the recent flap over Notre Dame and President Barack Obama on their formal agenda this week in San Antonio, the aftermath of that episode is very much in the air. As it happens, the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, the main umbrella group for Catholic colleges in America, has a suggestion for the bishops: to scrap their current policy and make a clearer distinction between ?honoring? a politician who holds views contrary to church teaching and merely providing a platform.

t The ACCU made its recommendation during a June 11-12 meeting of its board of directors, held at the University of San Diego.

tThe following is the summary of their discussion, provided by the summer issue of the ACCU newsletter:

?In response to a request from Bishop Thomas Curry, chair of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops? Committee on Catholic Education, the Board held a lengthy discussion concerning campus speaker policies. This conversation continued a dialogue started by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, who informed bishops in 2006 that their document ?Catholics in Political Life? warranted further clarification regarding its application to Catholic higher education.

?ACCU?s directors informally concluded that it would be desirable for the USCCB to withdraw ?Catholics in Political Life? since it was written as a stop-gap statement prior to the 2004 national election. A successor document, if any, should distinguish between ?honors? and ?platforms? and should acknowledge more clearly the differing roles of campus authorities and bishops. In addition, ACCU?s directors suggested that juridical expressions of bishops? or universities? responsibilities should be kept to a minimum, lest they inhibit the ?mutual trust, close and consistent collaboration, and continuing dialogue? to which Ex corde Ecclesiae calls Church and university authorities.?

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