

Franciscan University of Steubenville

Steubenville, Ohio

www.franciscan.edu

Overview

Located 40 miles west of Pittsburgh on a hill overlooking a small, industrial Ohio city, Franciscan University of Steubenville began with modest goals in 1946. Bishop John King Mussio of the then-new Diocese of Steubenville wanted to develop a Catholic institution that would educate returning war veterans. He turned to the Third Order Regular of St. Francis (T.O.R.) to fulfill his objective.

The university has grown up in the city that was once an important steamboat port on the Ohio River and now has a population of about 19,000. Perhaps the most prominent local native is the late entertainer Dean Martin. But over the years, the term “Steubenville” has come to represent the university, rather than the city, for many Catholics.

During the 1960s, many Catholic and secular colleges were experiencing challenges. Franciscan University was not exempt as the university lost its moorings. Fortunately, in 1974 there emerged a visionary leader, Father Michael Scanlan, T.O.R., whose 26-year presidency reestablished the vigor and Catholic identity of the university.

Part of that renewal was attributable to its establishment as a prime center for charismatic worship among U.S. Catholic colleges. Although the charismatic focus is less predominant than, say, 20 years ago, it remains an important part of the mix of Catholic religious preferences at the university.

For the first 40 years of its existence, the institution was the College of Steubenville. In 1980 it became the University of Steubenville



QUICK FACTS

- Founded:** 1946
- Type of institution:** Medium-size university
- Setting:** Small city
- Undergraduate enrollment:** 2,049 (2008–09 academic year)
- Total undergraduate cost:** \$26,000 (tuition, room and board for 2009–10)
- Undergraduate majors:** 41

FIVE KEY POINTS

1. Owned and led by the Franciscans who are a visible presence on campus.
2. Faithful Catholicism permeates every aspect of campus life.
3. The faith-centered household system is strong, supportive and notable.
4. Forty percent of undergraduates major in theology or catechetics.
5. The university has unique ties to the Catholic charismatic movement.

and then it acquired its current name in 1985, reflecting the broadening of its curriculum and graduate program as well as emphasizing its Franciscan identity.

The university had an undergraduate enrollment of 2,049 in fall 2008. The student body is almost entirely Catholic (98 percent) yet geographically diverse, hailing from 50 states and 15 countries. The freshman retention rate ranged from 81 to 87 percent between 2003 and 2007.

Franciscan offers 36 baccalaureate majors in mostly typical liberal arts fields as well as three religious-oriented majors in humanities and the Catholic Culture, catechetics and

From the Financial Aid Office

“In addition to very competitive tuition, Franciscan University awards deserving students financial aid worth more than \$6.4 million every year. These awards are based upon academic merit, financial need or both. A typical aid package includes part grant (which does not need to be repaid), part loan (which does need to be repaid) and work study.

“Financial aid is distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. Over 80 percent of Franciscan University students receive financial aid. For your best opportunity, you must apply early for financial aid.

“Start by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). We can help you look into other sources of aid too, such as scholarships from businesses, clubs, benevolent organizations and your church. Franciscan University even offers an interest-free payment plan. Look online for further assistance: Click on Financial Aid at www.franciscan.edu.”

theology. Students also can choose from five disciplines to receive an associate of arts degree. The university also offers seven different master’s degrees, including an M.B.A. and an M.A. in theology and Christian ministry.

A \$25 million capital campaign was launched in October 2006, titled “Leading the Renaissance in Catholic Higher Education: The Campaign for Franciscan University.” Among the goals for the fundraising program are endowed chairs in bioethics, business ethics and catechetics. By early 2009, the campaign had reached nearly two-thirds of its goal.

Graduates join a 14,000-member alumni network, which is largely concentrated in Ohio, Washington, D.C., and New York City. One example of the caring nature of this group is that they have formed a Special Needs Network to assist alumni who have children with autism and other special needs.

Franciscan’s tuition rate is lower than the average for private institutions in Ohio. The undergraduate cost for tuition, room and board in 2009-10 was \$26,000, and students can apply for scholarships and financial aid including federal grants and loans.

Governance

The ownership of the university and the responsibility for its Catholic identity rests with the Franciscan order, officially known as the Third Order Regular of St. Francis of Penance of the Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, based in Loretto, Pennsylvania.

A largely lay board of 22 trustees reports to the order. Father Christian Oravec, T.O.R., is the minister provincial of the province and chairman of the board, as is the tradition. Seven other members of the board are Franciscans.

During the 2008 presidential campaign, university board member Nicholas Cafardi publicly defended his support for then-Dem-

ocratic candidate Barak Obama, despite Senator Obama's pro-abortion platform. "I believe we have lost the abortion battle—permanently," Cafardi argued. He resigned from the Franciscan board of trustees after some furor, and Franciscan issued a statement denouncing Cafardi's position. "The University does not believe the abortion battle is lost, as Dr. Cafardi states, but that the tide is decidedly turning in favor of life," the statement read.

All five presidents of the university since 1946 have been Franciscan—the president is required to be a friar—with Father Scanlan serving from 1974 to 2000; he is currently chancellor. His successor is the current president, Father Terence Henry, T.O.R.

Public Identity

In explaining its mission, the university includes the following: "The Way, the Truth and the Life are fundamental concepts and guidelines for evaluating University priorities, staffing and budgets and are understood as explicating dynamic orthodoxy." In fact, "dynamic orthodoxy" is identified as one of the pillars of the university.

According to the Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Max Bonilla, Catholic orthodoxy is promoted through the senior management of the university. He said, "The president and board strongly support and encourage faithful following of [Catholic] identity. The board makes sure the senior admin-

istration will support the mission. Selection of the board members is done on the same basis. This has maintained a great clarity as far as being faithful to the Church."

The mindset which emphasizes Franciscan, Catholic and Christian mooring does, indeed, permeate the campus. Dr. Bonilla added, "Everything we do is in the context of

Catholic identity." This is worn with a badge of honor.

Fr. Henry, the president, wrote in a 2006 issue of the alumni magazine, *Franciscan Way*: "[P]arents frequently express surprise and heartfelt gratitude for the degree to which a Catho-

lic worldview pervades the entire Franciscan campus—something they noticed was absent at other colleges they had visited."

And according to one theology professor, "Here, more than anyplace else that I've seen, there are a lot of practicing and faithful Catholics, from physical plant staff members to the registrar's office to high administrators in student life and academic affairs and the president himself—they are really good Catholics." About 20 Franciscan friars are involved in various capacities on the campus.

One way the university displays its Catholic identity is by the selection of individuals who are awarded honorary degrees. Of the more than 80 such degrees granted since the mid-1970s comes a veritable "who's who" of orthodox Catholic leaders in the field of theology, public affairs, journalism, academia and the pro-life movement. It is quite clear that



the university seeks to acknowledge those who promote Catholic teachings.

The speaker and honorees at the university's May 2008 commencement included pro-life scholar Dr. Janet Smith of Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit and Cardinal Francis Stafford, former Archbishop of Denver and most recently a member of the Vatican's Curia. Cardinal Stafford has said of Franciscan, "This university has been central to the renewal of the Catholic Church."

The 2009 commencement ceremony featured theologian Michael Novak, political scientist Paul Kengor and Father Michael Higgins, minister general of the Third Order Regular Franciscans.

All guest speakers are required to be faithful to the Magisterium and approved by the president. Sometimes debates on issues will occur on campus during which, for example, pro-abortion and pro-life representatives will participate. One university official explained, "Strong, pro-life students will challenge the pro-abortion speakers. This is a healthy experience for students to understand what the other side thinks."

The need for the public appearance of Catholic propriety is taken very seriously. In fact, we were told that when the family of Dean Martin approached university officials about contributing money for an auditorium named after the singer and "Rat Pack" mem-

Message from the President

Dear Parents and Prospective Students:

What are you looking for in a university? A place that will prepare you to succeed in your future career?

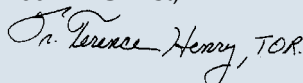
That's a good goal. But what if God has an even better plan for you?

What if you could find a school that will not only enlighten your mind but transform your heart and soul as well? That's exactly what students from all over the country and around the world have found at Franciscan University of Steubenville.

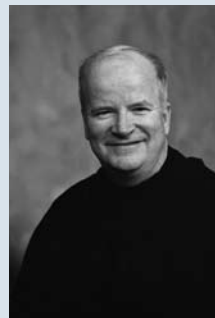
The integration of faith and reason makes the Franciscan experience unlike any other in the world of higher education. By challenging students intellectually, forming them professionally and supporting them spiritually, we prepare them to confront the social and economic challenges facing our society and equip them to engage the culture, living as "salt and light" of the world.

If you're looking for an education that's academically challenging and passionately Catholic, Franciscan University may be just the place for you. I invite you to get to know us better and find out.

Your in Christ,



Father Terence Henry, TOR



ber, the university declined. They did not believe that he was a suitable role model.

One popular campus event is the Festival of Praise charismatic worship program, which annually draws 1,500 students, faculty, parents and other visitors at each session. The unique service started in the 1980s.

Finally, the university has presented a monthly television program on the Catholic network EWTN for the past 16 years, providing an opportunity to showcase Franciscan University's leaders and faculty, as well as its interest in a variety of Catholic matters.



Academics

Undergraduates at Franciscan University are required to complete a flexible core curriculum of 48 credits, of which 15 are in a broad "communications" grouping and another 15 are in humanities. Students choose six credits in theology. A review of the core curriculum is currently underway.

The university reports that 99 percent of the faculty is Catholic. The theology department was the first among U.S. Catholic colleges and universities to take an Oath of Fidelity, in 1989. It has been done with every new theology faculty member and all new campus ministers since. Non-Catholic faculty exhibit respect for the Catholic tradition. Dr. Bonilla said, "The department knows that our work is to support the Church."

Students can choose from 41 majors and 37 minors, the latter including such less-

common pursuits as Human Life Studies and Franciscan Studies. Five of the majors are reserved for associate degree candidates. There also are eight pre-professional programs. Students can pursue an eight-seminar or 32-credit honors program that relies on the Great

Books and the Catholic intellectual tradition.

The theology department, with a strong reputation among Catholic colleges, has the most majors on campus with 460 students at the beginning of the 2008-2009 academic year; about one-quarter of the 2008

graduates were in theology. The second most popular major is catechetics. Together they account for about 700 students or nearly 35 percent of the undergraduates. The other top seven in order of enrollment are elementary education, nursing, business administration, English, philosophy, communication arts and biology.

Theology faculty comprise the university's largest department, with 37 full-time and part-time members. One senior called the theology department "exceptional beyond words." Among the notable professors are the prolific writer Dr. Scott Hahn and Dr. Regis Martin. Another student said of Dr. Martin, "He shows great acumen in seeing the connection between literature, theology and the beauty of God in everyday things."

The philosophy department also is strong and faithful. According to one philosophy major, "Much of the philosophy done here is in the personalist and phenomenological tradition of Pope John Paul II." There is a

great deal of focus on the Franciscan philosophers as well as on Saint Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican.

Among recommended philosophy faculty are Dr. Jonathan Sanford, a scholar of Aristotle and Greek, ancient and medieval thinkers, and Dr. John Crosby, an expert on the work of Dietrich von Hildebrand.

In 2008 a member of the philosophy department, Dr. Patrick Lee, was appointed to the university's first fully endowed chair, the John N. and Jamie D. McAleer Chair in Bioethics. He heads the university's Institute of Bioethics, which has held several conferences and in March 2009 hosted Dr. Robert George of Princeton University.

Catholic commitment extends across the curriculum. The Social Work Program, which was reaccredited by the Council on Social Work Education and Accreditation in 2008, is described by the university: "Preparing for a career in social work at Franciscan University assures you of a holistic education, meaning one will learn to integrate the social teachings of the Catholic Church with the knowledge and skills necessary for social work practice."

Professor Shawn Dougherty, winner of the university's 2005 Senior Faculty Excellence in Teaching Award and head of the fine arts department, said in a recent alumni magazine interview: "Good art is a response to God, to the artist's encounter with God, whether in a relationship, in nature, or in some other circumstance."



Dr. Brian Scarnecchia, an assistant professor of human life issues and director of the legal studies program, has led an annual delegation of Franciscan students, faculty and alumni to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York since 2005. He also serves as president of the International Solidarity and Human Rights Institute, which promotes Catholic teachings in the international realm.

One student provided us with perhaps the greatest compliment to the faculty at large, which includes four Fulbright Scholars. In addition to academic competence, he said, "You see professors and administrators going to Mass with families, trying to live their faith and be fathers and mothers. You can talk openly about Christ with them and they try to share Christ with you."

And yet another said professors "bring faith into the classroom. Faith is alive in them and they want to share it through studies."

They also reflect a commitment to the university. One faculty member said of this: "It can be measured by the fact that, until recently, the faculty and staff had the second or third lowest pay rates for small liberal arts schools in Ohio. Many have either taken a sizeable cut in pay or foregone a better-paying job to come here. Many see working at FUS as a calling, not as a job."

Franciscan has had a pre-theologate program for nearly a quarter-century. Fifty-six students were enrolled during the 2008-2009 academic year, which is a typical number. Eight mem-

bers of the 2008 graduating class moved on to seminaries. This program is aided by the Blessed Junipero Serra Fund.

There also is an impressive study-abroad program. Each semester about 160 students, mostly sophomores, study for one semester at a former Carthusian monastery in the Alpine town of Gaming, Austria. They share quarters in a 14th-century building with students from more than a dozen other countries involved in similar programs. Students at Gaming study European history, languages and art amid a Catholic spiritual environment. Also, in 2007, Franciscan University cosponsored an International Symposium on John Paul II's Theology of the Body at Gaming.

The university also offers seven different master's degrees, including an M.B.A. and an M.A. in theology and Christian ministry; this latter program offers a study-abroad component in Rome at the Dominican Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (the Angelicum).

Spiritual Life

The most prominent building on the 239-acre campus is the Christ the King Chapel, a 41-year-old modern-looking structure noted for a large steel cross atop its roof. The chapel has become somewhat of a trademark of the university, and it is the center of its vibrant campus life.

Twenty Masses are celebrated weekly. Daily Masses are held Monday through Friday at 6:30 a.m., 12:05 p.m. and 4:45 p.m. and reportedly attract more than 700 students

each day. All four Sunday Masses are filled to the chapel's 300-person seating capacity. The chaplain, Father Dominic Scotto, T.O.R., reports "full, active and conscious participation" by students at the Masses.

The Masses are reverent. Most are charismatic or contemporary, but there also are Extraordinary Form or chanted Ordinary Form Masses offered most weekends. Students seem to welcome the different varieties and, as one staff member told us, such diversity seems to reflect the universal nature of the Catholic Church. No other faiths are promoted on campus.

Confessions are held four times each week with seven or eight priests. The Rosary and other devotions are prayed daily. There are the periodic Praise

Festivals and frequent retreats, including silent ones, for those in music ministry and others in residential households.

There also is a Franciscan house off-campus where some young men live in a "mitigated program" of scheduled prayer and quiet as part of the spirituality of the Third Order Regular. There are days of discernment for women who might consider religious life, and friars help out with this.

The university website notes, "Prayer is the heart of our life at Franciscan University, and a place set aside to develop that discipline is an integral part of our campus life." Additional opportunities for prayer exist at a small chapel known as the Portiuncula or the



“Port,” which is rich in Franciscan heritage; it hosts 24-hour Adoration in the spring and fall and a limited program in the summer. There are also a Marian Grotto, outdoors Stations of the Cross and a life-sized creche. The campus has 14 Eucharistic Tabernacles.

A unique memorial to note is the Tomb of the Unborn Child, complete with an eternal flame, which pays tribute to the millions of aborted babies and reflects the university’s strong pro-life commitment. About 750 students make the five-hour trip to Washington, D.C., for the March for Life each January, where the university’s green-and-white banner has become a fixture.

Chapel ministry is active and, in addition to assisting in various ways with Masses, students participate in community outreach programs such as Project St. Nicholas, which works with needy Steubenville residents. The Works of Mercy group and others assist with food kitchens as well as prison and other ministries. Such outreach “enables us to be part of the world,” according to one student. There are international mission trips.

The university sponsors an annual Vocations Awareness Day, which attracted representatives from 93 religious orders and dioceses in October 2008. One student was quoted in a university news release on the event: “It really does help to have that culture of vocation, that culture of discernment here at school.” There was a Lay Vocations Fair in March 2009.



The university also emphasizes its Catholic outreach through a well-known adult summer conference program, which stretches back to 1975. The focus of many of these three- and five-day conferences is evangelization in the charismatic tradition; the theme for 2009 is “Christ Our Hope.” Among the many speakers over the years have been Father Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R., Jeff Cavins and Dr. Scott Hahn. Summer youth conferences are held in Steubenville and elsewhere—14 cities overall in 2009.

Student Activities

Students can participate in more than two dozen student organizations, including an unusual number of groups engaged in spiritual and Catholic outreach efforts. These include the Catholic Womanhood Missions, which encourages young women to study and emulate the Virgin Mary; Latinos for Christ; Ut Unum Sint Society for Christian Unity; Voice in the

Desert, emphasizing personal witness for Christ; and the Knights of Columbus.

The Students for Life club is very active. In addition to participating in the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., they have a prayer ministry outside abortion clinics four days a week, train sidewalk counselors and host prominent speakers. Once a year, a coffeehouse is held to raise money for Assistance in Motherhood Pregnancy Help Center in Steubenville.

The organization's vice president in 2008-2009, Emily Espinola, said, "Franciscan University is very pro-life, and since the mission of the school is education, our main focus on campus is educating students about the pro-life movement and how they can be pro-life."

The Works of Mercy group assists with nursing homes, homeless shelters, soup kitchens, prison ministry, mentoring and other programs with local youth. There are at least 20 ministries under the Works of Mercy umbrella.

Students also participate in foreign mission trips. A number of faculty and students made an independently-sponsored mission trip to China in the summer of 2008 as part of a hospice program called Loving Heart Home, founded by a FUS alumna. In March 2009 students fanned out to mission programs in Belize, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico as well as stateside to the Bronx, New Orleans and North Dakota's Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation

Other groups include The Tolkien Society, a women's a cappella group (The Annunciations), theatre and student government. There are opportunities to work on the weekly student newspaper, *The Troubadour*, and a campus magazine titled *Lumen Vincens*.

There is an intercollegiate athletic program. Competing as The Barons, Franciscan University participates in men's and women's soccer, cross country, basketball and track;

women's volleyball; and men's baseball and women's softball. There is a men's rugby club. There also are basketball, flag football, ultimate frisbee and volleyball intramural teams. Much of the sports activity takes place at Finnegan Fieldhouse.

The university is part of the 10-member Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference, and was granted provisional status for the NCAA Division III in August 2007.



Residential Life

About 60 percent of undergraduates live on campus. There are 12 single-sex residence halls, the largest of which is St. Thomas More, which houses 299 women. There also is a new, nearby Assisi Heights apartment complex which houses men and women.

Opposite-sex visitation in student rooms is restricted to Saturdays and Sundays from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. There is a defined and enforced

code of conduct.

A unique aspect of the university is the "household" system that was launched by Father Scanlan 34 years ago. Three or more students of the same sex can come together as a household to support each other spiritually, academically and in other ways. Each household has an advisor. The university describes the households as "radical, Christ-centered, Spirit-empowered faith communities who seek to do the will of the Father in

all things.”

In spring 2009 there were 47 households. The women’s households had such names as Ark of the Covenant, Carae Domini (which extends back to 1975), Daughters of Jerusalem, Handmaids of the Lord and Veritatis Spiritu. Among the men’s households were The Apprentices of St. Joseph, Fishers of Men, Soldiers Under Command and Watchmen of Zion. There were three households reserved for men in the pre-theologate program: Koinoia (“Brotherhood of Believers”), Living Stones and Electi Mariae (“Chosen of Mary”).

Father David Morrier, T.O.R., coordinator of Household Life, explained a bedrock principle of the households: “The students compose a ‘covenant,’ which states and expounds on their charism. To aid the members in living out the covenant, they draw up a list of commitments—things such as common prayer, regular meetings, service projects, group activities and attending Mass together regularly.”

Students often congregate in the J. C. Williams Center, the student center located near the middle of campus, to hear bands and visit the Pub deli.

A health center staffed by a physician and three nurses treats routine matters. Trinity Health Systems operates two medical centers in Steubenville. There are a number of larger hospitals in nearby Pittsburgh.

As with virtually all campuses, there have been some drinking problems reported, but they have largely been restricted to off-campus incidents. The campus itself is safe, and any crimes committed tend to be petty property-related ones.

The Community

Steubenville is located in the tri-state area of Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. A fairly typical small Rust Belt community,

Steubenville has a population of about 19,000 people; the population of its county, Jefferson, has fallen to pre-1920 levels. The county unemployment rate for January 2009 was 10.5 percent, significantly higher than the Ohio state average of 8.8 percent. The city has a higher than average crime index.

The downtown is known for its 25 large art murals. But students are likely to be more attracted to Pittsburgh, about 40 miles away. The second-largest city in Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh has a wide variety of sports, cultural and entertainment opportunities. The Pittsburgh Steelers were the 2009 Super Bowl champions.

The Pittsburgh International Airport, about a half-hour away, is a major but manageable airport that serves as a hub for U.S. Airways and a number of other carriers. Steubenville is easy to reach by highway, with Interstates 80, 76 and 70 nearby.

The Bottom Line

Although well-known as a center of charismatic Catholic worship, the university embraces other orthodox approaches to Catholic spirituality and attracts a wide variety of students, albeit nearly all of them Catholic. That is the results of a national reputation for strong Catholic identity, including a powerful witness to the pro-life cause, which penetrates everything the institution does.

For those who want a very strong Catholic environment that will bolster their spirituality while also challenging them intellectually, Franciscan University is certainly worth investigating. There is much here that makes it a “must visit” college for Catholic high school seniors.