

"This is fundamentally a matter of 'who decides?'" says John Rouse, a professor of political science at Ball State. He concedes that his colleagues "are somewhat jaded about grandmothers dying—always at exam time," which may yield a degree of bias against allowing missed classes late in the semester. Yet Rouse's stance on principle has kept up debate on the policy, despite its approval by the university senate.

"Professors make policies on class absences," Rouse points out. "Academic freedom permits them to determine absence policies." At most campuses, he adds, people such as student referees, who are not members of the faculty, "do not make academic policy." ●

Academics Vow to Resist *Ex Corde* Norms

IN STATEMENTS FILLED WITH ALLUSIONS to past struggles over academic freedom, religion professors at two Catholic campuses in Massachusetts announced plans to defy a key provision of the implementation norms for *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. The policy, approved by the nation's Catholic bishops last November, aims at strengthening the church's ties with affiliated universities. Its approval also prompted a professor in California to resign her tenured position at a Catholic institution, citing a chilled political climate.

The professors' criticisms center on the policy's insistence that theology professors at Catholic campuses obtain a "mandate" for their teaching position from their local bishop. "I have no fear about getting a mandate if I were to present myself, but I see it as a form of ecclesiastical McCarthyism," Peter Beisheim, a professor of religious studies at Stonehill College, told the *Boston Globe* in February. "I don't need to take a loyalty oath," he added.

Donald Dietrich, chair of the theology department at Boston College, also bristled at seeking a bishop's blessing for his appointment. "My own personal plan would not be to seek a mandate,"



The Rev. Richard McBrien, the Crowley-O'Brien-Walter Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, is among faculty critics of *Ex Corde* norms.

Dietrich says. "My thinking is that a university is a university, an autonomous entity that should be supportive of free thought in the American tradition. You can't have free thought if there's a mandate and some kind of control."

Boston College president William Leahy made clear his intention not to enforce the mandate provision on that campus. "The university's position is that it's an individual Catholic theologian's decision to seek a mandate or not," said college spokesperson John Dunn.

In another sign of resistance in December, Anne Eggebrotten, a professor of English at Mount St. Mary's College in Los Angeles, resigned from her position amid fears about the effects of *Ex Corde's* implementation. "As much as I love the college and my colleagues, I couldn't continue to accept a paycheck or donate energy." Eggebrotten says she viewed the Catholic bishops' vote of ap-

proval as a nod to forces "external to academe," who may gain undue sway over the content of instruction at Catholic campuses under the policy. "I realized I would have difficulty teaching in this kind of political environment."

University of Notre Dame theology professor Richard P. McBrien told *Academe* that his concerns parallel some of his colleagues'. "If external, nonacademic agents can intrude on the internal academic life of our Catholic universities and colleges, that fact in itself would compromise those institutions' claims to be universities and colleges in the fullest academic sense of those words." McBrien notes that difficulties stemming from the policy transcend fears about academic freedom: "The

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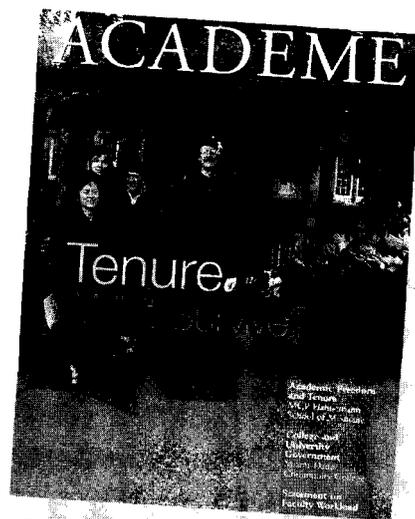
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