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With Seven-Figure Gift, Elms College Establishes St. John Paul II Center for Ethics, Religion and Culture

CHICOPEE, Mass. -- College of Our Lady of the Elms announces the creation of the St. John Paul II Center for Ethics, Religion, and Culture (CERC) thanks to the generous support of three foundational donors. A seven-figure naming gift from an anonymous donor and two six-figure contributions from Carolyn Jacobs, Ph.D. MSW, and B. John and Collette Dill and Family will help the College launch the Center. The CERC will examine the most pressing and complex questions related to ethics, religion, and culture in today's society and lead the regional community in thoughtful, engaging discourse.

"We are very excited and profoundly grateful to the anonymous donor, as well as to Dr. Carolyn Jacobs and the Dill Family, for their foundational support of the St. John Paul II Center for Ethics, Religion, and Culture," said Elms College President Harry E. Dumay, Ph.D., MBA. "As a Catholic college, Elms has served as a place where thoughtful discourse on topics of faith, ethics, and culture has always been welcome. As an institution founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph, social justice has served as an important lens through which we examine these topics. The CERC connects us more deeply to our liberal arts core and is a key objective in our Elms Plus strategic plan."

"The creation of the CERC reflects the college's goals of training the next generation of ethical leaders, sharing the richness of the Catholic intellectual tradition, encouraging interfaith dialogue, and promoting our commitment to diversity and inclusion," said Peter A. DePergola II, Ph.D., MTS, associate professor of bioethics and medical humanities at Elms College and member of the CERC Advisory Board.

From an academic perspective, programming for the CERC will focus on the infusion of ethical leadership across the curriculum, the integration of ethics within the healthcare and business fields of study, and the provision of innovative experiential learning opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students.

"One of the long-term goals of the CERC is to facilitate the creation of master's and doctoral programs in bioethics and medical humanities, which would make Elms College the only institution in the U.S. to offer a doctoral program in this multidisciplinary field," said Walter C. Breau, Ph.D., vice president of academic affairs.

Another goal of the CERC is to develop and produce a quarterly, peer-reviewed research journal that will highlight the interdisciplinary work of the CERC and include scholarly commentary on the topics related to ethics, religion and spirituality, health, and culture.

An official launch of the Center for Ethics, Religion, and Culture will take place in late October and, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will be held virtually.

About Elms College

Elms College is a coeducational Catholic college offering a liberal arts curriculum that gives students multiple perspectives on life. Founded in 1928 by the Sisters of St. Joseph, Elms College has a tradition of educating reflective, principled and creative learners, who are rooted in faith, educated in mind, compassionate in heart, responsive to civic and social obligations, and capable of adjusting to change without compromising principle.

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