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Press Release

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For Immediate Release

Accomplished University Administrator Named First Director of Catholic Schools Group

The dean of one of the world's leading online universities has been named executive director of the Mid-Atlantic Catholic Schools Consortium.

Dr. Mary Ellen Hrutka assumed her duties as the Consortium's first executive director on January 8, 2007. The Consortium is a collaborative effort among the six Catholic (arch)dioceses of the Mid-Atlantic Region to develop innovative strategies for addressing common challenges facing Catholic schools in the areas of funding, leadership and governance.

Dr. Hrutka joins the Consortium from the University of Maryland University College, where she most recently served as Vice Provost and Dean of the School of Undergraduate Studies.

Dr. Hrutka led the university's efforts to overhaul the undergraduate curriculum and build a robust inventory of academic majors, minors, and certificates worldwide in a system that serves over 29,000 students in both classroom and distance learning formats. She managed a staff of more than 80 full-time employees and 1,500 faculty members and played a critical role the development of UMUC as the leading public "Virtual University."

"She will bring energy and vision to this position," said Dr. Patricia Weitzel-O'Neill, the Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of Washington. "This is somebody who is a very realistic person, who always has a vision and who always has a way to solve a problem.

"Mary Ellen Hrutka is exactly what we have been looking for to lead this important initiative to the next level and beyond," remarked John Elcesser, the Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Richmond. "She has experience in building new ventures and developed the key partnerships and relationships to ensure success."

The mission of the Consortium is "to make Catholic schools the schools of choice for Catholic children and families, and all who desire an education rooted in Catholic tradition and Gospel values." It will identify collaborative solutions to the challenges shared by the six Mid-Atlantic (arch)dioceses: the Archdioceses of Baltimore and Washington, and the Dioceses of Arlington, Richmond, Wilmington, and Wheeling-Charleston.

“The Consortium will provide the organizational framework through which all interested parties can work together to be part of the schools’ continued success,” Cardinal William H. Keeler, the Archbishop of Baltimore, said. “I am delighted that Mary Ellen Hrutka, who has served already Catholic schools so well as a member of the Archdiocese of Washington School Board, is taking the lead in directing this important project.”

Bishop Michael A. Saltarelli, the Bishop of the Diocese of Wilmington said, “The Mid-Atlantic Catholic Schools Consortium ensures that our future remains bright through its initiatives to secure viable financing, governance and leadership options for our schools. I look forward to working with the Consortium and its new executive director, Mary Ellen Hrutka, to provide for the success and growth of our Catholic schools in the coming decades.”

The executive director is the strategic and operational leader for the Consortium and is responsible for implementing the mission, goals, objectives, and policy agenda of the Consortium. Some of the Consortium’s goals include supporting the important role that Catholic schools play in faith formation, strengthening the management and governance structures of Catholic schools, leveraging the benefits of the size of the Consortium and ensuring long-term government and private financial support of Catholic schools.

“It is my privilege to serve as the first Executive Director of the Mid-Atlantic Catholic Schools Consortium,” Dr. Hrutka said. “Working with the six superintendents, members of our Leadership Council and those who share our commitment to Catholic Schools, we will increase the awareness of the value of our Catholic schools and ensure their continued accessibility and affordability.”

James McAndrews, the chairman of the Leadership Council, said that, “The addition of Mary Ellen Hrutka as the Consortium’s Executive Director brings an experienced leader with demonstrated academic and program building abilities to a Consortium committed to finding new and better ways to educate and develop our school children; attract, retain and further enhance the skills of dedicated teachers; and make Catholic schools the standard by which other institutions of learning are measured.”

Dr. Hrutka joined UMUC in 1992. She previously taught or served in student service and counseling departments at: The University of Maryland, Barry University, Emory University, Trinity College, and The Johns Hopkins School of Nursing.

Dr. Hrutka has served on the School Board for the Archdiocese of Washington since 2003, and is also on the Board of Trustees at St. John’s College High School in Washington DC. She is a parishioner at St. John the Baptist Parish in Silver Spring, Maryland.

“When Mary Ellen came in to be interviewed, she absolutely engaged herself as a full person in the process,” said John Yelenic, the Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. “She’s really going to walk among the people who are really what this whole project, this whole consortium, is about.”

“The operative word has been and always will be collaboration between the six dioceses,” said Dr. Timothy McNiff, the Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Arlington. “Dr. Hrutka has the vision and the ability and to bring that collaboration together.”

“All of us have the same challenges,” said Dr. Ronald Valenti, the Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of Baltimore. “The best way to address them is collectively. With Mary Ellen coming on board, with her education insights, she certainly will help us achieve our goals.”

For more information on the Mid-Atlantic Catholic Schools Consortium, please visit www.midatlanticcsc.org.