

Who "owns" Christian

By Lorcan P. Barnes, President

With a history as long and involved as ours I am often asked, "Do the Brothers still own Christian Brothers High School?" People are interested in understanding the relationship between the Brothers, the Board of Trustees, the Diocese of Sacramento, and the school administration. With this article, it is my hope that I can shed some light on how these various groups collaborate to ensure our mission is carried out effectively.

"Ownership" is both temporal and cultural. Temporal ownership involves the practical, worldly responsibilities involved in managing our organization, otherwise called governance. Cultural ownership involves a profound belief in our charism, including our philosophy of education.

The Brothers

For most of our school's history, the Christian Brothers' District of San Francisco (our province) held each of its schools under the umbrella of De La Salle Institute, which acted as a central office for all of the schools. In 1994, the District went through a significant reorganization. Each school within the District was separately incorporated. The Lasallian Education Corporation (L.E.C.) was established, enabling the District to maintain canonical responsibility for, and oversight of, schools while leaving governance and management to local leadership. The L.E.C. is comprised of District leadership and is ultimately our school's legal owner and the legal owner of other Lasallian secondary schools on the west coast.

Christian Brothers High School is currently blessed to have a community of four Christian Brothers who live at the school, three of whom minister full time in the school.

Board of Trustees

At the time of reorganization in 1994, each school within the District established a Board of Trustees comprised of Brothers and lay partners. This method of leadership was consistent with the desire of Vatican II and the Brothers to have more lay involvement in leadership.



The 2006-07 Board of Trustees: Top row (l-r), Br. Donald Johanson, FSC, Kevin Valine '73, Richard Cunha, '65, David Rasul '65, Peter Berghuis, David Holquin '99; bottom row (l-r), Thea Stidum, Helen Pierson, Janet Ruggiero, Patricia Moore.

The Board of Trustees represents the Brothers, who remain the moral owners of the school. The Board of Trustees focuses on strategic direction, as opposed to administrative detail. It is concerned more with the future than the past or present. It maintains a clear distinction of Board roles and CEO roles. Among its specific responsibilities is to hire and evaluate the President/CEO.

Serving as a Trustee is a voluntary commitment. We are blessed to have ten dedicated trustees comprised of Christian Brothers, alumni, parents of alumni, and other community leaders. Each candidate is required to go through training on the Lasallian Mission and governance model before s/he is presented to the LEC for approval.

Ongoing formation in the Lasallian charism is also a part of each Board meeting. Trustees are formally appointed by LEC upon recommendation of the sitting Trustees. Terms are three years, renewable once. The Board meets approximately eight times a year.

The Diocese of Sacramento

Christian Brothers exists within the Diocese of Sacramento. As a ministry of the Catholic Church, all of our activities canonically fall under the auspices of the Bishop. As mentioned above, however, we are not legally "owned" by the diocese.

Brothers High School?

While we enjoy a strong relationship with the diocese, it is important to note that our governance model makes us different from diocesan-owned schools, such as St. Francis H.S. and parish grade schools. The diocese has full fiduciary responsibility for those schools. As a private, Catholic school, Christian Brothers High School is responsible for our own financial health.

Some of our students do receive tuition assistance through the diocese, in the form of funds established at the diocese. Our faculty and staff are employed by CB, not the diocese.

Faculty, Staff, and Administration

The De La Salle Christian Brothers are leaders in the Catholic Church in training the laity to serve and lead on behalf of the mission as a ministry of the Church. Christian Brothers Sacramento has a strong reputation nationally as having a high degree of faculty and staff participation in Lasallian formation programs. More than half of our faculty and administration have participated in formal Lasallian training or was a graduate of a Lasallian school, a current parent, or a parent of a graduate.

The President-Principal model of school leadership has formally been in place at Christian Brothers for approximately fifteen years. When we adopted the model in the early 1990's, approximately 20% of Catholic high schools employed this model. Today, according to the National Catholic Education Association, this number is approximately 60%. As President, I am hired by – and report to – the Board of Trustees. My role is to ensure that our mission is alive and tangible today and well into the future. In this model of leadership, the day-to-day operations of the school are delegated to our Principal, Mr. Ray Burnell.

Cultural Ownership

Those of us involved with the school today stand proudly on the shoulders of Christian Brothers, alumni, parents, and faculty and staff, who made tremendous sacrifices to create something special over the past 130 years. Today, this dedication remains. There are alumni, faculty and staff, parents, and students who bleed our

school colors. This is cultural ownership.

Being a member of the CB community is a privilege. It takes time, commitment, and sacrifice before one can truly say s/he is a Falcon. Over time, our students will realize that it is their responsibility to uphold the high standards of our school and to pass on our rich tradition. In other words, it is our hope that they will assume cultural ownership.



Owning De La Salle's Mission: Ownership of De La Salle's mission and Christian Brothers High School is a responsibility set before us all.

Divine Ownership

Temporal and cultural ownership are vital to any organization's strength. But we in Catholic schools have a higher calling. In our case, for example, we have to make sure that the Lasallian charism is passed on to successive generations.

A "charism" (Greek for "gift") includes a unique spirituality, a rich history, and special philosophy of education. The charism of St. John Baptist de La Salle is timeless, but it will only thrive if current leadership instills the charism in the hearts of current students. This responsibility is greater than temporal and cultural ownership. It is divine.

The Answer to the Question

Simply put, Christian Brothers High School is owned by the Christian Brothers. But we recognize our structure is unusual and complicated. Regardless of structure, strong schools rely on committed people. Christian Brothers High School is blessed to have committed ownership; temporal, cultural, and divine.

Our owners are faculty and staff who take seriously their responsibility as educational ministers of our Church. Our owners are parents who pay tuition and collaborate with us to provide quality education and moral example to tomorrow's leaders. Our owners are alumni who support the school financially because they understand that their education was subsidized and they feel an obligation to give back. Our owners include Christian Brothers and Trustees who challenge us to be true to the vision of our founder.

And, of course, our owners are our students...those who wear proudly the name "Christian Brothers" and demonstrate ownership by doing their very best to realize their God-given potential.