



The Diaconate Formation Program at MACC

The diaconate formation program at MACC is built on the collaborative approach of the partner diocese and the Mexican American Catholic College. It emphasizes not only the academic aspect of formation but also the pastoral, human and spiritual aspects of an integral approach to form effective leaders for the Church in the United States. The collaboration between the diocese and MACC include:

A Deacon Formator: The local Director of Diaconate Formation, a deacon generally, accompanies the candidates in formation, focusing on helping the candidates develop the four dimensions of the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*: intellectual, human, spiritual and pastoral. The local director's interactions and engagement with candidates helps foster a sense of guidance to all four dimensions. The local director coordinates with faculty in the academic and theological preparation. The local director may serve as a tutor in times when candidates may be struggling academically. The local director also helps identify any anomalies regarding the discernment process of the candidate and provides the candidates with valuable insight on the demands and expectations of being an Ordained Deacon.

Entrance Assessment: Depending on the guidelines for admission for (arch)diocese and bishop, an entrance assessment may be utilized. The candidates may undergo a psychological assessment prior to being accepted in formation by the diocese. MACC recommends that this be done before acceptance or during the first semester of formation at the latest. The application process used by the diocese may provide valuable information, especially the Spiritual Autobiography of the candidate. In an effort to not use the Spiritual Autobiography as a means of exclusion, the Spiritual Autobiography may indicate if a candidate has suffered some emotional or physical trauma that may be latent but that hopefully will not manifest itself. The local director works with MACC to enroll those candidates who have been accepted into the formation program by the diocese.

Annual Evaluation: MACC provides transcripts at the end of each semester to each candidate and the director of formation. The local director may work in conjunction with the parish priest of each candidate in formation to evaluate both the academic progress of the candidate as well as the candidate's involvement in the parish. This helps the local director to see how the candidate is involved in ministries that help reinforce his theological learning, as well as how the candidate desires to be with the people of God. This annual assessment helps the local diaconate office determine the progress of the candidate.

Mentoring: The local director may serve as a mentor to the candidates in formation. The local director also encounters and walks with the candidates, as he can share his formation and practical experience with the candidates as they prepare to be deacons. The (arch)diocese may also have in place a mentorship team as part of the formation, assigning candidates to a well-seasoned and formed deacon already in active diaconate ministry. The local director as a mentor may bridge gaps of the discernment process for each candidate. The local director keeps in touch with MACC during the formation process of each candidate.

The Service of the Mexican American Catholic College

Faculty: The faculty at MACC provides intellectual and academic formation for the diaconate formation candidates in the studies of theology and pastoral ministry. Through the Director of the Diaconate Formation Program at MACC, the faculty complements the local director and works together to identify any learning difficulties. The extension of the academic preparation is also aimed at developing sound and capable leaders in ministry. The collaboration between faculty, the local and MACC director, and the candidates facilitates a learning environment and assures academic success.



Intellectual Formation that Incorporates Integration: Theological formation goes hand in hand with spiritual, human, leadership, and pastoral praxis. All participants must meet the coursework required in the program. The intellectual formation of the candidate includes modes of integrating what each candidate is being taught in class. It is good practice to include workshops that allow the candidate to practice the theology or pastoral ministry education instructed in class into a practical methodology. The theological preparation should be taken to their parish and shared with the people of God. For example, during and after the Sacramental Theology class, it would be a good practice to have the candidate become involved in either Marriage Preparation or Baptismal Preparation. These spaces allow for teaching and practicing the sacraments in a practical way.

Cohorts: The DFP at MACC has an English and Spanish track, which means that every group has a sense of being a cohort, even if some students only attend synchronous classes online. The diaconate formation program is either three or five years, depending on diocesan needs. The cohorts vary in the number of candidates, each according to their specified track.

Academic requirements: Intellectual formation is foundational for ministry, and it is intrinsically related to spiritual formation. Deacons are expected to minister alongside priests and lay ecclesial ministers. Therefore, their intellectual formation must be aligned with the local Arch/diocesan Pastoral Vision for effective pastoral service in the local church.

Because the program is offered at the undergraduate certificate level, the basic requirement for accepting a candidate into the Diaconate Formation Program is a high school diploma or a general education diploma (GED). It would be beneficial if a candidate had some college experience since it gives a point of reference for their academic ability. Candidates have the option to enroll in the collaborative Bachelor of Arts in Pastoral Ministry (a 121-credit undergraduate program) or the Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry (a 36-credit graduate program) that is offered by MACC and the University of Incarnate Word at an additional cost. The entire academic preparation in the formation requires that at least a grade of a C be earned for successful completion towards the certificate of completion.

Financial Elements: The candidates in the Diaconate Formation Program should always come to MACC through the partner diocese. The 2024 tuition cost for the Diaconate Formation Program is \$765 per credit. Through current generous funding, scholarships of 40% of tuition are available at MACC. Students take up to 12 credits, or 4 classes, per year. In addition to tuition, there is a \$250 technology and registration fee per year, a one-time \$30 application fee, a one-time graduation fee of \$85, books and/or other non-tuition required materials needed for the program.

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