

**PRESS RELEASE:**

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## The Cardinal Newman Society Awarded 2026 Heritage Innovation Prize for Catholic School Accreditation

The Heritage Foundation recognizes innovative Newman Guide, NAPCIS project to expand faithful, parent-centered Catholic education

**MANASSAS, Va. (June 25, 2026)** — The Cardinal Newman Society has been awarded a prestigious [2026 Heritage Innovation Prize](#) from The Heritage Foundation for its groundbreaking innovation in Catholic school accreditation, expanding families' access to faithful Catholic education.

As a subsidiary to [The Cardinal Newman Society](#), the [National Association of Private Catholic and Independent Schools \(NAPCIS\)](#) supports a wide variety of faith-based school options and increases their students' access to school choice funding. It substitutes mission-focused academic standards for woke biases and meddlesome mandates, with a streamlined and low-cost application process.

**"We are deeply honored and grateful that The Heritage Foundation, America's leading public policy organization, recognizes our NAPCIS program as a model of accreditation reform and an important step toward renewing American families, culture, and citizenship,"** said Patrick Reilly, president and founder of The Cardinal Newman Society.

The Heritage Foundation has been a leading voice for school choice and education reform and an important resource to The Cardinal Newman Society. Heritage established the Innovation Prize to recognize and generously advance bold, results-oriented solutions to some of the most pressing challenges facing America.

**"This prize affirms the importance of education that forms young people in faith, virtue, and reason without surrendering to ideological pressure,"** said Dr. Denise Donohue, chairman of NAPCIS.

**"The goal is to make accreditation easier, more affordable, and more impactful for schools that live out their Catholic mission with confidence and joy,"** said Dr. Daniel Guernsey, executive director of NAPCIS.

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The Cardinal Newman Society acquired NAPCIS in late 2025, beginning a new chapter for the 30-year-old accreditor. NAPCIS currently has 87 members including parochial, parent-led, and classical schools.

The new structure integrates two important assurances for Catholic families:

- **Recommendation in The Newman Guide**, which identifies schools committed to strong Catholic identity and outstanding formation, now integrated with the NAPCIS evaluation process; and
- **NAPCIS accreditation**, which also evaluates schools' academic quality, governance, operational health, and institutional stability.

Unlike many conventional accreditation systems, the renewed NAPCIS process is intended to be affordable, efficient, mission-centered, and respectful of subsidiarity.

It emphasizes what matters most—faithful Catholic formation and academic excellence—rather than imposing ideological agendas, uniform educational models, excessive credential requirements, and intrusive bureaucracy.

"Accreditation should help schools fulfill their mission, not distract them from it," Guernsey said. "Faithful Catholic schools need a process that respects parents, encourages innovation, protects religious freedom, and gives families confidence that a school is both authentically Catholic and well operated."

The initiative is also intended to help Catholic families benefit from expanding school-choice opportunities. In many states, school accreditation is necessary for their families to participate in education savings accounts, scholarship programs, and other forms of school-choice assistance.

By providing an accessible pathway to accreditation, NAPCIS helps faithful Catholic schools remain independent while becoming more available to families of varied financial means.

The Heritage Foundation's recognition highlights the broader importance of the project, beyond Catholic education.

Schools that form young people in objective truth, moral virtue, personal responsibility, faith, and reason help prepare strong families, principled leaders, and responsible citizens needed for American self-government.

"This is about much more than an administrative process," Donohue said. "It's about strengthening schools that recognize parents as the primary educators of their children, resist destructive ideologies, and form young people to seek truth, serve others, and live with courage and integrity."

“The renewal of America begins with the formation of its children,” Reilly said. “We are grateful to The Heritage Foundation for recognizing that faithful Catholic schools are providing a compelling and urgently needed model of education.”

The Cardinal Newman Society’s NAPCIS accreditation reform project will support the evaluation of current member schools, recruitment of new schools, continued development of streamlined accreditation standards, and integration with the growing Newman Guide network.

### **About The Cardinal Newman Society**

Founded in 1993, The Cardinal Newman Society promotes and defends faithful Catholic education. Through The Newman Guide, the Society recognizes faithful Catholic schools, colleges, graduate programs, homeschool programs, and curricula. It also provides standards, resources, policy guidance, networking, and legal support to help Catholic educators strengthen and protect their religious mission.

### **About NAPCIS**

The National Association of Private Catholic and Independent Schools supports and accredits PreK–12 schools faithful to the magisterium of the Catholic Church. NAPCIS provides mission-centered, efficient, and affordable accreditation focused on faithful Catholic formation, academic quality, and operational health.

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