

THE 29TH ANNUAL HENRY PALEY MEMORIAL AWARD

Christopher B. Nelson

President, St. John's College, Annapolis, MD

Since assuming the presidency of St. John's College in Annapolis, MD, in 1991, Christopher B. Nelson has been a constant presence for the private, nonprofit higher education sector. Before accountability was a national buzzword, Chris Nelson was a key member of NAICU's 1994 Task Force on Appropriate Accountability, helping to frame the language still used in our sector about the importance of self-regulation to preserving the core quality and diversity of American higher education.

Among a distinguished set of voices for the value of the liberal arts, none is more articulate nor better known than Nelson. *The Washington Post* cited Nelson as one of the most influential college presidents in the country in a profile marking his 20th anniversary at St. John's College in 2011.

From Congressional testimony to speaking engagements to opinion essays to blog posts to congressional testimony, he regularly engages in the national conversation about higher education. Recently, he has addressed issues of institutional autonomy in the face of government regulatory intrusion, changes proposed to the accrediting system, defining the role of liberal education as an excellent grounding for career and professional development and, most importantly, for an open-minded pursuit of lifelong learning. He is a regular contributor to the opinion pages of *The Washington Post* and *The Huffington Post* as well as a prolific writer of the

blog Sign Post for Liberal Education (blogs.sjc.edu/christopher-nelson/).

But above all, Nelson's voice resonates because his educational philosophy is rooted in a desire to help all students find within themselves that which defines their humanity. In a time when the national conversation increasingly seeks to reduce education to numbers and dollars, Nelson's voice cuts through the clatter and misguided measures of values to remind all educators of our common and most fundamental purpose.

St. John's is devoted to the most liberal of liberal education. Its richly varied curriculum focuses on an integrated study of philosophy, literature, history, theology, political science, mathematics, music, and science. Students and faculty engage directly—not through textbooks and lectures but through study and discussion—with original texts and ideas that are at the foundations of Western thought.

A 1970 alumnus of St. John's College and a graduate of the University of Utah College of Law, Nelson practiced law in Chicago for 18 years and was chairman of his law firm when he left the practice for the top leadership post at St. John's College. He was active on numerous national, state and local Bar Association committees and published articles in the field of labor and employee benefits law.

Nelson is serving or has served on a number of boards and committees related to education. He is currently serving a second three-year term on

the NAICU Board of Directors and serves on the Accountability Committee. Nelson is a former chair of the Board of Directors of the Maryland Independent Colleges and Universities Association and a past chair and a founding member of the Annapolis Group, a

consortium of over 120 of the nation's leading liberal arts colleges. He also served on the board for the Council of Independent Colleges and as chair of the Board of Trustees of Shimer College.

Named for Henry Paley, president of the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities of New York from 1975 until 1984, the award recognizes an individual who embodies his spirit of unfailing service toward the students and faculty of independent higher education. The winner of this award has set an example for all who would seek to advance educational opportunity in the United States.

HENRY PALEY MEMORIAL AWARD RECIPIENTS

2015	Christopher B. Nelson, President, St. John's College (MD)	2000	Sr. Mary Andrew Matesich, Ohio Dominican College
2014	NAICU Legal Services Review Panel	1999	David Irwin, Washington Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
2013	Bernard Fryshman, Executive Vice President, Association of Advanced Rabbinal and Talmudic Schools	1998	Rev. William J. Sullivan, Seattle University (WA)
2012	Patricia A. McGuire, President, Trinity Washington University (DC)	1997	James Whalen, Ithaca College (NY)
2011	The Rev. Charles L. Currie, S.J., President, Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities	1996	John Frazer, Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities
2010	Sister Kathleen Ross, SNJM, Heritage University (WA)	1995	Richard F. Rosser, National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
2009	Morgan Odell, Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities	1994	Sr. Dorothy Ann Kelly, College of New Rochelle (NY)
2008	The Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., University of Notre Dame (IN)	1993	Derek Bok, Harvard University
2007	Alexander W. (Sandy) Astin, Higher Education Research Institute, University of California	1992	(Special Summit Meeting – no award was given)
2006	Clare Cotton, The Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Massachusetts	1991	Francis "Mike" Michelini, Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania
2005	Robert N. Kelly, Kansas Independent College Association	1990	The Honorable Silvio Conte, U.S. House of Representatives
2004	Michael S. McPherson, Spencer Foundation, Macalester College (MN)	1989	The Honorable Thomas H. Kean, Governor, New Jersey
2003	James C. Ross, Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities of New York	1988	The Honorable William H. Natcher, U.S. House of Representatives
2002	Allen P. Splete, Council of Independent Colleges	1987	Frank "Sandy" Tredinnick, Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts
2001	(Special NAICU 25th Anniversary Meeting recognizing all previous recipients; no new award was given)	1986	James Ream, Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Universities
		1985	Rev. Timothy S. Healy, Georgetown University (DC)