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by Heidi Schlumpf

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After nine years as a freelance columnist for the National Catholic Reporter, I was thrilled to join NCR as its national correspondent last August. Since then, I've reported stories from Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Baltimore and New York. But the story I'm most proud of started in Chicago, where I am based.

After attending a gathering of young Catholics at the McCormick Center downtown, the editors and I realized there was a bigger story in the Colorado-based organization, the Fellowship of Catholic University Students, or FOCUS. Over three months, I interviewed nearly 20 people on the record, and almost that many off the record, as well as delved into FOCUS' financial and tax documents.

The result was a [three-part series](#) that shed light on FOCUS' \$57 million annual budget, as well as its connections to conservative organizations and their money. It also revealed the organization's plan to expand beyond campus ministry into parishes.

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The response to the series of articles, which ran online and in print in March and April, was overwhelming, with dozens of letters and emails thanking us for making public the concerns of many in campus ministry throughout the U.S. Others were grateful for explaining an organization they had been asked to contribute to, but knew little about.

It's that kind of in-depth, investigative reporting that the National Catholic Reporter has been known for throughout its nearly 54-year history. And it's a heritage I'm proud to be a part of, as I cover other church organizations, the hierarchy, the #MeToo movement and the serious social justice issues facing our country today.

Please consider supporting NCR during our Spring Fund Drive — either [with a one-time gift](#) or [as a monthly giving member](#) — so we can continue to do this kind of deep reporting on the church and our country. Thank you.

[Heidi Schlumpf is NCR national correspondent. Her email address is hschlumpf@ncronline.org. Follow her on Twitter [@HeidiSchlumpf](#).]

This story appears in the **Spring Fund Drive 2018** feature series. [View the full series](#).