

Cultivating the Vine of Ursuline Education

Introduction

At the heart of Ursuline education is the Gospel call to mission and the living spirit of St. Angela Merici, foundress of the Ursuline Sisters. Grounded in this call and in this spirit, Ursuline education is relationship-centered, with attentiveness to and respect for the unique gifts, potential, and needs of each individual. It is an educational vision which fosters the development of the whole person – spirit, mind and body – in a nurturing community environment. As Jesus and St. Angela were both attuned to the needs of those around them, Ursuline education seeks to form servant-leaders, open to and engaged in the ever-changing global reality in which they are called to live and serve.

The schools sponsored by the Ursuline Education Foundation are called to be faithful to this educational mission and vision through the following Core Values and Essential Characteristics of an Ursuline School.

Core Values of an Ursuline School

Spiritual Formation and Faith Development
Respect for the Uniqueness of the Individual
Development of the Whole Person
Development of a Nurturing Community Spirit
Commitment to Peacemaking
Serviam
Academic Excellence

Essential Characteristics of an Ursuline School

1. Cultivates its Catholic Christian identity and instills Ursuline values, heritage, history, and the spirit of St. Angela within its programs and activities.
2. Nurtures a strong spiritual formation for its students and co-workers, one that cultivates the faith development of all its constituencies.
3. Fosters respect for the uniqueness of each individual member of the school community.
4. Promotes the development of the whole person.
5. Forms and supports a nurturing family/community spirit.
6. Promotes faith-based living and leadership in a global community while striving for peace and justice.
7. Ensures the motto of “Serviam” permeates every aspect of the school.
8. Instills academic excellence while inspiring intellectual curiosity.

Roles and Responsibilities

Leadership of Ursuline-sponsored schools is cultivated by a collaborative network of positions, each one with a unique role and responsibilities, to ensure fidelity to the mission and identity of Ursuline schools.

As the **Canonical Sponsor**, the Ursuline Education Foundation, has ultimate oversight in the areas of Catholic/Ursuline Identity for all Ursuline-sponsored schools.

Their responsibilities include:

1. Serving in the sponsorship role. (The term “sponsorship” means to have responsibility for, and to be accountable to, a higher Church authority for (i) the development and maintenance of the mission and ministry of the sponsored work as a Catholic/Ursuline entity and (ii) the fidelity of the sponsored work to the legislation and teachings of the Church.)
2. Fulfilling all duties as articulated in the governing documents.
3. Approving amendments to the mission statement.
4. Approving mission-related amendments to the governing documents.
5. Reviewing and affirming candidates to serve as school trustees and chief administrators.
6. Financing the Office of Mission and Identity and appointing and coordinating the selection/evaluation of its staff.
7. Financing the Office of the Director of Ursuline Education Foundation and appointing and coordinating the selection/evaluation of its staff.
8. Committing to on-going formation in areas of governance and Catholic/Ursuline Identity.
9. Reviewing and responding to end-of-year evaluations of boards of trustees and chief administrators as shared by the Office of Mission and Identity.
10. Reviewing and responding to reports that are part of the Ursuline Identity Assessment process.

The role of the **Office of Mission and Identity** is to provide leadership in promoting and integrating the Catholic/Ursuline Identity in Ursuline-sponsored schools and to assist in all areas of oversight.

The responsibilities of the Director of this office include:

1. Facilitating the inter-connectedness of the schools.
2. Organizing Catholic/Ursuline Identity resources to be made available to all schools.
3. Building and maintaining relationships with school leadership, especially boards of trustees, administrators, and mission personnel/campus ministers.
4. Ensuring programs of orientation and on-going formation occur in each school for board members, administrators, and all co-workers.
5. Coordinating the Ursuline Identity Assessment process of accountability for each school.
6. Serving as an ex-officio member of the board of trustees of each school and as liaison between the board of trustees and the Ursuline Education Foundation.
7. Facilitating end-of-the-year evaluations of boards of trustees and chief administrators.
8. Serving ex-officio on the Ursuline Education Foundation.
9. Preparing regular reports for the UEF and assisting in assessing and meeting ongoing formation needs.
10. Overseeing the general administration and budget of the office.

The **Board of Trustees** of each sponsored school makes and implements decisions rooted in the school's Catholic/Ursuline charism, mission, and identity.

The responsibilities of the Board of Trustees include:

1. Exercising governance of the school in accord with governing documents.
2. Developing and implementing policy in light of the school's Catholic/Ursuline mission and identity.
3. Developing and implementing a strategic plan grounded in the school's Catholic/Ursuline mission and identity.
4. Approving the annual budget aligned with the Ursuline Mission/Identity.
5. Approving amendments to the mission and/or governing documents of the school for forwarding to the Sponsors Council for review. All amendments pertaining to mission must be approved by the Ursuline Education Foundation.
6. Developing and implementing a leadership succession plan for the board of trustees and school leadership positions.
7. Hiring and evaluating the president/head of school annually with review and affirmation by UEF.
8. Submitting an annual self-evaluation which is used to guide any necessary changes in board operations and procedures.
9. Committing to new trustee training and on-going formation in areas of governance and Catholic/Ursuline Identity.
10. Participating in the Ursuline Identity Assessment process and submitting any reports requested as part of the process.
11. Approving financial transactions such as borrowing, capital campaigns, etc. after the property agreement of the school is fulfilled. *

The **School Administrators (President/Head of School/Principal)** of each sponsored school ensure the Catholic/Ursuline identity of the school is developed, nurtured, and kept visible.

The responsibilities of the administrators include:

1. Modeling, articulating, promoting, and advocating for the Ursuline mission and core values to all members of the school community.
2. Employing those whose values are compatible with the school's Catholic/Ursuline Identity and evaluating all employees in accordance with this identity.
3. Ensuring a comprehensive program of mission-focused formation for all co-workers.
4. Ensuring there is designated staff whose role is devoted to Mission Integration in the school.
5. Ensuring the academic and co-curricular programs as well as the Graduate Profile are rooted in Catholic/Ursuline Identity and address the needs and well-being of all students.
6. Committing to mission-focused orientation before assuming office and on-going formation in Catholic/Ursuline Identity.
7. Participating actively in Ursuline-sponsored leadership gatherings.
8. Submitting measurable goals to be included as part of the yearly evaluation process.
9. Participating in the Ursuline Identity Assessment process and submitting any reports/action plans requested pertaining to the process.

* Approving real estate, borrowing, and certain other financial matters for the school remains a power reserved to the Ursuline Leadership Team until the property agreement is fulfilled.

The **Mission Integration Personnel** of each sponsored school serve to ensure the school's mission, vision, values, and heritage are integrated into all aspects of the school's life.

The responsibilities of Mission Integration Personnel include:

1. Working with the school's administrators to make the school's Catholic/Ursuline mission a lived reality.
2. Providing leadership in the design and implementation of a comprehensive program of mission-focused formation for all members of the school community.
3. Providing oversight, resources, and support for activities/events related to the school's Catholic/Ursuline Identity, mission, and heritage.
4. Communicating regularly with the Office of Mission and Identity to further collaboration, networking, and support.
5. Participating actively in Ursuline-sponsored mission integration gatherings.
6. Participating in the Ursuline Identity Assessment process and working with administrators to submit any reports/action plans requested pertaining to the process.

Assessment of Ursuline-Sponsored Schools

The Ursuline Identity Assessment is the evaluatory tool used to ensure each school's fidelity to its Catholic/Ursuline Identity. It is an opportunity to reflect on the school's uniqueness, make connections with others who share the spirit of St. Angela, and foster the shared identity which exists among sister-schools. This process will allow for community reflection and processing to ensure each Ursuline school experiences an affirmation of its commitment to its Catholic/Ursuline identity, understands its challenges, and has the opportunity to deepen its commitment to growth in every area.

The Office of Mission and Identity oversees the assessment process which begins with a self-study based on the Essential Characteristics of an Ursuline School. Upon completion of the self-study a visiting team reviews the information submitted by the host school and spends time on the school campus facilitating focus groups and witnessing the lived reality of the mission. Using the commendations and recommendations of the visiting team report, the school submits an Action Plan to the Office of Mission and Identity to be lived and reviewed until the next self-study cycle begins.

"Never cease to cultivate this vine which has been entrusted to you."

~St. Angela Merici

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