

JOSEPHINUM ACADEMY OF THE SACRED HEART

CONVERSATION PIECE

2021 Recap



Looking ahead Page 5

Windia

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Letter From **OUR LEADERS**

Dear Josephinum Community,

It's impossible to look back on the last few years without reflecting on the pain and suffering we experienced. From civil unrest to sickness, isolation to loss, long-held tensions to unprecedented grief, it has been a season marked, first and foremost, by hardship. But it has also been a season marked by tenacity, courage, innovation, and commitment.

In the face of countless hurdles, our talented faculty and staff have worked tirelessly with care and passion. Families and friends made sacrifices to keep our doors open safely and pave pathways to the future. And our strong, creative students rallied together, invested in themselves and one another, and persevered.

They navigated another impossible year with grit and grace—and continue to show us what it means to be resilient.

As we look to the future, we are hopeful that our mission and purpose will fall like seeds on fertile ground, taking root and remaining strong for the next 130 years.

We are mindful of the redemptive nature of this mission—one that opens doors for a diverse community of talented young women ready to find their place and make their marks on the world.

We are energized to be part of the Sacred Heart Network of Schools and encouraged by their ongoing support.

We are inspired by our students as we continue to show them that they are loved, that they matter, and that a community surrounds them.

We are appreciative of our educators who stretch the boundaries of what's possible, introducing new opportunities like digital art, computer science, culinary arts, cyber security, STEM, and more to best prepare students for their college and careers.

And we are grateful for each and every one of you—the supporters, friends, partners, and families who have stood alongside us this year. Even when we were discouraged, threatened, and challenged, you showed up. Your presence and partnership have made all of this possible.

Thank you for being part of the diverse, dynamic community at Josephinum Academy. What an honor it is to have you with us on this journey.

With gratitude,



President Richard McMenemy



Principal Colleen Schrantz

OUR IMPACT

134

Students

45

Zip Codes

11

Languages spoken at students' homes

8:1

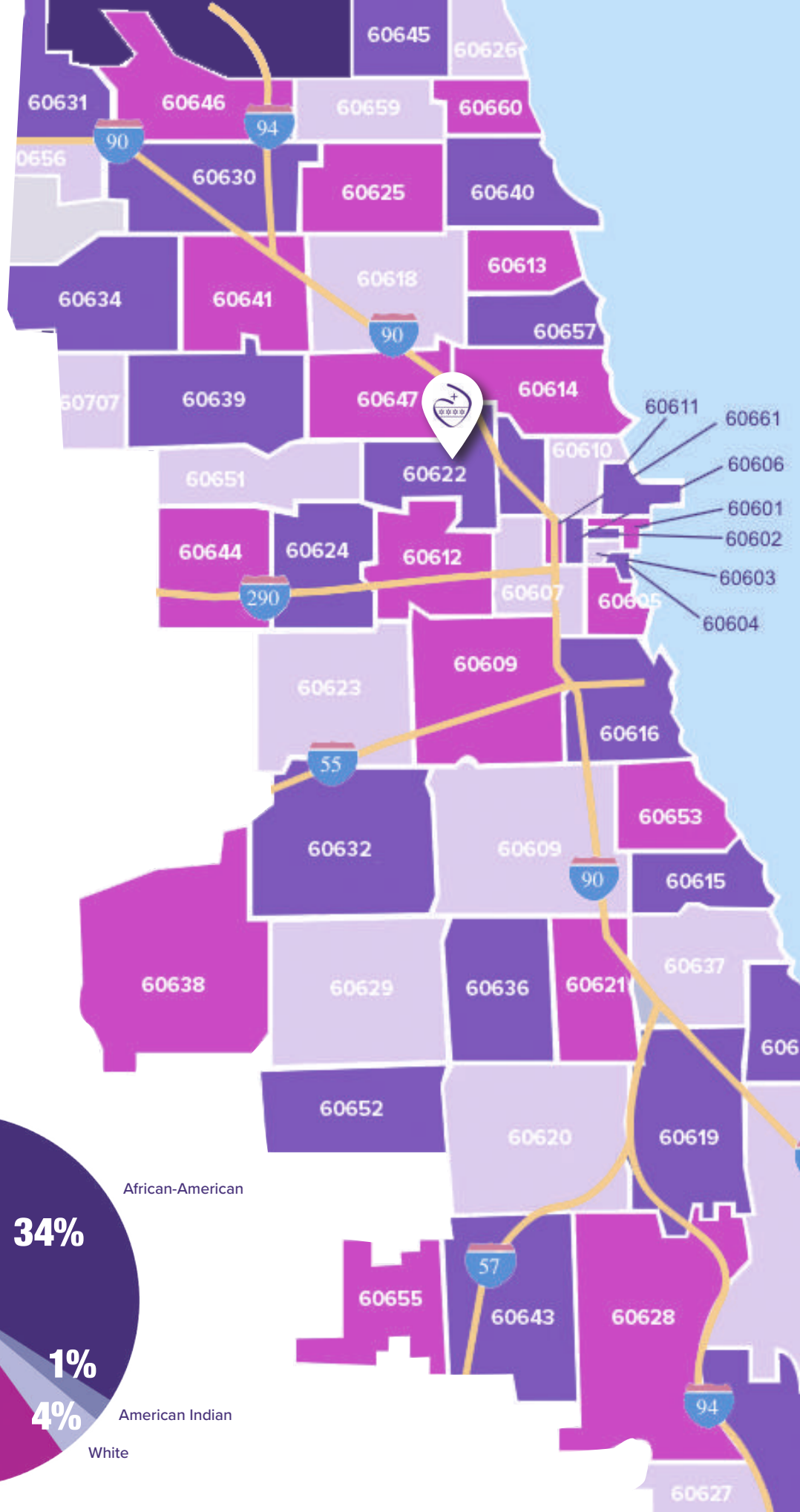
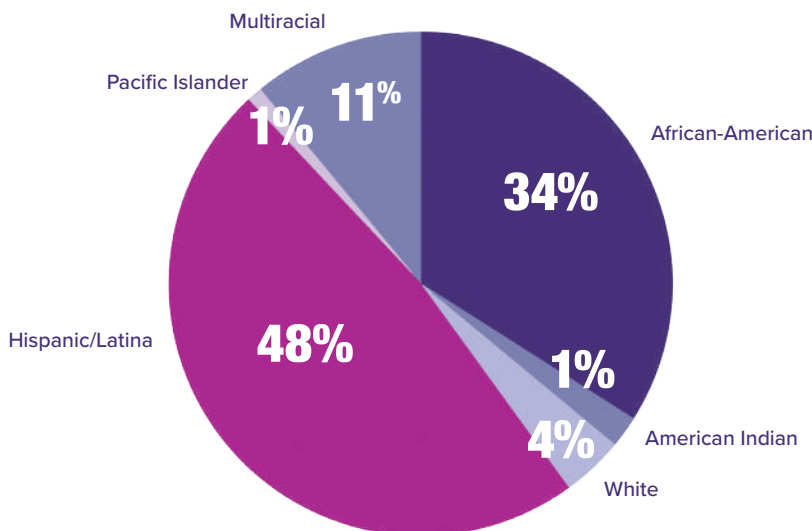
Student-to-teacher ratio

15

Average Class Size

97%

Graduation Rate



Windia's STORY

A worthwhile commute

On an average day—before COVID-19 changed everything—Windia Ire-Newman woke up at 4:30 a.m. to travel from her home in Calumet Heights to school at Josephinum Academy.

“It’s a long process, getting on multiple buses,” the JA senior said. “It’s an hour and 45 minutes. Two hours if traffic is bad.”

It’s a long commute—but one that Windia never questioned. Since she first learned about Josephinum Academy during a presentation at her middle school, she decided, “Yeah, I’m going to go there. I liked how they would talk about the sports and activities and stuff like that. And they seemed like they had a connection, like, teacher and student connection.”

These days, Windia is involved in multiple clubs and activities—but it’s the people that make the two-hour bus ride worth it.

“I’m really cool with all my teachers,” she shared. “We can make jokes and have a good time in class, but also, like, get down to business.”

“The girls that gravitate toward this school are really cool.” Windia added. “So like everybody, I mean, everybody is really fun, cool, and funny... It’s a great environment to create friends, and it gives a lot of good opportunities.”



During a difficult year, Windia has continued to dream big about her future. “It was kinda hard at the beginning,” she said. “I was really just like, this is going to be the worst year ever, but as it went on, it became easier.”

She is looking forward to attending an HBCU, but hasn’t decided what to major in yet. She’s considering starting a business. And she plans to go to cosmetology school, too, either during or after college.

“There’s not one thing I want to set my mind to,” she said. She wants to do and try so many things, just like she has learned to do at The Jo—and she has no plans to start imposing limits now!

MARLEN GONZALEZ

The Jo set the foundation



When Marlen Gonzalez started at Josephinum Academy, she was struggling to succeed.

“I came into Josephinum with a 2.7 GPA, but I knew that I wanted to do better. And I knew that I wanted to have a bright future.”

Marlen always dreamt of being on television. “When I was little, I used to lock myself in the bathroom and play in front of the mirror,” she shared. “I was so dramatic!”

At Josephinum Academy, her aspirations started to feel possible for the very first time. She took drama courses and joined The Jo’s theater program, while also remaining active in NHS, the Ambassadors Club, and soccer.

“Once I was here, I got the initial exposure to the industry that I always loved. I learned how to be disciplined. I learned how to manage my time,” she shared.

Now working in the media industry, Marlen reflects on the lasting impact The Jo had on her career and her confidence.

“I found out that I was really smart, and I didn’t think that before.”

“I know I still have so much to learn, but Josephinum set the foundation.”

Her counselor nominated Marlen for a scholarship, and Marlen received an award to attend Cornell University after she graduated from Josephinum Academy in 2015.

“Because of that opportunity, because of my scholarship, I have a degree that I could only have dreamed of. I knew I had crazy dreams, but the scholarship gave

me the opportunity to really think of the world as my oyster—to really go for it.”

Now, with a college degree and a job she loves, Marlen looks back at her time at The Jo with gratitude.

“I know I still have so much to learn, but Josephinum set the foundation.”

“There are so many opportunities to take advantage of here. Teachers genuinely care about students’ futures. Seeing how much potential they saw in me helped me see it in myself.”

And she isn’t alone. She is part of a community made up of strong, creative young women—young women who are full of potential and full of bold goals.

“These girls. The more we invest in them, the more they allow themselves to dream. Ultimately, their future is made of their dreams.”

DAVID FEHR

The power of an arts education

When David Fehr directed his first theater production at Josephinum Academy in 2010, it was like lightning had struck.

"The work we were doing was transformative for everything else. We saw huge jumps in participation—grades increased across the board."

David, who is himself a professional actor and director, has grown the arts program from that single show more than a decade ago to the robust department it is today. Building on the legacy and foundation laid by educators who came before him, he has opened countless doors for the girls at Josephinum Academy to explore their own creative expression.

"We ask the question, 'What does it mean to be an artist?' And we ask the question because we are genuinely interested in the answer."

Regardless of the academic or career path they choose, David's students are well-equipped for success. Their ability

to listen, work together, understand themselves, move in relation to others, and communicate with clarity crosses industries and disciplines.

"Acting is vocational and essential to creative collaboration. You use your talents with technique to make everything else more filled, more complete, better."

The fine arts department was growing, students were thriving, and David was continually introducing new opportunities for discovery and expression. Then COVID-19 disrupted everything.

For teachers like David, the pandemic brought a set of challenges they never could have anticipated. How do you continue creative exploration from home? How do you foster collaboration in the midst of isolation? And how do you ensure equity—of access, of resources, and of opportunity?

He and his fellow educators got

creative—and got to work. They distributed supplies to students, rewrote curricula, and introduced new methods for students to engage from home. They pivoted, and pivoted, and pivoted again.

Through it all, David returned, over and over, to one key lesson: his students are people first, and learners second.

"Before we worry about education, we first need to meet our needs as humans. We need to take care of us—as a school, as a community. As students, as faculty, as staff."

This personalized care has always been at the heart of Josephinum Academy—and it is core to each of the teachers who invest in our young women.

"The Jo is a joyful anomaly. Here, we ignite students' curiosity. We encourage questions. And we help each student go as far as they can, with joy, encouragement, serious educational edge, and technique."



NATALIE

Learning to prioritize mental health

The Jo is defined by our tight-knit community—one that supports and stands with students as they overcome challenges. In a year of separation and isolation, these hurdles were bigger than ever—and students like Natalie Venegas were faced with compounding crises.

“Last year was really difficult mentally for me,” Natalie shared. “There was a lot of stuff going on in my personal life and I wasn’t really sure how to handle it...”

“On top of that, I’m a student with ADHD,” she added. “So I get distracted easily in my own household.”

Natalie, who shares her home with 7 other people, had to learn to focus in the midst of endless distractions, while also taking care of her own mental health. She remembers long days trying to focus on school while her siblings were logged into their own classes, her mom worked from home, and her youngest sister participated in virtual kindergarten.

“All day we were trying to not interfere with each other or talk over each other. We were trying to stay quiet and respect each other’s individual spaces.”

“It was hard for me to focus, but the teachers did make a really good transition into the online learning platform,” she said. “They helped keep us accountable by tracking our progress. And they were very accommodating to the students and their needs.”

Outside the (virtual) classroom, helping students through this difficult time was a top priority for The Jo. The school provided support groups and other

resources—like a weekly stress and anxiety management group Natalie attended.

Students who participated were able to talk about their feelings and practice new coping skills with school counselors. “They’re active listeners,” Natalie said. “They’re paying attention, and you can tell, and I feel like it’s very important that people feel heard and seen.”

The group was a safe space for students. “What was said in the group

stayed in the group,” affirmed Natalie.

Throughout the many challenges of the last year, Natalie has continued to grow. With the support of Josephinum Academy at her back, she’s coming out of these difficult months with new tools for achieving her dreams.

“It helped me develop my own autonomy and independence,” she shared. “And with being my own advocate ... I feel like this is a very important skill to have.”





LYRIC

Overcoming obstacles through the pandemic

When asked to describe how she's changed during her time at Josephinum Academy, Lyric Robinson has a lot to say. The senior has grown significantly in the last four years, but she also recognizes how much she's learned in the last two years throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Before The Jo "I was really hard-headed. I was really disrespectful," admits Lyric.

"Sometimes I don't think I've grown up," says Lyric. "Then, everybody has come to me and been like, 'You have grown up so much!'"

She credits a lot of that change to her favorite part of The Jo: community.

"I just love the whole family dynamic," Lyric shares. "It helps everybody grow all around you."

And this family at The Jo has noticed how much she has grown.

"That's what a lot of the teachers love about me: how much I have changed and how much I have grown up," she shares with a smile.

During the pandemic, Lyric got sick with COVID-19. "It was really hard," she says.

It was also hard to focus on online classes, but Lyric persevered. She relied on her family—both at home and at The Jo—to help her keep going.

"My mom, she helped me a lot, and some of my teachers," said Lyric. "I'm a really outgoing person, so they know when something's wrong. Ms. Schrantz was on me a lot, and she's the principal. She was like, 'Lyric, come on. I know it's hard, but we gotta get it done.'"

Now, as Lyric considers colleges—primarily HBCUs—and dreams of becoming a speech-language pathologist, she's thankful for the wide range of activities she experienced here.

She knows she'll take the lessons she has learned at The Jo—and the family she has built here—with her throughout her life.

"I just like branching out and doing everything. I want to go off to college and live my best life!" Lyric says, barely containing her excitement.

Year in Review

Celebrating 130 Years



Honoring Helen Bruns Ryan

On April 29, 2021, we honored Chair Emerita Helen Bruns Ryan for her 40 years of service to Josephinum Academy. The virtual celebration featured messages from past board members, leaders in our community, and recipients of the Helen Bruns Ryan scholarship—Josephinum Academy graduates who have directly benefited from Helen’s generosity, encouragement, and support.

Helen also received Josephinum Acad-

emy’s very first “Award for Unwavering Service,” recognizing her remarkable leadership throughout so much of The Jo’s history. Helen was instrumental in building our relationship with the Religious of the Sacred Heart, strengthening our ongoing connection to the Sisters of Christian Charity, and navigating difficult seasons of change with unwavering vision. Most of all, she has maintained a fierce belief in and commitment to Josephinum Academy students, championing them every step of the way. We are so grateful for her four decades of service, and it was our honor to celebrate her this spring.

Learning in the midst of the pandemic

“Last year was very difficult. I’m a visual learner, and so to learn from a screen was very new and very different. And it was hard. And I know it was hard for teachers, too. But they pushed me to say, ‘No, you are not failing. You cannot fail.’ And I needed that. It taught me how to persevere, and I ended the year with all As and Bs. Now, I’m ready for my senior year. The work is hard, but I’m ready.”

Destyne Smith, Class of 2022

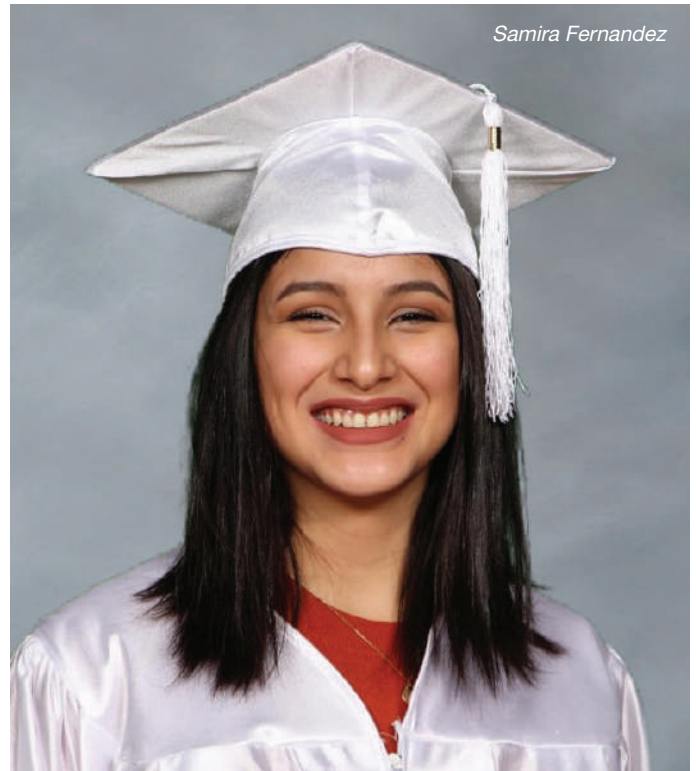


Destyne Smith

The Josephinum Academy sisterhood

“There are a bunch of things that make Josephinum special, however, one thing that made Josephinum special is the bond of the sisterhood you get during and after the four years you are at The Jo. I would tell current students at The Jo to communicate with your teachers, counselors, and staff. The people at The Jo have been through some of the things you are going through—and even if they didn’t, they have those connections to lead you to make good decisions.”

*Victoria Krol, Class of 2021
Freshman at DePaul University*



Advice from an alum

“During the pandemic, Sister Carol’s hot chocolate was definitely a bright spot for me. It was a place where I could sit and have conversations with my peers and simply relax, no matter what my day had been like. It was a place where I could catch my breath and talk about anything.

“My advice to current Jo students would be to appreciate and listen to your teachers! Sometimes their assignments might seem pointless, but they foster skills in you that will be valuable in college and in life.”

*Samira Fernandez, Class of 2021
Freshman at Cornell University*

Members of the Class of 2021 are currently studying at:

Beloit College
Cornell University
DePaul University
Hope College
Howard University
Lewis & Clark College
Northwestern University

Purdue University
Trinity Christian University
University of Notre Dame
University of Illinois at Chicago
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Westmont College

FINANCIALS



615

Donors gave in FY21



879

Gifts



\$2,597

Average gift amount

\$2,283,000

in donations

Revenue

Tuition & Fees	\$295,000
Development	\$2,283,000
Other*	\$526,110

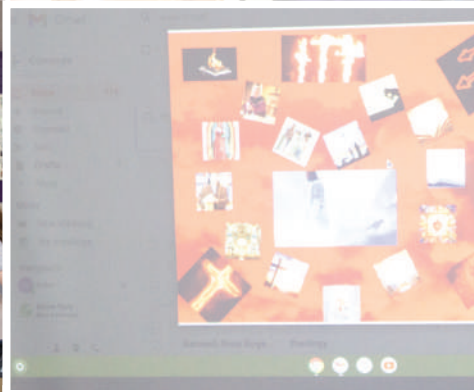
Total \$3,104,110

Expenses \$2,755,283

Net \$348,827

*includes \$505K in PPP funds

For the year ending June 30, 2021 (unaudited)



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Thank You!

FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dear Friends,

When I think about why I choose to serve and support Josephinum Academy, my answer is simple—and one that our entire board shares: It's the young women. The smart young women who walk through the halls of The Jo every day, the brave young women who study and dream, the creative young women who navigated an impossible year with tenacity and courage—they are our inspiration and motivation. They are what this is all about.

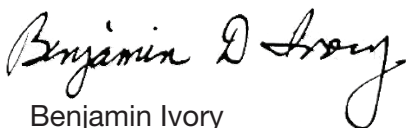
They remind us to be hopeful amid hardship, demonstrate resilience in the face of challenges, draw upon depths of inner strength, and show us what is possible when a community rallies together.

Thankfully, these talented young leaders don't have to walk their paths alone. They are surrounded by a community of faculty, staff, families, friends, and each one of you—a community that has had to dig deep over the past year to develop innovative solutions, invest in new opportunities, and make the magic happen. A community that has impressed and encouraged us with their resilience and perseverance.

It has been remarkable to see just how creative, collaborative, and committed each of you has been. Thank you!

We know the journey ahead isn't easy, but we have learned that good efforts stand the test of time. So we move forward with optimism and confidence—encouraged by teachers and staff, surrounded by partners like you, and inspired by incredible Josephinum Academy students.

With gratitude,



Benjamin Ivory
Board Chair

ABOUT JOSEPHINUM ACADEMY OF THE SACRED HEART

Josephinum Academy of the Sacred Heart, a college-preparatory high school for girls of all faiths and backgrounds, is a member of the Network of Sacred Heart Schools in the United States and Canada. The schools of the Sacred Heart Network share five goals which commit them to educate to:

- ***A personal and active faith in God***
- ***A deep respect for intellectual values***
- ***A social awareness which impels to action***
- ***The building of community as a Christian value***
- ***Personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom***

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