



New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Accreditation Report for the Community

**NEASC Foundation Team Visit: May 11, 2022**  
**Program Visit: October 16, 2022 - October 19, 2022**

## PURPOSE & VALUE OF ACCREDITATION

Through accreditation, institutions hold themselves to high mutual standards, assess their strengths and challenges, undergo regular peer review, and constantly aspire to greater achievement. Accreditation both maintains and enhances this vitality.

NEASC has become a globally recognized standard of excellence. Students, parents are assured a school has the resources to provide a high-quality learning experience.

A NEASC accreditation is a unique, immersive, self-reflective process that engages the entire school community. It is the common experience of schools that the accreditation is a unifying process.

- ➔ Schools benefit from a structured accreditation process, building on existing strengths, and mapping out short—and long-term plans.
- ➔ Member schools must periodically demonstrate continued alignment with NEASC standards to maintain their NEASC accreditation and membership.
- ➔ All schools must file Two-Year and Five-Year Progress Reports after accreditation demonstrating progress.



## HISTORY & CULTURE OF AUSTIN PREP

The mission of Austin Preparatory School is to inspire hearts to unite, minds to inquire, and hands to serve. By intentionally weaving the Augustinian charisms into its mission, Austin Prep sustains and deepens its Augustinian heritage and provides a unique educational experience to its community.

Austin Preparatory School was founded by the Augustinian Friars of the Province of St. Thomas of Villanova in 1961 and opened to students in September 1963. St. Augustine is Austin Prep's patron saint and strives toward the Augustinian ideal of: "One mind, one heart, intent on God."

The Augustinians welcomed 176 freshman and 24 sophomore boys in the school's inaugural year in 1963 and graduated its first class of 18 students in 1966. Still an all-boys school Austin Prep

expanded its mission to serve young men in grades 6 through 12 in September 1987. Austin Prep opened its doors to young women. Austin Prep's first alumna graduated in 1993.

Today, the school is on the cutting edge of educational advances, The school also kicked off its first capital campaign to build the multi-purpose Facility, now Meelia Hall, marking the beginning of a transformation of Austin Prep from a school building to a campus.

Over the next decade, Austin Prep renovated science laboratories and classrooms to incorporate state-of-the-art technology and equipment. A second capital campaign funded the renovation of the old Monastery Wing into arts classrooms, music classrooms, an art gallery, dance studios, a technology lab, and an expansion of the Fr. Smith Library & Media Center. Austin Prep celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 2011.

With the arrival of Dr. James Hickey in 2013, Austin Prep redoubled its commitment to its Augustinian heritage. The school adopted best practices in school governance and student programs by aligning with the standards set forth by the National Catholic Education Association and the National Association of Independent Schools. From that point forward, it began a series of programmatic, curricular, and scheduling projects to significantly enhance the student experience. Comprehensive upgrades included:.

- ➔ Multi-purpose synthetic turf stadium and track facility
- ➔ New Dining Hall and all-inclusive dining program
- ➔ Lower Fields Athletic complex, including a multi-use field and tennis complex
- ➔ Renovations to classrooms and offices, initiating 1:1 iPads and MacBook programs
- ➔ Investments in infrastructure
- ➔ Investments in faculty and staff aligning salaries & benefits to NAIS benchmarks
- ➔ Hiring of additional faculty and staff to better serve students
- ➔ More professional development to attract, develop, and retain outstanding professionals
- ➔ Sponsorship of a congregation of the Bannabikira Sisters, the Daughters of Mary.



## AUSTIN PREP TODAY

Today, Austin Prep has a capacity enrollment of 805 students while maintaining a close-knit sense of community. Included in that number are two dozen international day students from China, Korea, and Italy. The faculty and staff who serve as standard-bearers of Austin Prep's mission contribute to a 1:10 teacher to student ratio and an average class size of 15 students. Small class sizes, combined with Austin Prep's advisory program, ensure that each student is known and valued and appropriately celebrated and supported throughout their Austin journey.

Austin Prep looks to the future to build on its growing momentum, its foundation of innovation, sound fiscal management and uncompromising commitment to mission to pursue the next decade with certainly, commitment and conviction.

## STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

- ➔ **FACULTY:** Austin Prep embraces a resolute commitment to teaching excellence – no other investment is as important. The school will continue to generate the financial resources to invest in new faculty positions to sustain small class size and personalized instruction. The school will appoint more faculty who will form an intellectual and professional linkage and collaboration across departments and disciplines. Faculty compensation and benefits will continue to grow to attract and retain the finest educators.
- ➔ **PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION & TEACHER DEVELOPMENT:** Austin Prep will continue to offer ongoing opportunities for faculty to continuously hone their expertise. Investments will be made in cutting edge educational innovation through planned mentoring and coaching.
- ➔ **CURRICULUM INNOVATION & RENEWAL:** Austin Prep will provide more educational opportunities and curricula initiatives that will cultivate the development of the mind, foster intellectual inquisitiveness, build scholarly curiosity, and advance the exploration of knowledge in the search for truth and meaning. The scope of the course of study will be reviewed regularly to ensure it is current, interactive, and inspiring, ensuring all student learning environments enable success.



- ➔ **CAMPUS RENOVATION & MODERNIZATION:** Austin Prep is fully committed to create modern learning environments in all areas of the school’s operational footprint, including the fine and performing arts and athletics. While the renovations and upgrading has already begun, and the costs of these projects, cumulatively, will be significant as most projects are of this nature, the school will continue to invest in campus modernization to create a safe, secure, comfortable, and inspiring surroundings.
- ➔ **ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY:** The Office of Admissions will increase outreach strategies to attract and enroll mission aligned students and families who appreciate and value the opportunities at Austin Prep, and who will contribute to its mission and values. Increases in financial assistance for families who qualify will make an Austin Prep education accessible to applicants who ordinarily would not be able to consider such an option.
- ➔ **PRUDENT FINANCIAL PLANNING:** Judicious financial planning has enabled Austin Prep to maintain and improve facilities, develop programs, and remain competitive among peer institutions. The Board of Trustees will expand its financial foundation incrementally to keep Austin Prep at the forefront of Catholic education.

## PATHWAYS FORWARD

- ➔ **MISSION:** Austin Prep will continue to unite all members of the Austin Prep community around the mission statement. Catholic character will influence and advise all undertakings. The mission will be the stimulus in fostering a culture of reflection and discernment.
- ➔ **MISSION, DIVERSITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE:** The Office of Mission and Inclusion will continue to prepare students to thrive in a complex and global world. Programs will be expanded to emphasize globalization, diversity, and inclusion. Teaching units will encourage dialogue, empathy, love of neighbor—qualities that stay with Austin Prep students throughout their lives. Social justice programs will be created believing that knowledge leads to change. These programs will equip the young generation with the knowledge and skills to be innovative changemakers, enabling them to shape more peaceful and just societies.
- ➔ **PHILANTHROPY:** Austin Prep has long relied on tuition to sustain the school and recognizes the importance of growing a broader culture of philanthropy to introduce new programs, renovate and modernize facilities, and support emerging educational initiatives. Financial acumen and expanded fundraising operations will engage the faithfulness and generosity of the Austin Prep community to continue the trajectory of transformational growth.



- ➔ **STRATEGIC PLANNING:** The school will continue to remain at a high level of strategic thinking and planning to lay a solid foundation for Austin Prep's future aspirations. The next five-year strategic planning process will commence in the early spring of 2024.
- ➔ **COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS:** The school will expand its affiliation with local agencies and experts who will consult with the school in formation of safety plans, pedagogical methodologies, student internships, student social and emotional well-being, including mental health intervention practices and protocols.

## FINAL IMPRESSIONS

Much of Austin Prep's growth in the past decade has been mission-aligned, focusing on how to actualize the charge to "inspire hearts to unite, minds to inquire, and hands to serve."

The Self Study process provided an opportunity not only to celebrate the successes and achievements of the past decade but to identify new aspirational goals and plans. Growing philanthropy was a common thread in the accreditation study as additional charitable revenue is needed to remain forward-thinking, building on a decade of extraordinary accomplishment.

Reflective of the charism of veritas, truth, the curriculum has evolved to adapt to new opportunities, utilizing Austin Prep's Catholic roots and Augustinian heritage as the guiding force. True to the Augustinian heritage of being restless, Austin Prep seeks to continue to grow by innovating with new ideas and fine-tuning existing ones.

This year, Austin Prep began a year-long celebration of its diamond jubilee: sixty years of an Augustinian education. The Mission of Austin Prep is as strong and pervasive, if not stronger, as it was when the friars opened the doors to campus six decades ago. With a new five-year strategic planning process about to begin, Austin Prep remains steadfast on its dedicated pursuit for excellence, quality, and purpose.

One of the most important features of the accreditation process has been the inclusion of community and the welcoming of diverse points of view. By shaping the future of the school with constituency involvement and participation, Austin Prep embraces its future with optimism, pride, and confidence.

Austin Prep now looks forward to addressing the challenges and pursuing the opportunities outlined in the accreditation to reach new heights as one of the premier Catholic schools in the region. Challenges to fulfilling Austin Prep's aspirations are not difficult to identify, but each challenge and investment brings us closer to becoming the school we have all envisioned it can be.