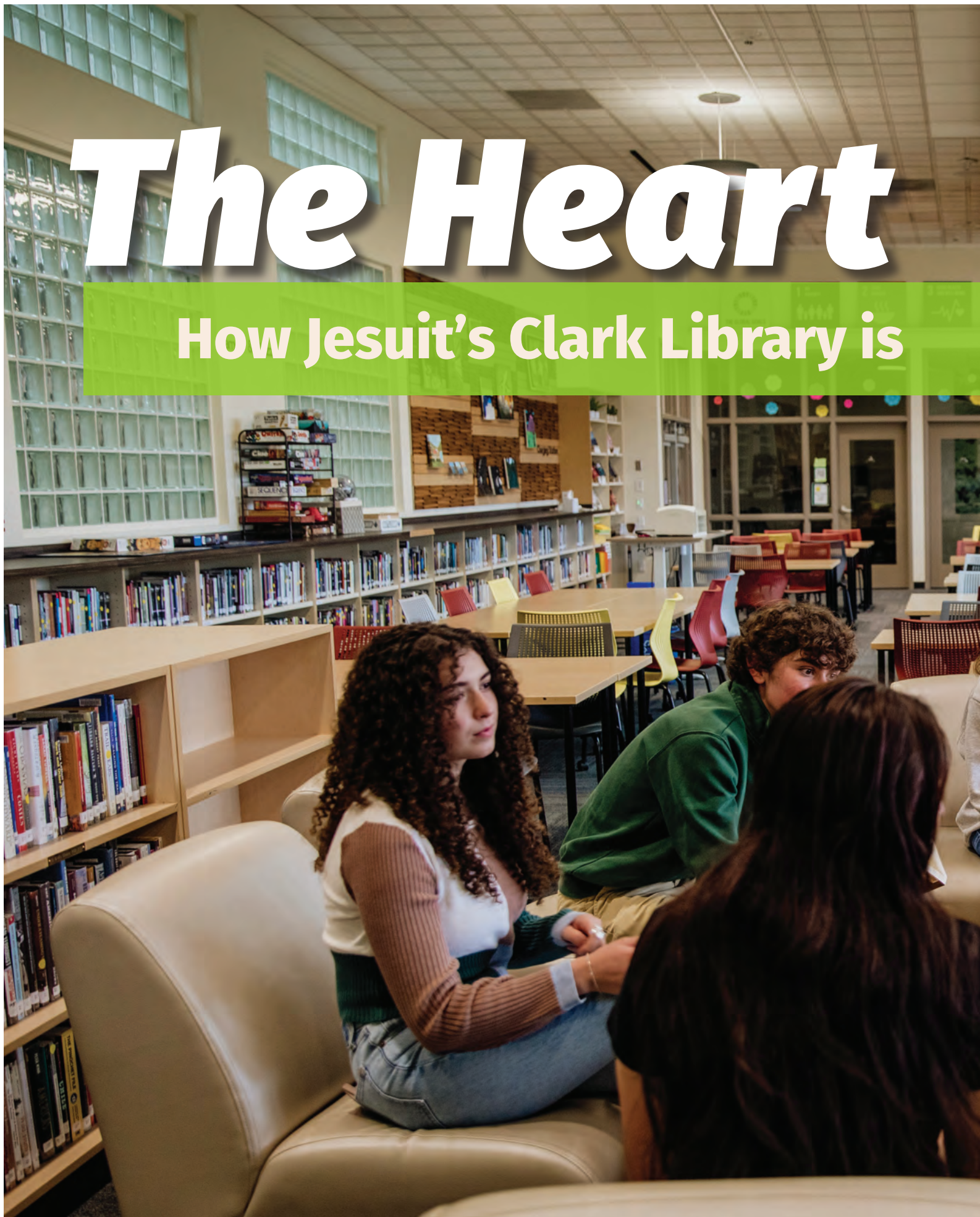
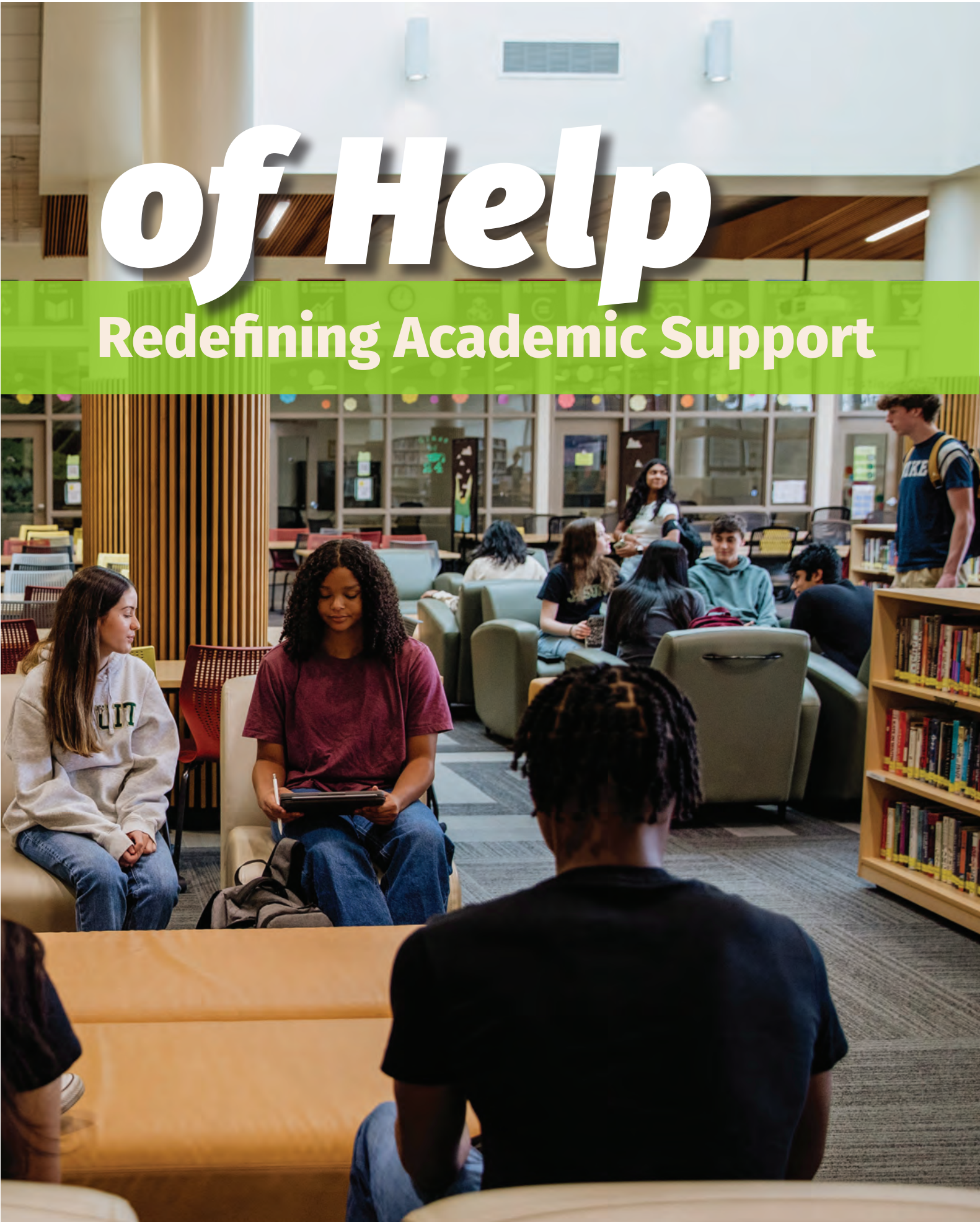


The Heart

How Jesuit's Clark Library is





of Help

Redefining Academic Support



STORY BY SADIE WUERTZ & MAUREEN MCGRAIN '97

Step into Jesuit's library and you'll find

not just books, but a space buzzing with activity, collaboration, and exploration. The Clark Library and Academic Resource Center (CLARC) is a dynamic, student-centered hub that embodies Jesuit's core values of *cura personalis*, openness to growth, and community.

With soft furniture, collaboration rooms equipped with whiteboards and screens, and flexible spaces for studying or socializing, the CLARC feels like a college commons. Beyond the inviting environment, what makes the CLARC exceptional is what it provides: academic support for every student, when and how they need it. There is free daily tutoring for all students in all subjects, a testing center, and a writing lab.

"Providing students with a space to work with the supplies they need, and with tutors they feel comfortable asking questions to, can make a dramatic difference not only in their academic performance, but in their self-advocacy skills," said Colleen

O'Mahony, Director of the CLARC. "They realize that good students ask for the help they need. And that's a life skill."

The CLARC staff work hard to anticipate any barriers to student success. That starts with being open daily from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the school year and from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the summer. Summer programming includes incoming freshmen support, Christian Service paper assistance, and credit recovery.

Along with an extraordinary array of materials, students have access to PhD-level research specialist Dr. Jason Price to guide them through college research preparation and provide support.

The CLARC also fosters peer-to-peer interactions through tutoring and the writing lab.

"One of Jesuit's mottos is 'men and women for and with others,'" O'Mahony said. "What you see here every day are formal and informal interactions of students helping each other."

A Space – and Philosophy – Expands

When O'Mahony joined Jesuit as Director of Learning Support in 2015 after more than a decade at Edison High School, the learning support program was focused on students with learning differences. It became clear that the need for academic support at Jesuit extended well beyond any single population.

"Students who didn't need 'official' support were showing up," O'Mahony recalled. "It was clear there was a hunger for success – and for a place that supported that. It aligned with Jesuit culture to grow the program into something more inclusive."

That evolution began with expanding academic seminars and adding zero and eighth periods for students with demanding schedules or who needed additional academic support. Students also began accessing study tools, finals templates, and other supplies.

In 2017, the school remodeled the space into a flexible, modern learning hub. With the retirement of Jesuit's longtime librarians five years later, as well as the natural shift toward digital and online resources, it was time to rethink how the physical library could serve all students, including the 250 students with diagnosed learning differences.

By 2022, all academic support services had fully transitioned into what is now the CLARC, with five full-time staff members.

The CLARC team orients its work around three key goals:

1. Make the Margins the Center

Inspired by Jesuit values, the team prioritizes programs that serve students who may be on the academic or social margins, building supports tailored to their needs.

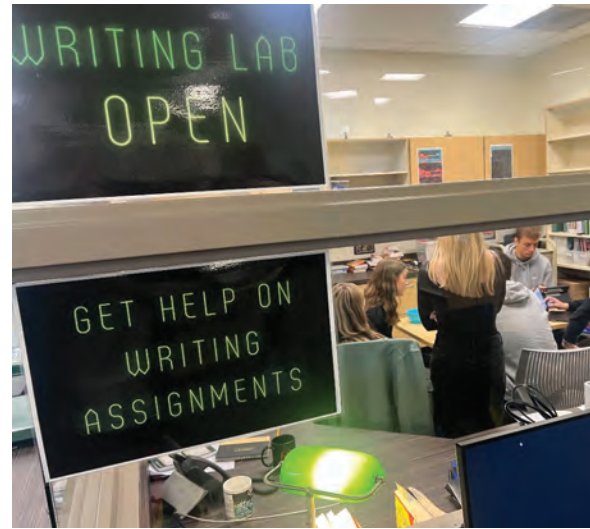
2. Cultivate a Growth Mindset

"Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness," said O'Mahony. The CLARC works to normalize both help-giving and help-seeking through peer tutoring, mentoring, and teacher collaboration.

3. Prepare Students for 21st-Century Scholarship

Through a four-year research sequence designed by Dr. Price, all students learn to think and work like college scholars. The program is embedded in core classes and includes video modules, classroom visits, and a common foundation in using citations, academic databases, and online tools. "With the curriculum, we are trying to develop skills that foster confidence in our students when they get to college. We want them to feel prepared and unafraid when they're handed that first research assignment their freshman year of university," said Price.





The Writing Lab and Testing Center

Two of the CLARC's biggest developments in recent years have been the launch of a student-run writing lab and a dedicated testing center.

The writing lab is led by Price – a former UCLA writing instructor – and 25 trained junior and senior writing fellows. Students can drop in or schedule appointments, and teachers receive follow-up reports to ensure consistent support.

“Research suggests that writing is one of those skills that is best cultivated in relational, one-on-one settings, so we wanted to create a space that supports the work of teachers in that endeavor,” said Price.

The testing center is equally innovative. Designed to support both students and teachers, the space accommodates everything from make-up exams to extended time for qualified learners. With college-level software and thoughtful scheduling, the center offers privacy and reduces stigma. Last year alone, the CLARC administered 6,380 tests. It also supports major assessments like AP exams, PSATs, and even schoolwide SAT testing.

Inspiration from Across the Jesuit Network

The CLARC team finds inspiration in Jesuit's mission and from other schools in the Jesuit network. “The Jesuit ideal is to adapt your educational spaces to your climate and context,”

O'Mahony noted. “We stewarded what we had and built something that fits who we are.”

Jesuit students now benefit from study skills workshops, executive functioning tools like the Pomodoro technique, and resume-building sessions. With student library cards that offer access to digital books and audiobooks through Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS) and Libby, the reach of the CLARC extends far beyond its 14,000 physical volumes.

A Community of Support

Collaborating with student clubs, affinity groups, and other departments on campus to organize forums and workshops is another way that the CLARC cultivates *cura personalis*. For example, the CLARC hosts info sessions on learning differences at Freshman Community Day and professional development meetings. The CLARC has even hosted a workshop to teach students how to tie a tie in anticipation of the first all-school Mass of the year.

Whether students are seeking a silent study space with noise-canceling headphones, a conversation about how to structure a final paper, or a game of chess with friends, they know they'll be met with kindness and support.

“Being together is the heart of who we are at Jesuit,” O'Mahony said. “Having a space where students feel seen, supported, and successful is what the CLARC is all about.”

