



Ursuline Academy

STRATEGIC PLAN
GUIDING OUR LEGACY **2023-2025**



Our Approach

In August 2021, Ursuline Academy initiated a strategic planning process facilitated by Jared Beard (Executive Vice President and COO, Gateway Region YMCA) and guided by principles developed by David La Piana, an expert in nonprofit management and strategic planning. Led by Deb Tallo (UA Board of Trustees, Vice Chair), the committee was comprised of trustees, administrators, coworkers, and parents – two of whom are also alumnae. The group met virtually and in-person over the course of approximately five months.

The La Piana process begins with identification of an entity's competitive advantage. As part of our deeper dive discussions about our competitive advantage, we felt it important to solicit the input of all stakeholders to assure that internal perceptions were aligned with the broader community. Surveys containing both quantitative and qualitative questions were distributed electronically to students, past and current parents, coworkers, trustees, alumnae, donors (within 5 years) and parish pastors and principals. Response rates ranged from 4% to 21% across groups.

Respondents identified Ursuline's competitive advantages as:

- ☆ **Welcoming Environment:** A campus environment that is comfortable and happy, feels like home and fosters a sisterhood of acceptance and confidence.
- ☆ **Student Focused:** A school where every girl can find her place, where coworkers focus on truly getting to know each student, meeting her where she is, and identifying what she needs to move forward successfully beyond high school
- ☆ **Global Network:** How Ursuline leverages its membership in a global network of schools, beyond its global program, integrating its global connections into daily class interactions – by “zooming” into a classroom across the globe, engaging alumnae working overseas, and tapping these connections to broaden the student experience.
- ☆ **Serviam:** Its reputation for active faith development, specifically around “Serviam.” Ursuline takes community service to a deeper level developing a lifelong mindset for service
- ☆ **Talented and Dedicated Coworkers:** Its ability to retain top-notch coworkers, with a turnover rate that is less than half the national average, and alumnae returning to serve the Academy in various ways

Priorities identified include:



The committee analyzed the feedback and defined three priority areas that either build upon a current competitive advantage or address areas that could negatively impact our ability to compete.

Next, the Senior Administrative Team was challenged to develop measurable outcomes tied to improvement in the priority areas, i.e. “How will we know when we’re there?” With agreement from Strategic Planning Committee members that the strengths and opportunities are relevant, coworker representatives from the committee were asked to facilitate working sessions with their colleagues to identify tactics to achieve the measurable outcomes. Coworker input, gathered during eight sessions, has been integrated into the plan.

The Board of Trustees voted at its May 2022 meeting to approve this plan with execution to formally begin July 1, 2022. Our progress on the plan will be reviewed at coworker and Board meetings semi-annually, with updates to the tactics and outcomes completed annually.



Mission Statement

Ursuline Academy of St. Louis, founded in 1848 and under the sponsorship of the Ursuline Sisters, is a private, Catholic, college-preparatory high school for young women. In a community environment built on standards of academic excellence and respect for the uniqueness of each person, Ursuline Academy educates students for Christian living and leadership in a global society, nurtures the development of the whole person and her potential, and cultivates within its students a spirit of lifelong service through its motto of Serviam, "I will serve."



Impact Statement

Ursuline Academy honors the unique, God-given talents of every young woman and works to assure that each student, feeling the acceptance and support of a loving community, grows to see herself as a strong and competent contributor to her world.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPACT

1.) A THRIVING AND ENERGIZED URSULINE COMMUNITY

Distinguish Ursuline by cultivating and promoting an engaged school community that respects diverse perspectives and backgrounds while also ensuring active participation in curricular, extracurricular, and community-building activities that provide meaningful and long-lasting connections to the Academy.

We strive for the following outcomes over three years:

To understand and improve the satisfaction level of our key stakeholders Ursuline will:

- ★ Develop and implement annual surveys for key stakeholders to gauge awareness and satisfaction
- ★ Analyze surveys' baseline data to establish metrics for improvement
- ★ Revisit the Graduate Profile, a description of what an Ursuline graduate achieves as a result of their time at the Academy. The profile needs to be revisited internally and updated to reflect the changing dynamics of the community

To prioritize Ursuline's focus on diversity and inclusivity for co-workers, students, and families Ursuline will:

- ★ Develop and implement a diversity plan to achieve the vision for diversity and inclusion that reflects Ursuline Academy values
- ★ Strive to recruit and enroll a more diverse student body
- ★ Increase the diversity of new coworker hires to better reflect the student population



To increase parent awareness and engagement in the Ursuline experience Ursuline will:

- ★ Determine baseline awareness of volunteer opportunities, parent and family activities, and the percentage of parents that participate.
- ★ Refresh and refine communications and outreach to ensure that parents are informed and feel welcome to participate in Academy activities and understand the importance of modeling Ursuline's motto of "Serviam" to its students by volunteering.
- ★ Create opportunities to support parents, deepen relationships, connections, and engagement with Ursuline Academy.

To enrich and expand alumnae engagement Ursuline will:

- ★ Create a class representative system in advance of 175th anniversary celebration with a goal of identifying and activating class representatives to help with increased alumnae engagement.
- ★ Empower the Alumnae Association Board to lead, in partnership with the Academy, efforts to engage fellow alumnae in a variety of activities that are of value to them and support the Academy's mission.

To continue to retain top-notch co-workers, attract talented and dedicated co-workers, and reduce voluntary departures Ursuline will:

- ★ Continue to provide a supportive and vibrant workplace resulting in the retention of quality coworkers, with voluntary departures (outside of retirement) limited to 7%.
- ★ Continue to explore HR/benefit enhancements
- ★ Implement/refine/update an exit interview process to fully understand and document reasons for departure
- ★ Offer stipends for extracurricular activities requiring extended time beyond the school day
- ★ Establish peer coaching process
- ★ Establish and communicate planned professional development opportunities and related budget



2.) OPENING MINDS TO A LIFETIME OF GROWTH AND LEARNING

Provide a dynamic academic program that utilizes the global Ursuline network to prepare each student intellectually, personally and spiritually to successfully engage and contribute to her community and world.

We strive for the following outcomes over three years.

To ensure academic excellence and growth specific to each student's unique talents and needs Ursuline will:

- ★ Analyze disaggregated pre-ACT and ACT scores to identify the spectrum of learners, ensure that we are meeting students where they are on their academic journey and that all students are moving forward in an equitable way
- ★ Evaluate test scores annually, and make curricular changes based on the data trends
- ★ Revisit math lab concept and explore the establishment of writing lab to provide extra support, and enrichment for students
- ★ Implement backward curriculum design/Atlas

To build cultural competency over the course of a student's time at Ursuline, Ursuline will:

- ★ Benchmark Cultural Competency Assessment scores to evaluate growth from freshman to senior year to inform necessary program revisions
- ★ Expand opportunities to interact with global network of Ursuline schools
- ★ Determine new ways to infuse aspects of cultural competencies into the curriculum

To integrate peace and justice into each student's relationship with God, self, and others Ursuline will:

- ★ Provide opportunities, beyond theology class, to integrate peace and justice throughout the curriculum and student experience. This work will be in collaboration and coordination with multiple departments, and focus on intentional reflection and commitment to service
- ★ Update campus ministry space to meet the program's goals and objectives



To provide each student with the resources to determine her unique path to continued achievement of goals after graduation from Ursuline, Ursuline will:

- ★ Create and implement an alumnae survey to assess college preparedness, satisfaction with the college counseling process, and opportunities to explore possible careers one-year post-graduation.
- ★ Update college counseling space
- ★ Evaluate college counseling program, and its implementation timeline over the course of a student's time at Ursuline
- ★ Expand Career Day programming beyond just one day, threading it throughout the year
- ★ Emphasize career exploration with mentoring starting in freshman and sophomore years and building in more robust programming for juniors and seniors
- ★ Engage alumnae in career exploration activities

3.) SECURING THE NEXT 175 YEARS

Build and sustain a financially secure future for Ursuline by managing enrollment, supporting a culture of philanthropy, and practicing careful financial administration and control. Ensure that Ursuline Academy is strong, sustainable, and identified as a preferred option for families seeking quality Catholic education for their daughters.

We strive for the following outcomes over three years.

To cultivate a strong community that understands the importance of philanthropy to yield increased support for the Mission of the Academy Ursuline will:

- ★ Develop and execute a communications plan to complement the roll-out of the new strategic plan, that articulates the connection between the strategic plan and the need for a campaign to support the achievement of the goals outlined in the plan
- ★ Develop and execute a successful strategy to energize and engage the Ursuline Community for the Academy's 175th anniversary celebration (scheduled for 2023) that results in a year-over-year increase in leadership annual donors (\$1,000+) and in the overall number of donors to annual giving
- ★ Review/establish giving/investment/spending policies

To refresh and energize the Ursuline story Ursuline will:

- ★ Develop and execute enhanced communications approach that highlights Ursuline's location as a strength and better tells the story of a school that welcomes and nurtures students with varied gifts and develops the whole person
- ★ Engage external resources to assist with enriched communications and messaging



To meet the needs of Ursuline students through facility enhancement, adequate financial aid and enriching the student experience Ursuline will:

- ★ Develop and fund spaces that foster interpersonal connection and collaboration, specifically outdoor spaces suitable for classroom activity and new seating for the chapel
- ★ Create a facility enhancement fund to ensure items like replacing the HVAC and unexpected (as well as planned) maintenance can be funded and resolved in a timely manner
- ★ Continue to enhance campus amenities that allow students to exhibit their full potential in the arts, music, emerging technologies, science, and athletics. At this time, to keep Ursuline competitive and meet the needs of our athletes, Ursuline will research, design, and fund a new turf athletic field
- ★ Maximize key spaces for mission use: Campus Ministry, Bear Den, Counseling, Board Room
- ★ Grow its endowment to allow Ursuline to meet the needs of our students, coworkers, and community

To achieve, and retain ideal full enrollment comprised of girls that reflect our Mission and core beliefs Ursuline will:

- ★ Evaluate current recruitment activities and update, as necessary, to increase the applicant pool with a keen eye to reach new diverse markets and demographics
- ★ Update and execute a variety of recruitment activities and follow-up to secure a strong applicant pool
- ★ Increase enrollment to 400 (100 students/grade)
- ★ Explore alternative and sustainable tuition models to address affordability concerns
- ★ Support a financial aid program that reflects the Academy's commitment to socio-economic diversity