

The Vine

Central Province Office of Mission and Identity

June 2023

As we come to the end of the 2022-2023 Academic Year, the Central Province's Office of Mission and Identity is happy to share ways our schools continue to "cultivate the vine" entrusted to us all!



Gathering of Leaders of Ursuline-Sponsored Schools

The March 2023 gathering of presidents, heads of schools, principals, and mission directors was held at the Province Offices in St. Louis. The Provincial Leadership Team and the entire office staff welcomed the school leaders as they gathered for community building, collaboration, and presentations. The meeting days focused on, *"Global Citizenship: Preparing Students for a Global Community."* There were panel discussions focusing on global education and on preparing students to live and work in a global community. Panel discussions were rich and valuable and allowed leaders to consider how to fully respond to our changing world and the Ursuline Core Value Essential Characteristic which calls on our schools to "promote faith-based living and leadership in a global community while striving for peace and justice."

The leaders welcomed Ursuline Academy St. Louis alumna, Spring Zhou '22, as she presented her Global Scholars Capstone Presentation. The Global Scholars Program, sponsored by the Ursuline Education Network, validates a student's intentional pursuit of a global education and recognizes students who demonstrate a strong interest in global citizenship. Spring's presentation titled, "Behind the Dirty Money," was an introduction to money laundering and its relationship with child trafficking in China. It was a thought-provoking way to end our global citizenship discussion and witness how an Ursuline education is impacting one amazing young Ursuline woman.

The Provincial Leadership Team spent time with the school leaders discussing the Ursuline Education Foundation's recent approval of their canonical status as a ministerial public juridic person by the Catholic Church. While the presidents and heads of schools sit on the Sponsors Council, this was an opportunity for all leaders to share in a discussion on this important work.

There was time for sharing and community building when the group gathered for meals and custard at St. Louis' famous Ted Drewes! The cold weather didn't stop everyone from enjoying the sweet treat! We are already looking forward to our Spring 2024 gathering at Ursuline Academy in Dallas, Texas!



Cultivating the Vine

Here are some exciting highlights of the Spring semester shared by the schools!



Every year, at Ursuline Academy in New Orleans, the first-grade class curriculum prioritizes cross-curricular projects that spark a trailblazing spirit within our girls and empower our girls with the skills they need to start their very own businesses. This year, we proudly present *Angela's Creative Keychains*, a business inspired by our very own St. Angela. Our UA-themed keychains feature our beloved mascots as well as our signature "Angela" keychain. Each keychain has received a special blessing from our chaplain, making it a cherished and meaningful item for every girl who carries it. These keychains embody the spirit of sisterhood that has been flourishing among us since 1535. We are thrilled to share the spirit of entrepreneurship

with our community! Some of the Ursuline sisters from New Orleans and those visiting from the General Council in Rome were the first to receive their keychains! Here is the link to their commercial: <https://vimeo.com/822538624?share=copy>



The Service Learning class and the Environmental Club at Ursuline Academy in Dallas hosted a booth at Dallas' Fair Park for EarthX, the largest expo and celebration of earth day in the world! Amber Szczepkowski '25 and Service Coordinator, Gabi Merani, spoke about the work of the Service Learning class, focusing on the UN Sustainability Goal #13, Climate Action, by teaching middle schoolers about the future of the environment and our impact on the earth.



With *Serviam* as the motto of all our Ursuline schools, Ursuline Academy in Dedham is proud to announce that students have spent over 12,100 hours volunteering in their local community throughout the 2022-2023 school year. Students have served at sites such as residential homes, food pantries, elementary schools, hospitals and after school programs, and recently students visited a scratch kitchen for those with critical and chronic illnesses and made Care Kits for Survivors of Sexual Assault and Abuse. Seniors are wrapping up their Senior *Serviam* Project, where they devote 100 hours of service to local community service sites throughout the Boston area. These Seniors will then prepare a short presentation to share with the UA community at the Class of 2023 Senior *Serviam* Fair on the last day of classes.



In April, Ursuline Academy St. Louis hosted the 17th Annual “Ursuline Sister Schools Lacrosse Tournament” and it was a HUGE success! The Ursuline School from New Rochelle, NY, Ursuline Academy, Dedham, MA, and Ursuline Academy, Wilmington, DE. all traveled to St. Louis to participate in the tournament. After some sightseeing and shadowing UA St. Louis students, all four teams competed and spent time building relationships over meals and even a dance/karaoke party in the gym! Lasting friendships were made! Next year the teams will be traveling to Wilmington for the tournament.



The second-grade classes at Ursuline Academy in New Orleans and Ursuline Academy in Wilmington, DE have been corresponding through a pen pal program! The girls have learned a great deal about their pen pal as well as learned that there are other Ursuline schools around the world. It has been an exciting experience to anticipate receiving mail from new “friends” from afar and a great learning experience!



Mount Merici Academy’s 8th-grade students, led by their art teacher, Maureen Rispoli, are creating a life-size paper mâché “statue” of St. Angela. Modeled after Angela as a pilgrim, it will stand 5 feet tall with her staff and will be painted all black with silver highlights to make it look as if it is an older piece of work. The students are excited about the unveiling of St. Angela at the last school assembly and leaving this parting gift for the school!





Ursuline Identity Assessment

The Ursuline Identity Assessment is a process that each of the sponsored schools completes every five years. 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. The year-long self-study process allows for community reflection and processing to ensure each Ursuline school experiences an affirmation of its commitment to its Ursuline identity and has the opportunity to deepen that commitment in every area. During the Spring of 2023, two schools completed their self-study and welcomed Visiting Teams to experience their Ursuline spirit.

In February, Ursuline Academy St. Louis opened its doors to the Visiting Team. The highlight of any visit to an Ursuline school is always time with the students experiencing first-hand how the Ursuline charism is a lived reality. As Peggy Slater, President of the Academy wrote in her introduction to the self-study report, "Our graduates are the face of the mission. Through the joys and struggles of their high school careers, they come to see the gift of diverse ideas and cultures, understand the power of speaking one's truth, lead from the heart and the intellect, and keep God at one's side through it all. They leave Ursuline Academy equipped for Christian living and

leadership." This was certainly evident in our time with focus groups. Students communicated feeling heard, valued, and able to effect change. As one student said, "Other schools make you be who they want you to be but at Ursuline, you can be yourself!"

In May, Mount Merici Academy's Visiting Team was welcomed to the "little school on the hill." Every focus group described their school as welcoming and the Visiting Team quickly understood their feeling! As Head of School, Tina St. Pierre stated, "We are a small school and our school community is a family that cares deeply about and looks out for each other; rejoicing and celebrating together as well as grieving and supporting each other when needed." Once again, time spent with students was the best part of the visit. Students showed pride in their school and shared how service has been so important in their lives that they will continue to keep serving their community. When asked what they thought the mission of MMA was, two Student Ambassadors declared, "Mount Merici teaches students and shows them God loves them. And they do it well!"

The Office of Mission and Identity and the Visiting Teams are grateful for their time at these two beautiful Ursuline schools!