

The Vine

Central Province Office of Mission and Identity

January 2024

The Central Province's Office of Mission and Identity is happy to share with you the many ways members of the school communities are continuing to "cultivate the vine" entrusted to us!

Gathering of Mission Personnel and Campus Ministers

In October 2023, the Office of Mission and Identity hosted the annual gathering of those who serve in mission and ministry roles at the five Central Province schools. We experienced true Ursuline hospitality as we gathered at Ursuline Academy in New Orleans. The first evening we were together, UA New Orleans' Campus Minister, Beth Joubert, opened her home to us for a special "Taste of the Town" dinner! The cuisine of New Orleans was center stage with homemade Red Beans and Rice and Gumbo. Others who gathered shared their local favorites with the group. We sampled St. Louis' Russell's Gooey Butter Cake, Dad's Cookies and Billy Goat Potato Chips, whoopie pies from Maine, and cannoli from an Italian bakery in Boston. It was a beautiful way to relax and unwind after a day of travel and prepare for the work we would do together.

The theme for our gathering was *Ursuline Roots: Our Heritage and Legacy*. We celebrated the history unique to each school and our shared history beginning with St. Angela. We recognized the almost 300-year history of the Ursulines in New Orleans by visiting the Old Ursuline

Convent in the French Quarter and the National Shrine to Our Lady of Prompt Succor. Our meeting time was spent learning about the individual history of each school and sharing resources on how each school ensures that students and co-workers are formed in the spirit of St. Angela.



We joined in prayer in the Shrine to open our gathering and to celebrate mass together. We were blessed to share the second evening of our gathering with several sisters! Sr. Regina Marie Fronmuller, Sr. Rita Ann Bregenhorn, and Sr. Ginger

Cirone joined us for dinner and sharing. We ended that evening with a prayer service under the stars in Sacred Heart Courtyard where each one received a beautiful individual blessing from Sr. Regina Marie. To close our time together on the final day, Sr. Regina Marie led us in a visio divina with the newest icon of St. Angela.

Our time together in New Orleans was very special and we are grateful for the hospitality shown by all at UA. We will continue to gather virtually to collaborate on "cultivating the vine" until we meet again!



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 Fall of 2023, Ursuline Academy of New Orleans welcomed the Visiting Team to their historic campus to experience their Ursuline spirit.

As is always true, the highlight of any visit to an Ursuline school is time with the students and the visit to New Orleans was no exception. Students proudly shared all that they love about Ursuline. They love that their school community is a family and shared the impact of the love, care, and support they experience on a daily basis from their teachers and administrators. Coworkers model for students how to interact with classmates as well as girls in differing grade levels to build community. Support and

compassion are a natural, organic occurrence at Ursuline in New Orleans. The community spirit as well as a push to serve others is evident in both the lower and upper schools. Students feel seen, valued, and heard. They know they are trailblazers!

It was clear to the Visiting Team that teachers and administrators model the values of St. Angela. As stated by Academy President, Dr. Karen Jakuback, in her welcome letter to the Visiting Team, "We continually stand in loving awe of the Sisters upon whose shoulders we stand; Sisters who built their legacy over nearly three centuries of educating women of New Orleans, Sisters who inspire us in their commitment to St. Angela's legacy and their own legacy here in our city and state. We humbly endeavor to continue to live out that legacy to which they and we have been called." In a time with so many challenges, Ursuline New Orleans' administrators and faculty are true examples of *Serviam*.

The Office of Mission and Identity and members of the Visiting Team are grateful for their time spent at Ursuline Academy!

Cultivating the Vine

St. Angela tells us, "Never cease to cultivate the vine that has been entrusted to you."

For this issue of The Vine, co-workers at all five schools were invited to reflect on and share what brings them joy as they cultivate the vine entrusted to them. Please enjoy the reflections received!

For me what brings me the most joy is being able to hold the space for students to learn and grow from their own experiences, and draw from their faith. And to have the honor of creating moments for our entire community to discuss issues of human diversity and connection is something that brings me great joy.

Estela Ayala
Director of Community & Inclusion, UA Dallas

As the Athletic Director at Ursuline Academy for 28 years, my greatest joy lies in witnessing the transformative journey of student-athletes—observing their growth, resilience, and camaraderie as they navigate the challenges and triumphs of sports, contributing to the vibrant tapestry of Ursuline's athletic legacy.

Jen Brooks
Athletic Director, UA St. Louis

It brings me so much joy to see the special relationships formed between our girls of various grades and ages. The young girls really look up to the older girls.

Maria Weidenbacher
Director of Alumnae, UA New Orleans



It excites me that we are working to form strong women who will hopefully change a world where women still struggle to have their voices truly heard. I'm especially joyful when I see our students working together, talking through a challenge, respecting what each has to offer, and celebrating one another.

Peggy Slater
President, UA St. Louis

What brings me the most joy in teaching my sophomore and junior students the craft of reading, writing, and analysis is seeing them get excited about challenging themselves and seeing them progress from an "I need a good grade in this class" mentality to a mindset of "what fun it is to see how much I can accomplish through conscientious effort and perseverance!" Regardless of where they end up in the future or what careers they will eventually pursue, I know that cultivating this delight in their God-given ability to hone skills with joy, thanksgiving, and creativity will help prepare them to be successful.

Allison Hibbitt
English Department, UA Dallas



My joy comes from watching students grow academically, but also emotionally and spiritually. As an advisor of seniors, I remember them as quiet freshmen beginning high school during the pandemic, and over the past four years have watched them take risks, make decisions, become friends, and discern their passions and interests. It is an honor to walk alongside them as they become young adults, and I will miss them dearly when they graduate!

Kathleen Schenck
English Department, UA Dallas

What consistently brings me joy is seeing these young women engage with their full hearts: the shared laughter following a peer's witty insight into a character or novel, their rush of excitement after reading ahead to get to "the good stuff," or even their quiet, intense journaling on a passage they find particularly meaningful.

Megan Griffin
English Department, UA Dallas



Meeting and developing relationships with Ursuline alumnae is a gift that brings me joy daily. I love learning about the impact an Ursuline education has had during all stages of our alumnae's lives.

Vicky Thaler Cabot
Director of Alumnae Relations, UA Dedham

As an educator, cultivating the vine involves nurturing the growth of each student and fostering a supportive and enriching learning environment. Just as a vine requires care, attention, and the right conditions to flourish, I hope to cultivate the spiritual, intellectual, and emotional development of my students, helping them reach their full potential.

Eve Juarez
Computer Science, UA Dallas

I am filled with deep pride and great joy to work with all of our student-athletes and coaches at Ursuline, Dedham. Last school year, 78% of the girls participated in school-sponsored sports. This past fall season all five of our sports (cross country, field hockey, soccer, swimming/diving, and volleyball) truly lived our motto of *Serviam*. The cross-country team organized a canned food drive for the local food pantry and the other four sports raised close to \$9,000 for breast cancer and pediatric cancer research.

Mike O'Connor
Athletic Director, UA Dedham

Each day, as I observe classes and interact with faculty and staff, I am impressed with their commitment to the school, to the students, and to the Mission. Each one is working to improve their craft so that the classroom experiences of our girls are engaging, intellectually challenging, and purposeful. I appreciate that they work very hard to help our students find faith, courage, and joy in their school days.

Sue Petrone
Principal, UA Dedham

It is easy for students (and adults!) to fall into the trap of task-oriented living. Our students can find themselves in a pattern of primarily focusing simply on what needs to be accomplished next or what assignments must be completed. One of my privileges and responsibilities in being entrusted with these precious souls, and helping cultivate them, is helping them step back from task-oriented living and, through the gifts of literature and writing, be fully present and engage with exploring their personal relationship to the world around them. In my class, I get to help students immerse themselves in stories, observe and practice really seeing others, reflect on others' experiences, develop understanding beyond tasks and self, and, hopefully, ultimately feel how profoundly connected they are to the people and world around them.

Liesl Mayerson
English Department, UA Dallas



What brings me joy when cultivating the vine entrusted to me is witnessing the girls connect the dots between the stories in the Bible and see them come together to form the full story of Salvation History. Then they begin to draw connections to their own lives and the world of today with such excitement and passion to make a difference in so many unique and creative ways!

Kathy Sherman
Theology Department, UA Dallas

Just like the work of a gardener, the work of a teacher is never done as the students are ever-growing, ever-changing, and ever-branching to new heights. It is an honor to accompany them on their journey, to shape their growth through daily moments and interactions, and to eventually watch them grow beyond your classroom knowing they will flourish elsewhere under the cultivation of another.

Amanda York
World Languages, UA Dallas



We have a student with a neuromuscular disease who sometimes needs help moving around the building. Watching the students around her step up to help without reservation is *Serviam* in action. That kind of compassion and sisterhood among our students brings joy to my heart.

Mark Michalski
Principal, UA St. Louis

As I reflect on what brings me joy as I cultivate the vine, I can't help but think about sounds. The sounds of learning and laughing coming from our classrooms. The sounds of children from the cafeteria and the playground. These wonderful sounds show me we are creating a community with roots.

Stacy Shoulta
Interim Head of School and Director of Mission and Theology, Mount Merici Academy

It brings me joy when I see our students living out service, courtesy, loyalty, and courage in very concrete ways through their attitudes and actions. I am filled with joy when I see them in their colorful house shirts as they spread love to their sisters in the halls.

Joni Mullen
Director of Mission Integration and Global Education, UA St. Louis

One thing that brings many of us Ursuline St. Louis alumnae joy is our Christmas poinsettia deliveries to local alums who graduated more than 50 years ago and continue to be loyal to our Ursuline mission through their generosity to our students today. It's always fun to surprise them and bring them Advent and Christmas cheer.

Katie Kempf
Alumnae Relations Coordinator, UA St. Louis

At MMA, our second-grade students pair up with our nursery school students and they read a story to them, coloring a holiday picture or doing a craft activity. This helps the nursery students feel welcome to MMA when they see a familiar face at lunch or in the hallway. This activity also allows the second graders to be role models for their nursery school buddies.

Martha Hart
Second-grade Teacher, Mount Merici Academy



What brings me joy is sharing the guidance of Angela and the wisdom of Marie of the Incarnation and then watching our community members, both students and staff members alike, realize that they are just like these remarkable women. They encounter similar challenges in the world and they, too, have the strength of faith and commitment to serve others in transformative ways. The example of our Ursuline Mothers encourages and empowers our community members to believe in themselves and act to bring about positive change in the world. To watch this cultivation of the vine from generation to generation is THE greatest joy.

Mary-Kate Tracy
Director of Mission and DEI, UA Dedham



The vine that is entrusted to each of us in the Ursuline family is a gift. I love being able to see the joy on our students' faces when they are doing service together, connecting with one another, growing in their faith, and taking steps to become the courageous young women that God created them to be.

Kristen Jensen
Campus Minister, UA St. Louis

It brings me tremendous joy when I see our young women discover their unique gifts and talents while in service to others! They light up and are eager to continue sharing their gifts!

Nikki Weston
Director of Campus Ministry, UA St. Louis

I find true joy in watching students mature and find their voices. I also enjoy witnessing our Ursuline girls share some of the same experiences and traditions that I had as a child at Ursuline.

Christy Zurcher
Director of Mission Integration, UA New Orleans

