



Ursuline Sisters of the Central Province Office of Mission and Identity

Ursuline Identity Assessment Cycle II 2020-2024

Ursuline Academy, New Orleans, Louisiana
November 1-4, 2023
Visiting Team Report

[Link to Self-Study Report](#)

Visiting Team

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General Overview and Observations of Visit

As Ursuline Academy of New Orleans is in the beginning stage of planning for its historic Tricentennial Celebration in 2027, the community embarked on its Ursuline Identity Assessment Cycle II in the Fall of 2022. Led by Academy President Dr. Karen Jakuback and Director of Mission Integration Christy Zurcher, the Steering Committee focused on four of the Essential Characteristics of an Ursuline school in the self-study process. The report was submitted to the Office of Mission and Identity in September 2023.

The Visiting Team met via Zoom to review the assessment process, details of the visit, and the initial review of the beautiful and expansive self-study Google Site. We then met in person upon our arrival in New Orleans on November 1st to organize the visit and begin a detailed discussion of the self-study and visit. We celebrated Mass together at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Prompt Succor and were treated to a delicious New Orleans dinner with Karen Jakuback and Christy Zurcher. They clarified a few questions the Team had about surveys and some themes that surfaced in the self-study.

From the moment we were greeted at Ursuline on the first visit day, the Visiting Team immediately felt the Ursuline spirit of hospitality. We met with administrators and the UIA Steering Committee who shared their strongest affirmations and most critical areas of growth. Through the self-study process, they felt affirmed in the outstanding job done imparting and

modeling the Catholic and Ursuline identity to the students and openly shared the challenges felt with the “one academy” model. These self-evaluations were affirmed by all focus groups during our time at the Academy. We were fortunate to be visiting on the first Thursday of the month when Eucharistic Adoration and “Parents in Prayer” was scheduled. In a deep display of community, we participated in a Rosary with parents and other members of the school community. We were led on a tour of the beautiful and historic campus by a High School Student Ambassador who showed her deep love and pride in her school. The Ambassador was positive, articulate, and enthusiastic, sharing her pride for her class mascot, the Phoenix, as well as her love of all things Ursuline. The culmination of our tour was evacuating for an unplanned fire drill! What was noteworthy about this experience was our witness of the deep dedication to the safety of the babies from Lily House. While the entire Academy exited the building and adults were clearly concerned with the safety of all students, we saw the Lily House caregivers exit the building without taking the time to even put on their own shoes in order to bring the babies to safety in their cribs. High School students immediately began comforting the babies when they were clearly distressed. It was a beautiful show of the love and support for the littlest members of the Academy.

The Visiting Team had the opportunity to visit Lily House, the Early Childhood Learning Center, classes of all grade levels, enjoy lively conversations over lunch with students of both the middle and high school levels, and participate in several focus groups with faculty, parents, board members, alumnae, and administration. In our time with many constituents, we were grateful for their openness and vulnerability in sharing to express their love of Ursuline and a true desire to seek growth.

Over two-and-a-half-days, the Visiting Team observed the following from Focus Groups:

- **Students in grades 5-7** felt they were heard and valued by their teachers. It is evident to them that their teachers love their jobs. Students were excited to share that they could recognize teachers as “Shining Stars.” Below are some of their experiences shared in their own words:
 - “The teachers are patient and supportive.”
 - “They (teachers) care for us.”
 - “Teachers know we can do better and provide support and resources for us.”
 - “I feel like teachers are preparing us for high school.”
 - “We would like longer class time.”
 - “I would add a study hall.”
 - “I like that there is a test calendar for assessments.”
 - “We had a unique opportunity to see a naturalization ceremony. We realized our gifts and are blessed to be born here.”
 - “I really like how Ursuline feels like a family.”
 - “We look forward to St. Angela’s Feast Day and service projects.”
 - “We can talk with our teachers about our faith.”
 - “I see Angela in all the girls here.”
 - “I wouldn’t change a thing (about the school).”

- **Students in grades 8-12** gathered to share their thoughts on what they would do if they were to be principal for a day. Below are some of their experiences shared in their own words:
 - “Serviam is natural.”
 - “People here are down to earth and humble.”
 - “I have a real identity because of Ursuline.”
 - “We want more opportunities together as a whole community.”
 - “I would hold a seminar to listen to the high school students and what they are concerned about.”
 - “Many surveys have been sent out more recently to get our opinions...one result of this is that the topic of mental health is not just talked about, it is now a club.”
 - “I would incorporate the middle school more into high school so they understand how different and great the high school is.”
 - “We need more community days to get to know people.”
 - “Give clubs more opportunities for leadership so clubs can make a difference.”
 - “The new form for starting a club has a service component so each club has to do service. I love that!”
 - “There is no popular group...the school filters out the mean girls.”
 - “We are a family here. Ursuline students welcome people seen as outcasts in other places.”
 - “We support fellow students and allow people to voice what they need.”
 - “We have even named the pump for our friend with diabetes!”
 - “Girls who leave often come back.”
 - “I feel like community was showcased at Open House.”
 - “We want ALL students to have opportunities to be involved in events, not just the ones picked or who are ambassadors.”
 - “I would share with the middle schoolers how Ursuline is so special where students feel seen, included, and comfortable talking with teachers when they have a question.”
 - “I would tell 8th and 9th graders it is ok to ask for help and go to their teachers because teachers are supportive.”
 - “This year the consistency in the Administration has given us consistent expectations.”
 - “Ursuline gives me a sense of pride, especially knowing our history and how Ursuline was the first for so many things.”
 - “My mom said I visibly calmed down when I came here.”
 - “Retreats with lower grades are positive experiences.”
 - “I love how the musical brings together 3rd - 12th grade.”
 - “I would like for us to have more spirit days.”
 - “We need a better library. I love the tech room, but want a space with chairs and availability of books and a nice study space.” In response to this comment, another student said, “I didn’t know we had a library!”
 - “I have listened to everything that has been said and my answer is, I wouldn’t change anything!”

Overall the students emphatically shared the impact of the love, care, and support they experience on a daily basis from their teachers and administrators. It is evident that healthy relationships between coworkers models for students how to interact with classmates as well as girls in differing grade levels to build community. Support and compassion are not taught in a formal setting, it is a natural, organic occurrence at Ursuline. 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!

- **Faculty** gathered together to share the successes and challenges of teaching. One teacher reflected that “we are the legacy holders of St. Angela.” In response, another recollected that they are a unique faculty because they are Ursuline educators, which sets them apart from other schools in the area. Going off of what was shared, one teacher happily exclaimed, I absolutely love it here. Love the girls, love the mission, and love the spirit!” While discussing the theme, *Take Care*, one teacher explained that here at Ursuline, in a healthy way, faculty push each other to be and do better every day. Faculty members have one another’s back. To further emphasize the lived experience of *Take Care*, a middle school teacher explained that for them personally, it meant caring for the whole student. Multiple middle school teachers focus on teaching students empathy and kindness. One teacher explained that “we’re trying to model how to be more aware by caring for one another”, and what this often looks like is reminding students to respect each other, their shared spaces, and shared supplies. In regards to living out *Take Care*, an ECLC teacher recognized that this meant not only taking care of the babies while they are here but also taking care of the parents and families of students. The teacher explained that there have been times when new parents or parents with multiple children often forget to bring personal items like bottles, jackets, or socks. Instead of being frustrated or scolding the parents, the teacher recognized the importance of extending care to the families because it was obvious that there was a lot going on. It’s clear that *Take Care*, while the theme of this particular year, is always a lived reality and is naturally integrated into the positive relationships between students and teachers, and in the fostering of positive and healthy learning environments. Throughout this conversation, it became abundantly clear that the faculty genuinely loves and cares for the students and each other.

Faculty also reflected on the challenges of teaching and emphasized the importance of professional development and support necessary to meet the demands of changing student demographics. Namely, teachers explained that they have noticed a trend of growing numbers of diverse learners and emphasized the difficulty in meeting the learning needs of every student. A high school teacher commended the opportunities to learn about diverse learners through seminars and guest speakers, though they felt like they still needed to have adequate teaching tools and skills to be successful. Coming from a parent’s perspective, another teacher reported that their daughter blossomed here. The teacher explained that their daughter who has dyslexia was treated so well by the teachers because they met her where she was and helped her not only pass but

thrive at Ursuline. Adding on to this personal story, another teacher reflected that their daughter attends Ursuline and is a different learner. She is respected and cared for and her uniqueness is celebrated here.

In addition to the challenges of meeting the needs of diverse learners, teachers across the board highlighted the feeling of tight timelines and limited time for meeting, collaboration, planning, and reflection. One teacher shared that all administrators, faculty, and staff are wearing so many different hats and emphasized the feeling of being stretched too thin. Many commented that the current “One Academy” model is, “not sustainable.” It became clear that many faculty struggle to find time to meet with their cohorts and are longing for connection, collaboration, and community. One teacher explained that because it is such a unique model compared to the other schools in the area, “If One Academy is who we are then we need to beat that drum!” The teacher continued to share that if we continue down this path, we have to figure out who we are in this aspect and then celebrate it with the wider community. Teachers and staff from Lily House and ECLC expressed feeling like they are on an island separate from the rest of the Academy. One teacher reflected that having some decisions made without teacher input makes them feel unseen, unheard, and undervalued. Some teachers shared they want to feel like the professionals they are with one emphatically stating, “There’s a huge wealth of knowledge and experience to pull from if they just ask us!”

Lastly, multiple faculty members commented that with the transition into the “One Academy” model, many are still confused about which administrator to go to when there are issues, questions, or concerns. One teacher recounted that with the current model and overstretched Administrators, observations are very limited, and teaching feedback is rarely shared. Though various challenges to teaching were shared and reflected upon, many teachers commended the dedication, passion, and compassion that they see within the administration, faculty, and staff. Even with all of the modern challenges that teachers face, one teacher proudly stated, “We’re here because of St. Angela and the girls and we love it!”

- **Administrators** feel everyone does an outstanding job of ensuring the Catholic and Ursuline identity and empowering students. They acknowledge that faculty members need more time for formation, reflection, and collaboration. Many expressed their exhaustion and concerns over their personal sustainability in the “One Academy” model. They expressed frustration with not being able to be an expert on all things such as curriculum ranging from “Phonics to AP Calculus” and dealing with social issues from first graders to seniors in High School. They see the stretch of the faculty and staff to care for all the needs of the students and feel as though we are in a “no man’s land” trying to navigate the reality of the current trends in enrollment and development.

While there are numerous impactful events occurring at all levels, the need for balance and time for reflection was reiterated by multiple individuals. It was shared that the Academy model is unique and allows for curriculum mapping across K-12 which

maximizes the ability to track student development from lower to upper levels. In regards to the "One Academy" model, multiple administrators exclaimed the difficulty of sustaining the current workload and operations. Some Education Team Administrators have not been clear on their roles as they are continually evolving and feel they can not be effective because there is not enough time. It was shared that upon reflection of their evolving job responsibilities, it's "hard to make sure everyone is happy all the time." In addition, a foreseeable challenge with ongoing and evolving job descriptions is the challenge of keeping up with all the events, disciplinary issues, different audiences, and calendar changes on top of a lack of meeting opportunities. With further reflection, it was shared with the group that there is "not enough time in the day to be effective," as well as, "I feel like I am not present to [the students]."

It is clear Ursuline has passionate, dedicated, and supportive administrators who feel overwhelmed yet continue to offer the students and each other the best they can give. They are a true example of *Serviam*.

- **Alumnae** from the graduating classes of 1966 to 2018 returned home for this conversation. Multiple alumnae highlighted the sense of community, sisterhood, and care and support that they experienced during their time at Ursuline and beyond. Alumnae also emphasized that their Ursuline education fostered independence and confidence in every student. The care and support that they received allowed them to be themselves and empowered them to be their best selves. With such an environment, one alum explained that she was able to face challenges and overcome obstacles beyond Ursuline because of the formation that she received as a student. One alum reflected on the history and legacy of Ursuline Academy and exclaimed that it is amazing to be a part of something bigger than yourself. In regards to their service reflection, one alum explained that when she came to Ursuline she learned about Servant Leadership, which has informed and transformed the rest of her life. This model of leadership and her service experiences at Ursuline were so formative that she continues to see herself as a Servant Leader as she runs her own business and continues to serve on a regular basis. Another alum gushed how grateful she is that alumnae are invited to join in on service projects or school-wide fundraising events. Lastly, an alum explained that service is integrated into classroom education and that service is a vital component of growing in self-knowledge. She simply exclaimed that service is a part of life here at Ursuline.

When asked what advice they would give Ursuline in regards to the further development of DIB, one alum commended the school for its progress in recent years to diversify leadership. Alumnae recollected the positive impact of the Oral History Project conducted by some high school students and praised the invitation for alumnae to share their experiences of integration at Ursuline. One alum recommended that the school foster more ways for alumnae of color to come and talk with students. They highlighted the unique experience of the Entrepreneurship Class and the positive impact of Career Day where alumnae are invited to share their professional work and successes. Lastly,

one alum explained that in recognition of the development of diversity, inclusion, and belonging initiatives the Alumnae Board application was rewritten to be more inclusive and accessible. Overall, these women are immensely proud to be Ursuline alumnae and are hopeful that Ursuline will continue to change with the times. As one alum commended, "continue to do a tremendous job of being ahead of the curve whether or not it ruffles feathers."

- **Parents** representing numerous grade levels from T2 through high school joined for a conversation. Multiple parents highlighted how the beautiful campus felt like "home" and a place of comfort. Parents have great peace of mind when dropping off their children for school. A parent said, "We feel like it's like dropping our children off at a grandparent's house where they are safe and loved." Ursuline is a positive, warm, and welcoming environment. Another positive response from parents was the importance of the Catholic education their daughters are receiving: faith, academics, discipline, structure, and service are all valued and visible at Ursuline. One parent of an alum stated that Ursuline well-prepared his daughter for college where she is thriving. A parent commented that the girls push each other to excel because "it is cool to be smart!" Student peer groups hold each other accountable and celebrate and support each other. Parents commented that their daughters are comfortable and empowered to advocate for themselves when difficulties arise in and outside of the classroom. A parent said, "Ursuline has a fantastic interventionist!" The learning consultant has helped her daughter through her learning differences and the learning environment meets student needs 100%. A parent said, "Ursuline is a great parent-partner in raising our daughters. Parents are listened to."

Another highlighted area for parents is the impact and importance of the diversity of the student body. A parent said, "With the diversity here, students learn acceptance of people who are different from them because the school reflects the city." Another parent affirmed that they were drawn to Ursuline because of the diversity. The parents are encouraged by the diverse representation within advertising and marketing materials.

Numerous parents commented that the Early Childhood Learning Center "sold us." The beauty of the space reminds them of a children's museum. The ECLC had a major impact on their daughter's confidence and thriving social development. Parents wanted a family environment that is nurturing and welcoming which they have found with the ECLC. Students "rave" about and "love" their teachers. One parent shared that on the first day of school her pre-K 4-year-old daughter said, "I don't like Ursuline, I LOVE Ursuline!"

- **Board of Trustees** members who spoke in the focus group shared many positives and some challenges facing Ursuline Academy. They recognized that Ursuline provides a top-quality education, many opportunities for service to the community, a safe place to learn, encourages risk-taking, and whole school prayer brings a sense of peace. Some of the challenges or concerns discussed were the lessening of the presence of the

Ursuline sisters, the current governing model of “one academy” being ineffective in meeting the needs of all students, and finances directing many decisions.

The trustees plan to review the current strategic plan and choose a new leader who will support it. They would like to invite faculty members to Board meetings to share events happening in the school. They expressed the importance of sharing the history of Ursuline in the community and in the school and continuing to promote *Serviam* by following the spirit of Saint Angela to change with times, and “do it prudently and with good advice.” One trustee stated, “If I had a daughter, I would send her here!”

Endorsement of Strengths

Evident in the Self-Study Report and through observations of the Visiting Team, we affirm the following strengths of the Ursuline community:

Essential Characteristic 2: *An Ursuline school nurtures a strong spiritual formation for its students and co-workers, one that cultivates the faith development of all its constituencies.*

At Ursuline Academy, this occurs through:

- Administrative level
 - Hiring a full-time Director of Mission Integration
 - Summer retreat/formation for the Board of Trustees
 - Mission Director provides a 10-15 minute prayer and continued formation piece before each Board Meeting
- Students
 - Ceremonies, events, liturgies, feast days celebrated throughout the year in conjunction with the liturgical calendar, and sacramental life of the school community
 - Theology classroom formation for the Ursuline Heritage occurs in 8th grade
 - Exposure to Ursuline History and Heritage is covered across the curriculum to make history come alive
 - Hands-on learning approach with real-world applications
 - Serve learning program - individual requirements and school-wide opportunities
 - Mass Buddies
 - Recognition of “Shining Star” and “St. Angela’s Awesome Angels”
- Coworkers
 - Receive a binder each year with a mission package that includes the theme along with the St. Angela quote, history of Ursuline, mission statement, essential characteristics, core values, and ideals important to Ursuline
 - History and heritage component for new hires
 - Opportunity to attend an overnight St. Angela retreat before the start of the school year begins
 - Heart to Heart newsletter shared

- Whole community
 - Strong Catholic Identity
 - Celebrations of Liturgical seasons (Advent, Lent, etc.)
 - Each school day begins and ends with prayer
 - Academy-wide liturgies with K-12 students
 - The Feast of the Coronation of Our Lady of Prompt Succor
 - Through the use of worship aids, Call to Worship, and the Prayer of the Faithful at Mass history and heritage formation is celebrated
 - Ursuline Day at the Old Ursuline Convent
 - Communion Service is held in the shrine every Thursday
 - Rosary held after school daily
 - Eucharistic Adoration takes place on the first Thursday of the month

Essential Characteristic 3: *An Ursuline school fosters respect for the uniqueness of each individual member of the school community.*

At Ursuline Academy, this occurs through:

- Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DIB) Task Force:
 - In collaboration with teaching artists from the Life Jacket Theatre Company of New York City - an oral history database with a wide range of Ursuline alumnae was created with eleven dedicated and specially trained students
 - Code of Belonging
 - Teacher Formation
 - Diversity, inclusion, and belonging education for faculty and staff by a parent member and local diversity and inclusion professional - discussed current terms and practices
 - Anti-Defamation League Conference on “The Power and Purpose of Allyship” for a group of students and administrators
 - Monthly celebration of select heritage months:
 - Hispanic Heritage Month
 - Native American Heritage Month
 - Black History Month
 - Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month
 - Women’s History Month
 - Increased administrative and administrative support staff diversity by 28% since 2020-21
- K-7th grade Learning Specialist works closely with students who need additional support
- Admissions Process incorporates a holistic approach and does not have a metrics system or set checklist for students
 - Ursuline is diverse compared to schools in the area in these primary ways:
 - Racially
 - Socio-economically

- Geographically
 - Learning Needs
- A work-study program to meet the financial needs of some students
- Classroom Integration includes new courses, NHS tutoring, and programs that broaden students' horizons and offer unique learning opportunities or additional assistance and resources:
 - Take Care: 8th Grade Class with sole purpose of adjustment and belonging to Ursuline.
 - Skills learned - empathetic listening and communication skills
 - Service learning is at the core of the class
 - Class created from recognition of post-COVID issues - cancel culture, isolation through technology, and social media challenges
 - Fine Arts Survey Course: history of visual and performing arts explored through a studio experience
 - YouScience - an "aptitude-based guidance platform that leverages data and artificial intelligence to help individuals identify their aptitudes" etc. for middle and high school students
 - Growing Up! For Girls - 4th-grade students and their guardians engage in a wellness presentation about biological changes, wellness, and self-care
 - Teen Life Counts - 7th-grade students engage in a suicide prevention program
- Outside-of-Class Programming for high school students is additionally offered to meet students where they are and provide unique opportunities with outside partnerships or unique travel opportunities:
 - NOCCA (New Orleans Center for Creative Arts) - half-day sessions
 - Career Day and Career Shadowing
 - American Sign Language class
 - Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps in conjunction with Brother Martin High School
 - March for Life
 - Close-Up Trip to Washington D.C.
 - Extended international trips
 - Clubs and Club Day - students can create clubs based on their interests
 - Morning meetings once per week led by students and *Insieme*
 - Celebration of Birthday Month with a party, cupcake, and birthday crown
 - It's a Great Day at UA - randomly selected to receive a crown and sash to celebrate their special day at UA
 - "Sunshine Sister" Award - a graduating senior, picked by peers to continue to foster a relationship with the Academy and her class from graduation and beyond
 - Senior Art Show
 - Art and Music Showcase during Catholic Schools Week
 - Art in Bloom
 - Spring Musical

- Outside-of-Class Programming for elementary school students:
 - Monthly assembly for community bonding and time to recognize good deeds.
 - Office of Mission Integration sponsors the “Shining Stars” Awards and “Angela’s Awesome Angels” Award
 - Atelierista - students are exposed to various cultures through language, music, and art
 - Lions on the Loose - clublike programming for younger students.
- Summer Camp is an opportunity to meet other students and engage in STEM, arts, sports, and more.

Essential Characteristic 5: *An Ursuline school forms and supports a nurturing family/community spirit.*

At Ursuline Academy, this occurs through:

- Grandparents day
- Welcoming new parents' reception
- “Meet and greet” event & “Back to School Night”- parents & students can meet teachers and visit classrooms
- Mother’s Day Tea - Pre-K students Donuts & Dads- Early childhood
- Mother/daughter luncheon, Father/daughter dance
- Dad’s Club sponsors a “Cigars Under the Stars” - a cocktail and dinner social event
- Parent/ Teacher conferences
- STEM Night - grades 1-5 display STEM projects for parents/families
- Establishing Parent Club - promote volunteering
- Growing up! For Girls - promotes positive body image
- Faculty/ staff retreat/ Mass/ Commissioning/ Longevity gifts
- Welcome Week- orientation/ pinning ceremony and community day
- Senior Art Show
- Homecoming Mass & Brunch for alumnae
- La Fête - gala fundraising event
- Spring Fest- family event
- Spring Musical- community event
- Christmas Program
- Mass- National Catholic Schools Week

Essential Characteristic 8: *An Ursuline school instills academic excellence while inspiring intellectual curiosity.*

At Ursuline Academy, this occurs through:

- Classrooms and learning experiences at Ursuline Academy are built around the needs of students
- Sparking a trailblazing spirit in the students through the “UA Marketplace,” “remember the ladies,” and citizenship cross-curricular project

- Early childhood program inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach to child development
- Curriculum is based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning
- Ursuline identity is integrated into the curriculum through visual arts, photography, and Fine Arts Survey
- Incorporating *Serviam* into classroom instruction and all other aspects of life
- Foreign language officially begins in Kindergarten
- Curriculum fosters and promotes higher-order thinking skills through extensive Arts and Humanities and STEM programs, Dual Enrollment, accelerated, honors courses, and honor societies
- Title I, the Individual Student Needs Program, Learning Center, and ACT prep classes focus on helping struggling students meet expectations for learning
- All grades incorporate the Daggett Rigor, Relevance, and Relationship framework of curriculum development that encourages a transition from the acquisition of knowledge to application, synthesis, and evaluation
- Cognia re-accredited until 2028
- Students experience hands-on learning and real-world application through unique courses
- Technology is immersed within the curriculum through the 1:1 device program
- Teacher assessments occur through regular classroom observations done by the Education Team
- Cross-curricular projects and student interactions across grade levels happen organically in the Elementary division
- The first school of music in New Orleans

There is no doubt what was observed and experienced by the Visiting Team is a strong confirmation of the Catholic and Ursuline identity of Ursuline Academy.

Recognition of Challenges/Opportunities for Growth

In the process of self-reflection for the UIA Self-Study, it is evident to the Visiting Team that the Ursuline community engaged in deep reflection on their efforts, outcomes, challenges, and improvements desired. We invite the Ursuline Identity Implementation Team and the entire school community to reflect on the many desired improvements identified in the Self-Study and plan for implementation for all even if it requires a "third way."

Below are the leading challenges and opportunities for growth evident to the Visiting Team.

- We recognize the challenge of serving young people who are being raised in a culture of materialism and individualism. We affirm the efforts of faculty, staff, and administrators to model values and the spirit of St. Angela to all students and one another. We invite the Academy to maintain the strong embrace of Catholic and Ursuline identity by continuing to offer opportunities for faith demonstration, development, enrichment, and service and above all ongoing mission formation for all members of the Ursuline community.

- We recognize the challenge in executing and implementing the Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Strategic Plan. We invite the Academy to continue to ensure that the Academy's Code of Belonging, stressing the uniqueness of each individual and encouraging empathy for others, is a lived reality. Considering the diversity of student demographics, we invite the Academy to continue to diversify its administration, faculty, and staff and to reinstate the relationship between Ursuline and a local HBCU as mentioned in the Academy's Self-Study.
- We recognize the challenge of the sustainability of the "One Academy" model. With regard to the workload of administrators, faculty, and staff, the lack of clarity in some Education Team Administrators job descriptions, and the continued desire from many constituents to truly be one academy, our observations showed these realities work in opposition to the spirit of St. Angela's "One Heart, One Will." The Academy's Self-Study highlights the current challenge needing to be addressed when it is stated: "... Academy employees desire connection and collaboration... Being in a full Academy can often be a challenge since administrators are spread from elementary through high school... Called by St. Angela to be models to our students, the Academy strives to foster the uniqueness of the individual in both students and staff" (pg. 12). We invite the Academy to:
 - Provide Education Team Administrators with more clearly defined job descriptions with sustainable expectations
 - Continue implementing ways to build community as "one academy"
- We recognize that the educational challenges in a post-COVID environment, the current economic crisis, and declining enrollment trends have negatively impacted academic excellence. The Academy's concern outlined in the Self-Study demonstrates the immediate impact when it is stated: "Our scores are declining faster than national averages. Closer inspection shows steady declines across all subscores, pointing to a need for more preparation overall rather than a specific curriculum shift" (pg. 19). We invite the Academy to:
 - Provide additional and intentional professional development utilizing the myriad of talents within the Ursuline community and/or outside resources allowing educators to develop skills in diversifying instruction and assessments in order to meet the needs of each one as an individual
 - Reinvigorate the Faculty Academic Committee to develop meaningful changes for academic growth and excellence
 - Offer opportunities for growth through increased observations and evaluations
 - Provide consistent, dedicated, meaningful, and ongoing time for planning, reflection, processing, and collaboration within each level and across levels

Concluding Statement

This report was written collaboratively by the Visiting Team, all of whom offer unanimous consent and agreement. We overwhelmingly confirm the strong Ursuline Identity that is a lived reality at Ursuline Academy. The Visiting Team wishes to thank the entire community for all that you did to prepare for our visit and for your genuine hospitality while we were on your campus. We each consider it an honor and blessing to have served on this Visiting Team and have the experience of connecting with the administrators, faculty, staff, students, parents, alumnae, and trustees. This completes our work as a Visiting Team. Ursuline Academy will remain in our thoughts and prayers as you continue to "cultivate the vine entrusted to you."

Karen Mortillaro

Karen Mortillaro - In the name of the Visiting Team
November 27, 2023