

SSND Sponsorship Review
of
Mount Mary College
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Spring 2011



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INTRODUCTION

With respect and gratitude we present the ***Mount Mary College SSND Sponsorship Report*** to the Provincial Council of the Milwaukee Province and to the North American Sponsorship Coordinator. We are confident that this document testifies to how profoundly the charism and educational vision of the School Sisters of Notre Dame are woven together with the mission and vision of Mount Mary College, founded by SSND in 1913. As we move toward our 100th anniversary as a four-year Catholic college for women, we seek approval for continued sponsorship.

The sponsorship review process coincides with our Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association re-accreditation self-study, with the on-site visit scheduled for October, 2012. The first chapter of the self-study is titled "Mission and Integrity." Therefore, the committee that President Eileen Schwalbach appointed to develop this chapter was the same one intended to discuss and research the data for the sponsorship review. The committee included five faculty members, four administrators, one staff person, one student, and a School Sister of Notre Dame.

The College acknowledges and supports the SSND definition of sponsorship as "the mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between the congregation and an organization in which the SSND charism and educational vision are defining characteristics". The influence of the spirit of the School Sisters of Notre Dame is evident in the mission and vision statements of Mount Mary College, which guide our efforts toward academic excellence, student success, financial vitality, community impact, campus renewal, and the development of a vibrant college community.

Each sentence of the mission and vision statements printed below highlight the defining characteristics of SSND education:

Mount Mary College, an urban Catholic college for women sponsored by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, provides an environment for the development of the whole person. [characteristic 1]

The College encourages leadership, integrity, and a deep sense of social justice arising from sensitivity to moral values and Christian principles. [characteristics 1 & 4]

Mount Mary commits itself to excellence in teaching and learning with an emphasis on thinking critically. [characteristic 1]

The baccalaureate curriculum integrates the liberal arts with career preparation for women of diverse ages and personal circumstances; the programs at the graduate level provide opportunities for men and women to enhance their professional excellence. [characteristic 2]

Mount Mary College is recognized as a diverse learning community that works in partnership with local, national and global organizations to transform the world. [characteristics 3 & 4]

Historical Update

Description of significant developments and changes at Mount Mary College in the past several years. This should include personnel, financial status, program changes and student accomplishments.

Mission and SSND Spirit

The mission and vision of Mount Mary College, emerging from the spirit of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, were affirmed by the Higher Learning Commission during their site visit in 2002. Their report stated: “The College is committed to developing the whole person—intellectually, physically, spiritually, and personally—and inculcating the values of integrity, social justice, the empowerment of women, and ethical leadership. It is clear across the campus that all of its constituencies are aware of the College’s mission, support it, and fulfill their responsibilities in light of these values.” The Commission ended its report by noting that Mount Mary College “exhibits a consciousness of its foundational purpose and values that is rarely found today.” Since 2002, there have been significant changes across the campus to ensure that the mission of the College remains vibrant, even as the number of School Sisters of Notre Dame diminishes.

Eight years ago, there were 35 SSNDs working in various venues across the campus, and this presence contributed significantly to maintaining a high level of commitment to the mission. Since the average age of the sisters was 61 in 2002, it was recommended that the College community engage in discussions about how to continue to develop an understanding of and appreciation for the mission and founding principles fundamental to the identity of Mount Mary.

As of Fall, 2010, there were 16 School Sisters of Notre Dame employed as faculty, staff, and administrators. There are also three SSND international students enrolled fulltime, four other sisters who are members of the Board of Trustees, and nine members who currently compose the Corporate Board.

With the decline in the physical presence of the Sisters, there has been an intentional movement to have SSND spirit, and the mission that arises from it, continue to play a vibrant role on campus. This has developed through the appointment of an assistant to the president in 2004, and now a vice president, specifically for mission and identity. The “hiring for mission” guidelines have been in place since 2004, and since 2000 SSND heritage awards have been presented to deserving employees during the annual Founders’ Day celebration. Each year at the honors convocation, two awards are given to students who have been involved with education as it is defined by SSND. A junior, demonstrating concern for the needs of youth and women at the local level, and a senior, demonstrating this concern with a global perspective, receive the Mother Caroline and Mother Theresa awards respectively.

Dr. Eileen Schwalbach, President of Mount Mary College, honors the SSND legacy in every speech and every welcome that she gives. In her inaugural address she stated: "Mount Mary's notion of transformative education is rooted in the very essence of what it means to be SSND....And so we go forward with the words of *You Are Sent* inspiring us and challenging us: 'Our call is nothing less than to transform the world so that all God's children can live in a world of justice, truth, and peace.'" These words resonate with the tone that is set for all who join the Mount Mary College community.

Since 2009, the College outlined four core values, which summarize the mission and help to set the focus as new employees are commissioned to their work within the College community, as students are introduced to the mission through the Leadership Model, and as residence hall leaders determine programming for the year. The "4 Cs," as they are called, flow into and out of each other, and together hold up what is distinctive about the mission of Mount Mary College. These four values, which are treated in depth in chapter two, are named *competence, community, compassion, and commitment*.

Thus, the mission and vision of Mount Mary has become part of the structures and processes of the College in significantly different ways over the past ten years.

The Strategic Plan, 2011-2016

In the summer of 2010, the leadership of Mount Mary launched *Operation Refresh*, sharpening the focus of the strategic plan which had been set for 2007-2012. The philosophical background of this plan remains unchanged, and is stated in the executive summary: "Drawing on the guiding philosophy of the College's founding order, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, the strategic plan reflects an institutional commitment to effect social change through education." In support of the SSND mission, the following guiding principles undergird the plan. "Mount Mary College will

- Remain a Catholic college,
- Remain a women's college and offer post baccalaureate opportunities for men and women, [N.B. Mount Mary and Columbia College of Nursing jointly offer a B.S. in Nursing to women and men.]
- Continue to be a mission driven institution,
- Secure financial stability,
- Remain focused on and responsive to the individual needs of each student,
- Increase diversity on all levels,
- Retain and build upon the liberal arts tradition."

Supported by these principles, the refreshed strategic plan focuses on six initiatives: academic excellence, student success, financial vitality, campus renewal, community impact, and a vibrant community. This last initiative particularly notes Mount Mary's commitment to the spirit of SSND: "We will create an exemplary workplace and community of scholars and learners which at all levels actively promote a deeply held understanding of social justice and the SSND charism."

The *Operation Refresh* process involved interactive, participatory groups from constituencies across the campus as well as trustees of the Board, alumnae and friends. As a result, the entire College community has identified strategic initiatives that align with our mission and that actively shape the College as a leader for Catholic, women's education.

Personnel

There are 398 employees at the College, with 97 fulltime staff and administrators and 95 part-time. Among the faculty, 67 are fulltime and 139 are part-time. Approximately 12% of the faculty and staff are persons of color, and the College continues to focus on increasing diversity, particularly among faculty and administrators. With 42% of our undergraduate population being women of color, it is imperative that more diversity be reflected among our employees. Two African-American women have recently been hired in strategic administrative roles. One is director of advising and career development, and the other is director of the Students Building Bridges program to encourage the building of relationships among people of diverse backgrounds.

Since 2004, there has been a policy in place that we "hire for mission," and, therefore, every interview process includes questions regarding our mission. Each semester begins with an All-College Workshop, which unites all employees around a mission-based theme. In August, 2010, all personnel had the opportunity to fill out the Employee Engagement Survey, which yielded data concerning the vibrancy of our community. After the results were compiled, a task force conducted interviews within every area of the College to discover how we might enhance our efforts to "provide an environment for the development of the whole person."

Currently, nine School Sisters of Notre Dame compose the Corporate Board, five of whom serve on the Provincial Council. The Board of Trustees consists of 25 members, with four of these members being SSNDs. At the October Board meeting in 2010, we began a new practice of incorporating an SSND moment with the opening prayer. This practice serves as an ongoing orientation to SSND heritage and spirit.

Financial Status

Since 2008, the financial vitality of the College has become very sound, a judgment affirmed by the *Milwaukee Business Journal* who presented an award to our chief financial officer in 2010, deeming him Chief Financial Officer of the Year.

The Composite Financial Index (CFI) provides an overall indication of the financial strength of the College. Values ranging from 3 to 5 indicate that the organization has sufficient funds to redirect its resources to allow for transformation. Mount Mary is above level 3, which means that reserves can now be used to address pressing issues such as deferred maintenance and strategic initiatives such as the renovation of the library into a student learning commons.

Even with the volatile economic environment, Mount Mary College has done exceptionally well in the past three years. For the third consecutive year, the College has seen record enrollment, with graduate students as the most rapidly growing sector. As of October, 2010, the number of undergraduates was 1,424 with graduates at 539, making for a total student population of 1,963. Our diversity has also increased among the student body with 39% of undergraduates being women of color in 2009 and 42% in 2010.

Program Changes

In response to the call for a college life seminar, Mount Mary created a course for students that would not only help them develop academic skills, but would also introduce them to the spirit of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and the mission and vision of the College, especially as it is presented in the Transformative Leadership Model. The Leadership Seminar for Social Justice is now a graduation requirement for all first-year, traditional age students.

In 2002, the College began a partnership with Columbia College of Nursing to introduce a joint nursing degree. Because Mount Mary provides two years of the BSN, and Columbia the other two, it is the only undergraduate degree in which men may graduate.

The Midtown Scholarship Program offers young women of Milwaukee academic, personal, and financial support as they pursue their degree at Mount Mary. Acceptance into the Program is based on academic merit, leadership commitment, and demonstrated financial need. The Midtown Scholarship award guarantees that an eligible student's federal, state, and Mount Mary gift assistance cover between 70 and 85 percent of tuition costs. Accepted Midtown students attend a mandatory six week Summer Bridge Program beginning in June. They then continue their studies at Mount Mary's Midtown Campus for the fall semester and begin taking their courses on the main campus in the spring semester.

In recent years, our study abroad programs have expanded both in the number of students participating and in the number of offerings to various locations from Ireland, France, Italy, and Germany to South Korea, Japan, China, Costa Rica and Perú. Whether a short-term experience of two weeks in Guatemala, or a longer stay of two months in Perú, the students are exposed to social justice issues and opportunities for service learning. Students may also explore arranging their own study program or study at our affiliate schools such as the American Intercontinental University in London, England, American College in Dublin, Ireland, Nanzan College in Nagoya, Japan, or Universidad Católica de Santa María in Arequipa, Perú. There are scholarships available to help students who may not otherwise be able to take advantage of this stretching educational opportunity.

For the past three years, the SSND gymnasium connected with the Munich Motherhouse has asked for one of our students to be the English speaker in residence,

and in 2010 we also sent a graduate to the school in Regensburg. In 2009, 22% of our graduates had participated in one or more study abroad program.

As of September 1, 2010, Mount Mary's status as an NCAA Division III school has been changed from provisional to active membership, allowing us to continue to holistically educate student athletes. Steadily building a sense of self-worth and team spirit, student athletes are rapidly becoming leaders in service on and off campus and models of character for their classmates. The sports offerings at the College include volleyball, basketball, softball, soccer, cross-country, and tennis.

Since the last Higher Learning Commission visit, Mount Mary College has initiated three master's programs—Business Administration, Counseling (with a concentration in community, school, or clinical mental health counseling), and English—and suspended one, the masters in Gerontology. The other master's programs currently include: Art Therapy, Dietetics, Education, and Occupational Therapy. Graduate students are the most rapidly growing sector of the College population, with 539 students registered in Fall 2010.

Besides program changes, there also has been intentional shifts in how the College addresses the public. Since 2005, news releases that come from the College include the following "boiler plate":

Mount Mary College, founded in 1913 by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, was Wisconsin's first four-year, degree-granting Catholic college for women. Located on an 80-acre campus in Milwaukee, the College offers more than 60 undergraduate areas of study for women and seven graduate programs for women and men. Mount Mary also emphasizes study abroad, service learning, and social justice initiatives. Its more than 1900 students enjoy small class sizes (average 14) and 95 percent of full-time students receive financial aid or scholarships. Through classroom instruction and community service, Mount Mary develops women to be leaders in their professions and their communities, serving as role models to inspire achievement in others. Visit Mount Mary College at www.mtmary.edu.

The campus signage as well as current business cards all note the College's sponsorship by the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

In addition to the initial introduction to the mission that each new employee receives at the beginning of the academic year, there are now seven opportunities offered to deepen understanding of the culture of Mount Mary College. These include topics such as: foundational information about Mothers Theresa and Caroline and how their initiatives gave rise to the College; an introduction to the content of our Leadership Seminar for Social Justice, which has as its base the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and the mission of Mount Mary; and insight into who the School Sisters of Notre Dame are today.

Student Accomplishments and Awards

Several students have received prestigious outside scholarships including the Rath, Tempo and Gates Scholarships.

Academic excellence and leadership for social justice are strong emphases at Mount Mary. The Caroline Scholars Program awards students who are promising scholars and have a passion for social justice. They meet as a cohort every week and reach out in substantial service learning projects throughout the year.

All first-year traditional age students are required to take the Leadership for Social Justice Seminar. As part of the class, students are engaged in service learning at over 40 community sites doing over 1,100 hours of service each semester. After completing the course, students report an increase in taking initiative to solve social problems. Mount Mary was placed on the Higher Education Community Service National Honor Roll for its service learning programming. It was one of only nine institutions in the state to receive this national distinction.

Notable student achievements within academic programs this past year include interior design students who assisted with the sustainTABLE CHAIRity and Upcycling Extravaganza benefitting a homeless shelter. Dietetics students collaborated with the Bread for Healing Free Clinic to offer one-on-one medical nutrition therapy counseling and group classes. The Mount Mary Community Garden Project, coordinated by the Behavioral Science Department, donated 450-500 pounds of vegetables to Second Harvest Food Bank. Occupational Therapy students participated in CarFit, sponsored by AAA and AARP, providing evaluations of seniors in their cars to ensure safety and functioning and making recommendations for adaptive devices. Students and faculty in various art majors created art to enhance the walls of the newest building for Children's Hospital of Wisconsin.

Students who are awarded the Mother Caroline and Mother Theresa awards, manifest accomplishments which resonate with the spirit of these two SSND founders. For example, one professor who recommended a student for the Mother Caroline award noted how "the same fortitude, faith, and entrepreneurial vision that fueled Mother Caroline" also fueled Terrilynne. She was an outstanding student who not only tutored her classmates through difficult courses but also combined her inspirational work with youth and her care for terminally ill patients by creating projects that helped her students connect with those in the hospice facility. Kim, a recipient of the Mother Theresa award, assumed a leadership role among her peers as she facilitated study groups and committed herself to hundreds of hours of service interacting with individuals with disabilities. Her global vision expanded as she traveled to Ireland and explored the health care system and roles of women in that country and as she raised funds for and studied the causes of poverty in developing countries. These two students represent the kind of accomplished woman that Mount Mary College seeks to develop.

In 2010, the Brady Corporation Foundation awarded a \$150,000 three-year grant in support of the Women's Leadership Institute, which provides an avenue for students to develop into talented and confident leaders while receiving a quality education at Mount Mary. In collaboration with existing organizations and women leaders, the WLI seeks to provide programs, resources and mentoring for women in the greater Milwaukee area.

Countless graduates are transforming lives and communities in Milwaukee and around the world. One alumna operates a free health care clinic in Milwaukee and another runs an agency where abused women can escape domestic violence and reconstruct their lives. One has started a hospital in Saudi Arabia and another has built a dormitory at a girls' high school in Cameroon. These examples give an idea of the many ways in which the alumnae of the College continue to live out an education that transforms.

Defining Characteristics

Description of Mount Mary College in relationship to each defining characteristic, including the meaning of the characteristic, the indicators of success, and what needs to be done to strengthen the characteristic.

Introduction

The four core values which summarize the mission and vision of the College intimately link with SSND defining characteristics. Below is the description of each characteristic followed by the core value which best addresses it.

SSND Characteristic: A conviction that educational excellence empowers those served to reach their full potential as individuals and enables them to direct their giftedness toward transforming the world.

Core Value:

Competence

- ❖ committing to excellence in teaching and learning with an emphasis on critical thinking
- ❖ integrating the liberal arts with career preparation
- ❖ enhancing professional excellence at the graduate level.

SSND Characteristic: A commitment to work for unity in a divided world, unity that is evidenced by inclusivity, internationality, and community building at all levels.

Core Value:

Community

- ❖ developing a learning environment founded on the spirit of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, a community of women rooted in the Catholic tradition
- ❖ promoting a diverse learning community, which is inspired by the SSND witness to unity in a divided world
- ❖ working in partnership with local, national and global organizations.

SSND Characteristic: A sense of responsibility for the world, especially the needs of women, youth, and persons who are marginalized.

Core Value: **Compassion**
promoting a deep sense of social justice arising from sensitivity to moral values and Christian principles, since the SSND legacy is one which confronts with the gospel message those elements which impede human development and unity.

SSND Characteristic: An openness to radical transformation, responding to issues of justice, peace, and integrity of creation, as well as working for systemic change, as appropriate.

Core Value: **Commitment**

- ❖ encouraging leadership and integrity because of the conviction that each individual is created in God's image and is thus a person of dignity
- ❖ providing an environment for the development of the whole person, since the SSND educational stance is grounded in a Christian vision of who the person is called to be and what the world is destined to become.

The development of each core value works toward Mount Mary's vision of transforming persons in order to transform the world.

Defining Characteristic One: Competence

Living the Characteristic

Mount Mary's commitment to competence is a living out of the SSND motto, which highlights the Latin words *Virtus et Scientia*. Thus the mission statement emphasizes excellence in teaching and learning as well as the development of the whole person; the importance of thinking critically as well as developing a sensitivity to moral values and Christian principles. In the Faculty Handbook, chapter V outlines academic policies for the undergraduate curriculum. Each of the belief statements in this chapter is integrated with a quote from the SSND Constitution, *You Are Sent*.

Mother Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger once said: "A well-educated teacher can more easily accept persons where they are and help them than one who is inadequately educated; good will does not supply for lack of competence." Each year, students nominate professors they believe merit the Teacher Excellence Award. The honor is given to a fulltime and a part-time teacher who have been recommended for excellence in teaching and who manifest innovative teaching methods.

Student surveys that have been administered since 2006, indicate that the undergraduates recognize Mount Mary College as an intellectually stimulating environment. Graduate students strive for educational excellence and demonstrate their leadership initiative through the graduate action research projects that are required in each program.

The annual Honors Convocation inducts juniors and seniors with a GPA of 3.6 into Kappa Gamma Pi and Delta Epsilon Sigma (the Catholic Honor Society). These students are also invited to write an essay qualifying them for the Mother Caroline Award (for juniors) and the Mother Theresa Award (for seniors). The students demonstrate involvement in education as defined by the School Sisters of Notre Dame as well as their conviction that the world can be changed through the transformation of persons.

Mount Mary has made an effort to provide a community for its most committed and academically talented students through the Honors Program. This program is specifically geared to provide higher level core curriculum courses for students with a GPA of 3.0 or higher who have significant interest in the liberal arts. While this program obviously increases the rigor and depth for the best students it also seeks to build a community of scholars for students. Small classes taught by full time professors bring together students to study and collaborate. Extra-curricular classes are also offered. Currently the program offers an Honors level Search for Meaning and at least one other honors level core class every semester.

Another program developing competence in graduate students is Urban Education Fellows, co-sponsored by Mount Mary and Alverno College and designed to improve

the quality of education in independent private, parochial or charter schools in the greater Milwaukee area. The program's mission is to assist participants (women and men) as they become new teachers and to help them prepare their credentials for licensure. Applicants must have a baccalaureate degree, but it needn't be in education. These graduate students teach in independent private, parochial or charter schools while they are participating in this rigorous two-year program leading to a Master of Arts in Education.

In January 2011, a team representing the Higher Learning Commission conducted an on-site visit to evaluate our proposal for a professional doctorate in art therapy. This doctorate is the first of its kind in the nation and marks a new level of competence at the College. The lead evaluator expressed his unequivocal support of the program and forwarded it to the HLC for final approval in spring, 2011. He praised not only the strength of the program but also the “incredible health” of the College. He was impressed with the leadership of the art therapy students and their eagerness to be on the cutting edge of art therapy in even more significant ways.

Our alumnae continue to live out the legacy of excellence that they received during their student years, and during the Alumnae Reunion each spring the Madonna Medal Award recognizes an alumna for community service and one for professional excellence.

Strengthening the Characteristic

First generation college students compose 50% of the student body, and more than 95% receive some financial aid. It is imperative that there be support systems in place to assure student success, which is one of the key initiatives of the strategic plan: “We will strengthen programs, services and support that foster growth—intellectual, spiritual, experiential—and that move individuals toward lives and careers of purposeful accomplishment and service.”

In fall 2010, Mount Mary received a Student Support Services federal grant, commonly known as TRIO, for \$220,000 per year for five years. The College’s program is called the Promise Program and serves at least 140 first-generation and/or low-income students per year. The Promise Program director, counselor, and tutors provide academic and career counseling, cultural enrichment and financial literacy activities, tutoring, and advising.

Access and excellence are the words that serve as our mantra as we move into the second decade of the 21st century. Although our retention rate for first-year, first-time college students was 64% in 2009, our neediest students continue to struggle with persistence as their rate of return was 44%. With the desire to develop the full potential in each student, faculty and administration continue to search out ways to embrace the students who choose our College and to stretch them to educational excellence.

Defining Characteristic Two: Compassion

Living the Characteristic

The Transformative Leadership Model, which guides students and personnel alike, emphasizes the spirit of compassion that characterizes a Mount Mary leader: “Mount Mary leaders learn how to be present to the other, to allow themselves to see through the eyes of another, and to be changed by what they see. They develop a deep sense of what it means to live justly, to be grounded in moral values, and to be true servant leaders guided by Christian principles such as the dignity of the human person and the importance of working for the common good.”

The Leadership Seminar for Social Justice, mentioned in the *Historical Update* section, began in 2000 with a cadre of faculty from diverse disciplines. This 3-credit course encourages reflection on social justice principles and global and local issues of social justice, particularly as they pertain to women. The course also highlights service learning as a means of increasing understanding of justice issues, and every student is required to engage in at least 10 hours of service during the semester. Some of the agencies that are involved in this experiential learning are Repairers of the Breach, Sojourner Family Peace Center, and the Milwaukee Rescue Mission—Joy House.

Each semester, students in the Seminar take a pre-test and a post-test to assess the impact of the course (if any) on their appreciation for social justice and the mission of the College. The results manifest a significant growth in students as they move through the semester. For example, there is decided development in their understanding that the moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members, and they more readily take the initiative to solve social problems that they perceive.

Several of our prominent majors, such as social work, nursing, occupational therapy and counseling, emphasize compassion as integral to the professions the students will be entering. The motto for art therapy is “compassion in action.”

The Caroline Scholars program, begun in 2002, marks another major movement toward the development of compassion in our students. Each year, approximately four students are selected to join the cohort, which remains around 18 students. This extraordinary scholarship and service program requires 350 hours of academic service learning and challenging academic work in return for a full tuition scholarship as well as a room and board stipend for the residence hall. The scholars serve at places like Pearls for Teenage Girls (heading up the alumnae board and doing outreach), 9 to 5 (doing lobbying and advocacy at the regional, state, and national level), CORE el Centro (leading programs and working on program development), Washington Park Senior Center (working directly with seniors on computer and other skills), and Notre Dame Middle School (tutoring and developing programs).

Campus Ministry has developed an approach to engage students called FLIGHT—Faith and Leadership in God’s Hands Today. They plan spring break trips to West Virginia,

Kentucky, Mississippi, and Louisiana, serve in the various communities, and reflect on their experiences. Personal leadership is developed through a servant leadership lens, with listening and supporting others as elemental components. There are also opportunities throughout the year to serve in local communities, to learn and be involved in fair trade and advocacy, to share their faith with others in peer groups, and to continue the process of transforming their own lives through compassionate relationships.

Strengthening the Characteristic

While service learning is a central component in the Leadership Seminar and plays a significant role in several majors such as social work, occupational therapy, and education, it needs to be a component of all of our majors as we develop an understanding of and appreciation for education that transforms.

Defining Characteristic Three: Community

Living the Characteristic

Developing a community that brings out the best in each individual and intentionally working toward the good together, is integral to who Mount Mary is. The leadership model specifically mentions the influence of the School Sisters of Notre Dame as “Mount Mary leaders work to create environments that are inclusive, respecting diverse perspectives, while working for unity in a divided world. They dare to challenge the status quo in their efforts to promote social justice, that is, right relationship among all.”

Students assessed their sense of community on campus by responding to several statements. Those experiencing a sense of belonging have risen from 60% in 2006 to 82% in 2009. Over 90% of students agreed that they are respected by instructors and other students, and 87% agreed that there is racial harmony at Mount Mary. The diversity within our undergraduate student body has increased from 39% women of color in 2009 to 42% in 2010, which adds to the significance of the harmonious, respectful environment that students experience on campus.

The Diversity Committee and the student-led International Committee are active on campus with awareness campaigns, multi-cultural events, and program offerings such as films and speakers, all of which enhance our felt sense of unity in diversity. The Greater Milwaukee Foundation awarded a \$25,000 grant to Mount Mary to design and implement Students Building Bridges, a new program for college students from diverse backgrounds. The initiative piloted during this 2010-11 academic year and will provide 50-75 college women the opportunity to develop relationships across ethnic and racial identities. With over 85% of Mount Mary graduates remaining in the Milwaukee area, the skills and experiences they gain during the program will later assist the community in reaching its full economic and social potential.

Nearly 60 Mount Mary faculty, staff and students are involved in Common Ground, an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to improve housing, education, jobs, public safety and immigration. Currently, Mount Mary is the only official college member and hosts Common Ground meetings on campus.

Residence life programming provides those students who live on campus rich and varied experience that enhance all four of the core values. Building community is a central focus, and activities range from family picnics to time management and life balance to participating in a book club or hosting a lunch or dinner with the School Sisters of Notre Dame who work on campus.

In August 2010, employees of the College took an employee engagement survey designed by an in-house team after researching several national models. The results provided data regarding the felt sense of community in the workplace and indicated the areas we most need to address. The statement “Mount Mary’s mission makes me feel my job is important” yielded 87.7% agreement by administration, 95% by faculty, and 75.9% by staff. To the statement “I have strong, supportive relationships at Mount Mary

within a caring and valuable community,” 78.9% of administrators responded positively, 83.8% of the faculty, and 75.9% of the staff.

In January 2009, the faculty agreed to establish a global awareness requirement for graduation. Students are now required to take at least one course with a global designation. A course with a “g” designation enables a student to articulate understanding of: 1) at least one “world view” or frame of reference beyond one’s own and/or 2) global interconnectedness (e.g. technological, environmental, economic, ideological, sociological or cultural issues/influences).

Study Abroad programs offer students for international community building. The two-week trip to Ireland in January 2011, for example, introduced participants to government officials and groups who are working for justice, peace and the stability of their country. The academic course that anchored the experience was Literature and Conflict Resolution. In summer 2011, the annual five to six week program in Perú engages students in service learning in the Alto Cayma community on the outskirts of Arequipa. Students also experience family life through home-stays with host families in the area.

The Foley-Poehlman Diversity Lecture Series (named in honor of two SSND professors at the College) offers programs each semester that intertwine themes of community, compassion, competence and commitment. The first lecture in fall, 2010, featured the community coordinator for Milwaukee Safe Streets Initiative who spoke on restorative justice and the creation of peace circles. The second lecture, presented by an attorney, focused on integrating values and vocation in community building. These lectures are free and open to the public.

Student Affairs personnel, which includes campus ministry, make every effort to create a welcoming, inclusive community that celebrates God’s love for all.

Strengthening the Characteristic

With a student body comprised of great religious diversity, only 25% of whom declare themselves Catholic, it is difficult to develop a liturgical sense of community on campus. President Schwalbach, in her remarks at the all-college workshop in January 2011, challenged us to think about what liturgy means at a Catholic college. We celebrate Mass together at only four distinct times—at the beginning of each semester and at the December and May graduations. Some of the questions we need to address are about how to make the Liturgy welcoming to people of different faiths; how to create other possibilities for coming together in prayer that will attract students; and how to enhance the spiritual growth of our students on a predominately commuter campus.

The full results of the Employee Engagement survey were made available for all, and three areas in particular were identified as needing improvement: 1) Communication; 2) Professional Development; and 3) Collaboration across Areas of Affiliation. In November and December 2010, every constituency had an opportunity to discuss these critical areas with members of the engagement team and to suggest ideas for

improvement. The discussion notes were collated and submitted to the engagement team who will present recommendations to the President's Council early in 2011.

In the letter introducing the survey, President Schwalbach and Doug Mickelson (the survey coordinator) laid out the purpose of this extensive process: "to engage the Mount Mary community in that discussion which will guide us in efforts to build, strengthen, and... enhance our felt sense of becoming a community intent on working together to further the mission of the College."

Defining Characteristic Four: Commitment

Living the Characteristic

Mount Mary College holds commitment as a core value. The kinds of leaders the College resolves to develop are not only committed to personal development and professional excellence. As the leadership model states, “They are also committed to deepening their integrity, which leads to wholeness and the wellbeing of all those who are influenced by their presence.” The character of such commitment leads one to openness for radical transformation.

Certainly, commitment is woven throughout the core values of competence, compassion, and community. Therefore, aspects of the College already addressed under these previous themes, for example the Leadership Seminar for Social Justice, Caroline Scholars, and Campus Ministry, are not repeated in this section on commitment.

The course, which is at the core of the core curriculum for all undergraduates, is the Search for Meaning. A four-credit course with two credits in philosophy and two in theology, “Search” is designed to investigate the fundamental questions concerning the meaning of human life. It offers every undergraduate the opportunity to ponder the importance and consequences of commitment and which commitments may (or may not) be worthy of a fully human life. The final exam requires a response to the following:

Since the Search for Meaning course is the only one that all Mount Mary students take, it has special relevance for the mission of the College. This mission states that the College is committed to promoting “integrity and a deep sense of social justice arising from moral values and Christian principles.” Was there any factor in this course that 1) called you to greater wholeness; 2) further attuned you to justice issues; and/or 3) challenged you to live out values more deeply than you had before?

A transformation often takes place as a student participates in this course.

The student affairs personnel and programming play a critical role in the students’ development of commitment. During this academic year 2010-2011, they assembled a brochure consonant with the eight principles of good practice for student affairs in Catholic colleges and universities. Those areas which compose student affairs— Campus Ministry, Residence Life, Athletics, Student Engagement, Students Building Bridges, Child Care, and Counseling Services—addressed the principles from their perspectives. Thus, for example, personnel described how they are creating “opportunities for students to experience, reflect upon, and act from a commitment to justice, mercy and compassion, and in light of Catholic social teaching to develop respect and responsibility for all, especially those most in need.”

A professor in the Behavioral Sciences department, initiated a Certificate in Peace Studies that can be earned in conjunction with one’s major field of study. Mount Mary

College, in collaboration with Alverno College, will host the 25th Annual Wisconsin Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies Conference on Friday April 8, 2011. "Can the Globe Go Green – Environmental Sustainability, Peace and the Threats of War" will feature keynote speaker Randall Amster, professor of peace studies at Prescott College in AZ and executive director of the Peace and Justice Studies Association. Students from all disciplines in Wisconsin and surrounding states are invited to submit proposals for papers, roundtables, arts presentations (poetry, short stories, visual art, songs, brief performance art and theater), and persuasive speeches dealing with challenges to world peace. Through awareness of justice issues, peace initiatives, and sustainability efforts, Mount Mary students are growing in their commitment to building a more just and truly human world.

Strengthening the Characteristic

Developing a sense of commitment with "staying power" is always a challenge, especially when students begin an initiative and graduate. Younger students may not have the same passion to continue the endeavor. This is a challenge we find in our sustainability projects.

Mount Mary is strengthening its commitment through all-college discussions where employees from every area re-visit the mission. For example, at the January 2011 All-College Workshop, President Schwalbach asked us to consider how we need to live out the charism of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in the second decade of the 21st century. Discussions centered on the meaning of our Catholic identity, being a college for women, and the distinction between being a college or university which intentionally includes graduates in the mission of the College.

Another critical way we are strengthening our commitment to the kind of competence, compassion, and community we profess is through the changes which will be enacted in light of the employee engagement survey. Commitment to providing an environment for the education of the whole person (which includes employees as well as students) remains strong.

Review Process

Outline the process used during this self-study, including the involvement of Board members, faculty/staff, administration, students and others.

Determination of Timeline

In September 2009, the President of the College, the Vice President for Mission and Identity, and the SSND sponsorship coordinator agreed to have the Sponsorship Review Process coincide with the North Central reaccreditation self-study for the Higher Learning Commission, which Mount Mary began in the summer of 2010 and will complete in fall, 2012. It was further determined that the SSND process needed to be submitted to the current Provincial Council in the spring of 2011, since the Milwaukee Province will reconfigure into the Central Pacific Province in June 2011.

Procedure

On May 17 2010, S. Grace D'Amico, then the NAMA sponsorship coordinator, met with S. Joan Penzenstadler, Vice President for Mission and Identity and Jennifer Hockenberry, chair of the philosophy department. Jennifer and S. Joan are co-chairs of Mission and Integrity, criterion 1 of the self-study. They reviewed the Sponsorship Review Process, its purpose and the defining characteristics. They also discussed possible processes and how the various college constituencies might be involved. At this point, it seemed that the SSND process and the mission and integrity criterion could easily be linked.

At the June 2010 meeting, S. Joan announced to the Board of Trustees that the Sponsorship Review Process was underway. It was clear to the Board chair that she is to accompany the President when the review document is presented to the Provincial Council. At the All-College Workshop in August 2010, the self-study process was launched across the campus, and approximately 50 faculty, staff, and administrators participated in the sectional on mission and integrity. They brainstormed around the five aspects of the mission criterion offering suggestions regarding the data that would be important to include.

By the beginning of the academic year, President Schwalbach had determined the composition of the criterion 1 committee, which included veteran and new faculty, administrators, staff, and a student. Beginning in September 2010, the twelve members who composed the committee met every two weeks.

By December 2010, the sub-groups within the committee each submitted a draft of the section for which they were responsible under the mission and integrity criterion. By this point, it became clear that the components of the mission and integrity criterion were much broader than what was called for in the sponsorship review. S. Joan took the material that had been generated and shaped a document in response to the

request for a historical update and a response to the four defining characteristics of the SSND charism.

In January 2011, S. Marianne Kempa, current NAMA sponsorship coordinator, reviewed a draft of the document, as did President Schwalbach and Dr. Hockenberry. All three offered their affirmation and encouragement. The draft was then sent to every School Sister of Notre Dame currently employed at Mount Mary, to the members of the President's Council, and to the committee members of the mission and integrity criterion.

Before the February 25, 2011 Board meeting, the completed document and appendices were made available to all members of the Board of Trustees. The intention is for President Schwalbach and Kris Krause, chair of the Board of Trustees, to present the document to the Provincial Council of the Milwaukee Province in March 2011.

Mission Education Opportunities

List the initial and ongoing development in place for Boards, administrators, faculty/staff and others. Include a brief description of each and whether it was sponsored by the College or by SSND.

In Los Altos, California, 2002, the President and three other members of Mount Mary College participated in the NAMA conference on sponsorship, *Who Will Bear This Identity?* Seven years later, the NAMA sponsorship coordinator hosted another conference, this time in Wilton, Connecticut. President Eileen Schwalbach and Board member Suzanne Carlton, attended. In 2009, two members of the SSND General Council met with the President's Council and updated them on the *Call to Solidarity* and the movement of SSND in the 21st century. In fall 2010, President Schwalbach was invited to St. Louis in order to present an update on the College and its vibrant connection with SSND as the leadership conference met with General Superior, S. Mary Maher.

All other opportunities for developing understanding of and appreciation for the educational mission and vision of the College in relation to SSND have been sponsored by Mount Mary.

Beginning with the *Hiring for Mission* component of the interview process, and continuing with initial orientations and planned programs, Mount Mary College members have occasions to revisit the SSND legacy and to lean toward the direction SSND is moving.

Orientations

All new employees receive an introduction to the meaning of SSND education, especially through a personal visit with "Mother Caroline" who brings some of the past stories up to the present. President Schwalbach makes sure that new students are acquainted with the legacy of the sisters as it relates to the founding of the College. Ongoing orientations take place approximately once a month throughout the academic year. New Board members also receive an orientation to the distinctive spirit of Mount Mary.

SSND Moment

The practice of beginning Board meetings with an SSND moment has also extended to the opening of all-college meetings. These moments are laced throughout the speeches given by our President.

Classroom Presentation

The most formal development for students takes place in the Leadership Seminar for Social Justice, a course designed for first-year students to introduce them to SSND spirit and the mission and vision of the College.

Field Trips

Periodically, meetings of students (e.g. the leadership summit) and various departments (e.g. external relations) are held at Notre Dame of Elm Grove where the Heritage Room and Mother Caroline's gravesite are special features. Some groups from the Leadership Seminar or other classes meet with the retired sisters and interview them for class projects.

Brochures

A brochure titled *School Sisters of Notre Dame: Grounded in Faith, Educating toward the Transformation of the World* is one that is handed to all new employees and students. The four panels give a brief account of the beginnings of SSND and the work of empowering women. The brochure also features the names of various buildings and halls that are named after prominent women in SSND history. The brochure outlining Mount Mary's transformative leadership model is discussed in the Leadership Seminar and other classes.

Awards

The Heritage Awards presented each year to a faculty member, an administrator, and a member of the staff revisit what the School Sisters of Notre Dame stand for. Students, as well, reflect on the SSND legacy as they prepare nominations for the Mother Theresa and Mother Caroline medals.

Celebrations

The Founders' Day celebration, which takes place in late February or early March, is marked by food, prayer, gratitude for the School Sisters of Notre Dame and an honoring of all those who have gone before us. In a less formal way, October 24, SSND Foundation Day, is also an occasion for celebration. In 2010, for example, 24 sisters interacted with equally as many resident students for a community-building exercise and an ice-cream social. For the 175th anniversary of SSND, creative socializing and education around the legacy of SSND took place during an entire week of activities.

In this document we have hoped to make clear how closely connected the mission and vision of Mount Mary College are with the educational vision and spirit of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Indeed, the SSND charism is the soul of the College. The most pervasive evidence of the ongoing legacy of SSND is found in the personal dedication and professional commitment of faculty, staff, and administration who sustain the founding spirit and commit themselves to furthering its mission.

