

The Vine

Central Province Office of Mission and Identity

June 2024

The Central Province's Office of Mission and Identity is happy to share with you ways our schools continue to "cultivate the vine" entrusted to us!

The Legacy of an Ursuline Education

For many graduates of Ursuline schools, the pride they feel in receiving their diplomas is shared by their mothers, grandmothers, and aunts. Each school was invited to choose one legacy student to share what their Ursuline education has meant to them. Enjoy these sharings from our five schools!

UA New Orleans – Cecelia McLellan '24

I am a proud bearer of a legacy that spans generations, a legacy that has been entrusted to me by my great-grandmother, my namesake, Cecelia Leonhard Maestri, Ursuline Academy of



New Orleans Class of 1939. In the past 85 years, thousands of stories, along with much history, have

flowed through the halls of Ursuline Academy. Back then, Cecelia walked these same hallways and worked in the same classrooms. She received the same ring that signified her journey at Ursuline. Her spirit, hopes, and aspirations are now intertwined with mine, as her ring, passed down through the years, finds its way onto my finger, heavy with the thought of ending my 14 years at Ursuline Academy. We are both a part of one of the longest legacies in the United States — a legacy that calls me to be the best version of myself, to honor the past, and to shape the future.

Mount Merici Academy – William Owens '26

My Mom attended Mount Merici Academy when she was younger. It is a special feeling to be in the same school that my mom attended. My mom shares her *Serviam* heart by volunteering to drive us to the places we help. I like the fact that my mom and I work together serving at some of the same places that she did. Our school is a welcoming place just like it was when my mom attended.



UA Dallas – Christine Martin '24

Being a legacy student at Ursuline has meant carrying forward a cherished family tradition rooted in faith and education. It's provided me with a unique sense of belonging and connection to both the school community and my family's history. Walking the same halls where my grandma, mom, aunts, sisters, and cousins once did has deepened my appreciation for the school's values and teachings, fostering a profound sense of pride in my heritage. Seeing my family member's pictures on the graduation composites around school reminds me that my work at Ursuline is a result of more than just myself but of my whole family. Through this legacy, I've not only received an education but also inherited an understanding of sisterhood, *Serviam*, and spiritual growth that will continue to shape me long after graduation.



UA St. Louis – Ellie Weston '24

Being able to carry on the legacy of an Ursuline education for my family has been nothing short of a privilege. I feel extremely blessed to be able to walk the halls that my sister, mom, grandma, and great aunt once did. Seeing the way Ursuline has shaped my family members makes me excited to see what my future holds. I am grateful to be rooted in our motto of "*Serviam*" and I hope to one day instill this value in my daughter or niece.



UA Dedham – Cailin Kelly '24

When I was making a high school decision, my mom never pressured or pushed me one way or another, but I always knew where I would call home for six years. Attending Ursuline has allowed me to compare and contrast with my mom and aunt about whether the tea room food is the same and if the traditions are similar to their days. But there is so much more than that - going to Ursuline means carrying on a legacy of *Serviam* and hard work. I have seen my mother day in and day out, working so hard and being so passionate about her career. And, I have seen her stay in close contact with some of her Ursuline sisters and watched them show up for one another. Being a legacy has taught me to be immensely grateful and aware of the sisterhood Ursuline offers. It has prepared me to be ready to serve those around me and to know the importance of community in my life.



Gathering of Leaders of Ursuline-Sponsored Schools

In March, Ursuline Academy of Dallas extended a warm welcome to the presidents, heads of schools, principals, and mission directors as they graciously hosted the annual Leadership of Sponsored Schools Gathering. As always, the time



spent together is rooted in Angela's spirit of community building and collaboration. This year the theme, "Legacy of Leadership and Service", gave the leaders time to reflect on their call to lead in the spirit and charism of St. Angela. After an introduction on the legacy of Ursuline leadership by Provincial Prioress, Sr. Elisa Ryan, Ursuline Education Foundation (UEF) Canonical Steward and educator, Dr. James MacLaren, facilitated rich discussions on current leadership trends and best practices.

The highlight of the gathering was a dinner, hosted by UA Dallas, for all of the school leaders and UEF Canonical Stewards. This gathering allowed all to have the opportunity to meet and spend time getting to know one another during a happy hour and family-style Italian dinner. Sr. Elisa Ryan reflected on the truly historic

gathering, "As we assembled one by one in the room, there was an explosion of energy and sheer delight over what it means to be committed together to the future of Ursuline education."

Some leaders who arrived in Dallas early for the gathering had the opportunity to see Girolamo Romanino's painting, *The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine*. After being restored at the Kimbell Museum in Fort Worth, it hangs there as the "Guest of Honor" painting on loan from the Brooks Museum in Memphis. Christy Zurcher, Director of Mission Integration, UA New Orleans, reflected on her experience, "Standing before this magnificent painting, surrounded by fellow Ursuline leaders, was a gift I will forever cherish - Angela and Ursula were truly in our midst."



Ursuline Identity Assessment

The Ursuline Identity Assessment (UIA) is a process that each of the sponsored schools completes every five years which 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. In April, Ursuline Academy in Dedham, MA completed its self-study and welcomed the Visiting Team to experience their Ursuline spirit. As Head of School, Kate Levesque and the Steering Committee stated in their introductions to the self-study report, their goal was to "yield fresh insights and a recommitment to mission" which was completed in cross-departmental collaboration and "affirmed the good work done across the community and helped spark new ideas and excitement."

As is true for every school visit, the highlight was time spent with the students experiencing first-hand how the Ursuline charism is a lived reality. Sisterhood unites Ursuline students, whose relationships with each other and the deeply committed adults on campus support their spiritual, academic, and personal development. One student's comment left us without a dry eye in the house, "UA guides us to live like Jesus and follow in His footsteps."

The Office of Mission and Identity is deeply grateful to all those at Ursuline Dedham for the hospitality shown to the Visiting Team.

Transitions

With the end of the 2023-24 academic year, three of our schools are experiencing leadership transitions. We are sad to say farewell to those leaving but extend a warm welcome to all transitioning into leadership roles in the school communities!



In New Orleans, Academy President, Dr. Karen Jakuback, will move to Houston after serving Ursuline for three years. Joining the Ursuline New Orleans family is Laurie Eichelberger Leiva. She has been on the Advancement Leadership Team at Loyola University in New Orleans and is looking forward to beginning her time at UA as they prepare for the tricentennial in 2027!



Mount Merici Academy in Waterville went through a transition last October when Director of Mission and Theology, Stacy Shoulta, became the Interim Head of School. In May, Stacy accepted a permanent position as Head of School. The MMA community is thrilled to have Stacy continue in this role to serve “The Mount!”



At Ursuline Academy of Dallas, there are many exciting transitions! As President Gretchen Kane returns to her alma mater in New Orleans, the current Principal, Dr. Andrea (Andi) Shurley has been named the next President of UA Dallas. Dean of Academics, Elizabeth Smith, will transition into the Interim Principal role as a search is conducted next year. Gratefully they will both continue to serve UA in new roles!



*With gratitude, we offer a truly heartfelt farewell
and a warm Ursuline welcome to all!*

