

SEARCH PROFILE:

PRESIDENT



UNIVERSITY *of* SAINT MARY



TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE OPPORTUNITY	3
ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY	4
MISSION & VALUES	4
GOVERNANCE	5
CHARISM AND SPONSORSHIP	5
STRATEGIC DIRECTION	6
THE USM CAMPUS AND LOCAL COMMUNITY	7
POINTS OF PRIDE	8
ACADEMICS	9
STUDENT LIFE AND SUPPORT SERVICES	10
ATHLETICS	11
FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION	12
ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT	12
ADVANCEMENT	12
FACILITIES	12
CURRENT LEADERSHIP	13
ABOUT THE PRESIDENT POSITION	14
LEADERSHIP AGENDA	14
REQUIRED AND DESIRED ATTRIBUTES	15
THE APPLICATION AND NOMINATION PROCESS	17



THE OPPORTUNITY

The Board of Trustees at the University of Saint Mary ([USM](#)), in Leavenworth, Kansas, announces the national search for its 10th president.

Founded by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in 1923 and rooted in the Catholic traditions of St. Vincent de Paul, the University of Saint Mary honors our core university values and encourages curiosity and conversation, and servant-leadership and exploration, while a spirit of gratitude lives in everything we do. Located in the Greater Kansas City area, USM today is an esteemed applied liberal arts university with a range of programs and a focus on health care education, and a well-earned reputation for supporting the social mobility of its students.

The University is seeking a dynamic, mission-focused, and visionary leader who will build upon the achievements of the past decade and its distinctive contributions. The successful candidate will be expected to expand institutional resources, enhance engagement with neighboring communities, and articulate a clear and compelling vision that motivates the campus community, alumni, and philanthropic supporters to propel the University's pursuit of continued excellence.

The new president will take office on or before July 1, 2026.



THE UNIVERSITY

The University of Saint Mary is an institution of higher learning sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCL). Rooted in the pioneer spirit of the 19th century American church, the university shares its spacious grounds with the Sisters in Leavenworth, Kansas, and celebrates their hard-working and pragmatic tradition as well as their deep trust in God. It strives for excellence in every aspect of teaching and learning in order to develop the whole person in students. In adapting to the needs of the contemporary world, the curriculum meets students where they are educationally and helps them develop their God-given potential.

Students today learn in modern classrooms and facilities on the university's historic Main Campus, as well as at a satellite location in Johnson County, Kansas, (the KC-area's largest county), and online in a number of undergraduate and graduate offerings

The University of Saint Mary is informed by a liberal arts tradition. USM's core curriculum reflects those roots. The basis of a liberal arts education is the belief that learning in a broad and deep range of fields enhances a student's ability to think. It refines, challenges, and encourages that ability in a student no matter the background or preparedness for university learning. As a graduate of a liberal arts education, a student will be an articulate and fulfilled human being, will find meaningful and gainful employment in a particular field, and will live a just and humane life.

The University of Saint Mary holds also that critical intelligence, depth and breadth of learning, and liberating aspects of the humanities and sciences are more important than ever in the diverse, interdependent, global society of the 21st century. Thus, the University of Saint

MISSION & VALUES

MISSION

The University of Saint Mary educates students of diverse backgrounds to realize their God-given potential and prepares them for value-centered lives and careers that contribute to the well being of our global society.

VALUES

Saint Mary believes in the dignity of each person's capacity to learn, to relate, and to better our diverse world. We value:

- Community
- Respect
- Justice
- Excellence



Mary concept of applied liberal arts embraces the rich history and meaning of the liberal arts while intentionally connecting learning to the real world in concrete and practical ways. In this way, the liberal arts combine with active, experiential learning, and career preparation so that students may use talents, knowledge, competencies, and energies to make a positive contribution in the world.

THE UNIVERSITY (CONT.)

GOVERNANCE

USM's Board of Trustees (BoT) focuses on guiding the university in an ever forward direction while maintaining its commitment to its mission, history, and values as a Catholic liberal arts institution—all with a commitment to fiscal responsibility. USM leadership has an aversion to taking on debt, opting to fundraise for major building and improvement projects. The BoT exercises fiduciary responsibility.

Besides the BoT, USM, as a sponsored work of the Sisters of Charity, is dually guided by the SCL's Board of Members.

BoT members are nominated by the BoT and appointed by the SCL Board of Members. They serve three-year terms. Participants in the SCL Board of Members serve six-year terms. The SCL Community Director (the Chair of the SCL Board of Members) or her designee is an ex-officio voting member of the BoT. The President of USM is also an ex-officio Trustee. The BoT makes decisions in the best interest of the institution, in compliance with board policies and with a commitment to the institution's mission and character. The governing board makes informed decisions with respect to the institution's financial and academic policies and practices; exercises deliberations that reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution; reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations; and delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the institution's administration and expects the institution's faculty to oversee academic matters.

The BoT has all powers for the governance of USM, except for those powers specifically reserved to the SCL Board of Members. The SCL Board of Members must approve changes to the mission and Bylaws of USM, appointment or removal of the President, appointment of accounting and auditing firms, the annual audit, operating and capital budgets, borrowing money, and dissolution or merger of USM with any other legal entity.

USM has the beneficial use of the land on which it operates. The land is owned by the SCLs who share the campus with USM. As such, the SCL Board of Members have reserve powers over use of the land, including building on it and selling or leasing it.

CHARISM AND SPONSORSHIP

The University of Saint Mary is shaped by the educational mission of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth.

Rooted in the gospel of Jesus, the charism of St. Vincent de Paul, and the spirit of Mother Xavier Ross, the sisters see Christian education "as one of the greatest acts of charity: serving others at the fullest points of their needs and ministering to their need to know and come to the truth, to be opened to the good and the beautiful, to understand the past, to confront and help shape the future, to be called to justice, to be more fully and completely human and Christian."

To live in the spirit of Vincent is to be part of a larger community united in service and caring, acting as a bridge between the rich and the poor, striving to witness virtues of simplicity, humility, and charity. It is to see the face of Christ in all people.



THE UNIVERSITY (CONT.)

The University of Saint Mary is a Catholic university.

As a Vatican II Catholic university, rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the university embraces diversity, community, and justice and in that spirit welcomes and respects people of all beliefs including those who seek God through the good, the true, and the beautiful. The university is committed to providing experiences for students to live the Gospel in alleviating suffering in the local areas and the world.

The University of Saint Mary is a Vincentian university.

Rooted in the 17th century spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, the university makes practical Vincent's Gospel values of bringing people together for mutual spiritual, intellectual, and economic benefit. Groups from the university, scholarship sponsors, and civic organizations lead each other to find ways to break the cycle of poverty. The university empowers graduates to continue Vincent's work after they graduate.

The University of Saint Mary is a community. It is an academic community of students, faculty, and staff. As a community, the university strives both to teach and to be a model of what it teaches – of the humane, intellectual, and cultural values of a liberal education and of continuous learning and professional competence. As a community, it proposes to reflect certain other ideals: religious conviction lived out in behavior; Christian social consciousness that calls for knowledge, responsibility, and world vision; and work that strives to better individual human lives as well as larger human systems. As a community, the University of Saint Mary seeks those human qualities that nurture growth – qualities such as friendliness, simplicity, and respect for the individual person.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

USM's strategic plan, The Pathway to Growing and Thriving, was launched in 2023, and is currently undergoing a midcycle review. The plan focuses on providing the university with a roadmap to success in the current climate—while recognizing and honoring our history and mission as well as our growing population of First-Generation Students. Through this plan, the University of Saint Mary will be prepared to face the headwinds in higher education with financial strength by providing exceptional service and transformational education with competitive programs and facilities that give the university an edge in a highly competitive market.

The Goal is Financial Strength: Financial strength empowers the mission. As a small liberal arts university with many first-generation and low-income students, tuition discount can be significant. To maintain financial stability, the university has a goal of diversifying its revenue streams so that no more than 70% of its revenue comes from tuition. Achieving enrollment milestones and exceeding retention expectations are inextricable with financial strength.

4 PILLARS OF THE PLAN

- **The 'Saint Mary Way':** USM will build a culture of exceptional constituent service and hospitality while celebrating the Saint Mary brand. This effort will support the recruitment and retention of students (from prospect to alumni), faculty, and staff. We will build brand ambassadors and ensure positive net promoters.
- **Transformational Teaching and Learning Experiences:** High-impact practices are educational practices that research has shown to increase rates of student retention, student engagement, and persistence to graduation for all students across diverse backgrounds. USM will propel student success through transformative experiences and high-impact practices.
- **Provide Competitive Facilities that Support the Educational Mission:** USM will maintain historical infrastructure, modernizing aging facilities and new construction to support and enhance the educational mission.
- **Enable effective programming and resourcing:** Through positive programming and revenue diversification, USM will efficiently manage resource execution informed by plans and processes that enable long-term goal setting and accountability.





THE USM CAMPUS AND LOCAL COMMUNITY

THE USM CAMPUS

USM students learn at two campus locations - the Sisters' historic home in Leavenworth, and the Johnson County Campus - as well as across the country in online courses. USM also offers bachelor's and associate degrees through its Prison Education Program at Lansing Correctional Facility, the United States Disciplinary Barracks and Joint Regional Correctional Facility at Fort Leavenworth, and the Federal Correctional Institute Leavenworth.

The university's historic Main Campus sits on 156 rolling acres at the southern end of Leavenworth. The Front Circle, with its popular fountain, is the center of campus around which sits a ring of both historic and more modern buildings. The university's main building—Saint Mary Hall—features a namesake spire and is the original 19th century home of the Sisters of Charity. A recently renovated Mary's Grotto is a highlight of campus. Other major features include Berchmans Hall—home to cutting-edge lab facilities for USM's health care programs, including a Human Anatomy Lab—and the Keleher Learning Commons (KLC). The KLC has evolved from a library to a true hub of campus life, and includes the university's on-site, student-run coffee shop.

Further off the circle are several first-rate athletic facilities, including Berkel Stadium (football and soccer), baseball and softball fields, and the Ryan Sports Center. Three residence halls—home to about 400 residential students—sit north of the circle.

The university also features a historic brick road that cuts through a leafy and picturesque portion of campus.

LOCAL COMMUNITY

Leavenworth, "the first city in Kansas," was founded as a major trading area with access to railroads, trails, and waterways—serving also as a stepping stone for the settlement and opening of the West. Much of its early growth is attributed to the installation of Fort Leavenworth (the oldest active United States Army post west of Washington, D.C.) in 1827—while the city had a boom in population during the Civil War, becoming a destination for refugee slaves from Missouri and other surrounding slave states.

Leavenworth, in addition to being home to the U.S. Army Garrisons and United States Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, has many city parks and a variety of recreational, cultural, and shopping options.

Just minutes away is greater Kansas City, offering some of the area's best restaurants, entertainment, cultural opportunities, and shops. Nearby shopping areas include the Legends, the Power & Light District, the historic Country Club Plaza, and Zona Rosa. Kansas City International Airport is just 35 minutes away from the main campus.

POINTS OF PRIDE

- Recognized as a Princeton Review Best Midwestern College every year since 2005
- A top regional university for Social Mobility in the Midwest, as ranked by US News & World Report
- Nationally honored student Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) program
- Excellent nursing NCLEX pass rates; Honor Society of Nursing recognized by prestigious Sigma Theta Tau International
- Excellent Doctor of Physical Therapy pass rates
- Recognized by G.I. Jobs as a Military Friendly School; Yellow Ribbon Program participant
- Recipient of multiple federal grants, including most recently a \$2 million NSF grant to fund a STEM scholarships program
- On-site Human Anatomy Lab, regularly visited by a few dozen high school and college groups each year
- A decade+ of positively trending enrollment growth
- Nearly all USM undergraduate students receive financial assistance from the university. In 2024-25, USM awarded more than \$16.4 million to deserving students.
- The athletic department launched 20 new athletic programs since 2009. The Spires now offer 28 varsity sports and are consistently recognized as a National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Five-Star Champions of Character institution.
- Students are prepared for the workforce, with 70% of recent undergraduates completing an internship, externship, or clinical experience.
- Currently, around 35% of undergraduates are first-generation students. USM launched a First-Generation Scholars program in 2021 to help connect these students with scholarship opportunities, mentorship, and academic support.
- The Guardian Angel Fund—a passion project of the outgoing president—is a donor funded work-match program that allows the university to provide a 2:1 match on student contributions, up to \$3,500 a semester, to students with the highest demonstrated and unmet financial need.
- USM relaunched its Prison Education Program in 2021, offering degrees at Lansing Correctional Facility, United States Disciplinary Barracks, the Joint Regional Correctional Facility, and the United States Penitentiary, Leavenworth.

FAST FACTS 2025-2026

TOTAL ENROLLMENT: 1,582

- Male: 47%
- Female: 53%

BY LEVEL

- Undergraduate: 962
- Graduate: 465
- Other / non-degree: 155

OUR STUDENTS

- Race/ethnicity
 - Hispanic: 16.5%
 - White: 47.9%
 - Black: 12.8%
 - Asian: 1.3%
 - Multiracial: 5.2%
 - Unknown: 12%
- Catholic: 16.6%
- First Gen: 35%
- Kansas Residents: 55%
- 45 States and 19 Countries

AVERAGE AGE OF STUDENTS

- Undergraduate: 22.8 (main campus UG is 20.4)
- Graduate: 30.3

Undergraduate with Financial Aid: 91% of degree seeking UG awarded (89% using)

- Excluding PEP, 98% awarded and 96% using

OUR FACULTY (FALL 2025)

- Faculty with Terminal Degree: 64% of FT Faculty
- Full-Time: 94
- Adjunct & Part-Time: 194

NUMBER OF GRADUATES (24-25): 337

- 204 undergraduates
- 77 masters
- 56 doctoral

LOCATIONS:

- Main Campus: Leavenworth, Kansas
- Evening and Graduate: Johnson County, Kansas
- Several local Prison Education Program sites

SCHOLARSHIPS:

- 99% of students receive financial aid of some kind
- \$17 million awarded in scholarships annually
- Up to \$70,000 over four years for qualified incoming freshmen
- Up to \$17,000 a year for qualified transfer students
- Up to \$8,000 in departmental awards over four years





ACADEMICS

USM's academic programs—both undergraduate and graduate—are divided up among five distinct academic divisions: **Business & Information Technologies, Health Sciences, Liberal Arts & Humanities, Natural Sciences & Mathematics, Nursing, and Social & Behavioral Sciences.** The university is proud to offer smaller class sizes that focus on the individual needs of our learners. Classes are taught by nearly 100 full-time faculty and about 194 part-time and adjunct faculty. Full-time faculty also serve as academic advisors—providing expert guidance and building meaningful relationships, with the students in their areas of expertise.

USM academic programs, besides educating in specialized areas, intend to improve students' critical thinking abilities and communications skills. Main Campus undergraduate students are able to join an honors program; and students at all levels have access to service opportunities as well as internships or other real-world experiential learning options. All programs include real-world career-building activities.

The university continues to seek to innovate in academic offerings and programs. Business students manage all aspects of the on-campus coffee shop. High performing students vie for the chance to participate in the Spires Trading Team—which gives them the opportunity to support their tuition costs while working with local investment professionals as they learn the options market. A partnership with a local community college allows students to be dual-enrolled in a USM bachelor's program while earning their degree in a construction trade.

Specializing in Health Care Education

Responding to a growing societal need—and in an effort to further provide USM students with lucrative opportunities—the University launched a growing specialty in health care education shortly into the 21 century. USM developed health care programs at both the graduate and undergraduate level include:

- **Nursing.** USM offers a traditional 2-year on campus BSN program for rising juniors or transfer students, as well as a 1-year accelerated BSN program that is delivered in a hybrid mix of remote classes and brief on-campus residencies. NCLEX pass rates

are frequently well above the national average. At the graduate level, USM offers an MSN with Educator or Administrator Specializations, an MSN-MBA joint degree, and two Nurse Practitioner programs in Family Nurse Practice and Psychiatric Mental Health.

- **Physical Therapy.** USM's Doctor of Physical Therapy program was one of the earlier such programs to launch in the Kansas City area and represents a significant percentage of the overall student body (120 + students). Pass rates for DPT students are excellent, and the program has developed a strong local reputation.
- **Occupational Therapy.** The University's Doctor of Occupational Therapy is one of USM's newest doctoral programs and draws students from around the region.
- **Mental Health.** USM offers multiple graduate licensure programs in mental health, including a growing online Masters of Social Work program, a Masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, and a Masters in Psychology.
- **Other programs.** At the undergraduate level, USM offers a number of pre-health paths, including pre-med. Other standout programs include biomedical sciences (a 3+4 program with a local Medical School), human biology (a 3+4 program with a local chiropractic college), and medical laboratory sciences.

STUDENT-TO-FACULTY RATIO: 11-to-1

ACADEMIC OFFERINGS:

Over 30 Undergraduate; 10 Graduate; 3 Doctoral

TOP UNDERGRADUATE MAJORS: Business Administration Management, Nursing, Exercise Science

NEWEST UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR: Social Work

NEWEST GRADUATE PROGRAM: Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner



STUDENT LIFE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

USM is strategically committed to bolstering student success and improving student retention and graduation rates. The heart of the university's student support services is the Keleher Learning Commons (KLC)—formerly the De Paul Library. Students have access to a range of support services at the KLC, including on-staff campus counseling who can provide mental health support, live and remote tutoring, career services and graduate and career fairs, and workshops and skill-building sessions. Students can also take advantage of LinkedIn Learn programs. All services are available remotely as well to students at USM's Johnson County campus or online learners. The KLC facility itself features a variety of study rooms and huddle spaces to facilitate learning.

USM's student success program is proactive. Grade and attendance checks are performed regularly, and student success coaches provide outreach to students who seem to be struggling with aspects of academics or college life. Programs like the First Generation Scholars connect students with a variety of resources, including peer mentors, to help guide them toward success. The First Gen group meets regularly.

Student life features a variety of clubs and activities for students to participate in. One of the most popular—campus ministry—is welcoming of students of all faith background and experiences and seeks to help Spires develop spiritually.

ATHLETICS

Athletics is an essential part of the student life experience at USM, a significant enhancer of the campus community, and a bridge to a larger local audience. The Athletics department at USM is made up of 28 varsity teams competing in the National Association for Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) with the Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference (KCAC). Spires Athletics stresses excellence on the field and in the classroom and is focused on developing student-athletes into excellent adults. Saint Mary student athletes are routinely named as NAIA Champions of Character each year, as well as earn all-conference honors. USM regularly features near the top of the KCAC's Commissioners Cup standings, and, in the most recent year, earned 7 conference titles:

- Men's Cross Country (12th Consecutive)
- Women's Cross Country (5th Consecutive)
- Men's Basketball Conference Tournament Champions
- Women's Indoor Track & Field Champions
- Men's Wrestling Champions
- Competitive Cheer Champions
- Competitive Dance Champions

The Cross-Country teams, in particular, are often among the top finishers at NAIA Nationals.

ATHLETICS

NICKNAME

Saint Mary Spires—
named after the spire atop
Saint Mary Hall, the oldest
campus building

MASCOT

Spiro the Dragon

COLORS:

Navy blue and gold

28 VARSITY SPORTS

Men's

- Football
- Baseball
- Basketball
- Soccer
- Cross country
- Indoor track & field
- Outdoor track & field
- Wrestling
- Swimming
- Tennis
- Bowling
- Golf

Women's

- Volleyball
- Softball
- Flag Football
- Basketball
- Soccer
- Cross country
- Indoor track & field
- Outdoor track & field
- Wrestling
- Swimming
- Tennis
- Bowling
- Golf
- Co-Ed
 - Cheer (co-ed)
 - Dance (co-ed)
 - Esports (co-ed)



FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Through the strategic leadership of its Board, management team and campus community, USM continues to build upon its financial strength. USM's operating model provides sustainable financial resources for the future.

Over the past ten years, total net assets have grown to \$69 million, an increase of \$37 million or 115% and unrestricted net assets have grown to \$35 million, an increase of \$24 million or 204%. The endowment has grown to \$30 million, an increase of \$11 million or 57%.

USM is committed to maintaining a minimal level of debt, with the only long-term debt being \$2.7 million for a residence hall constructed in 2008. Most major capital projects are paid for through reserves or fund-raising. The annual budget of USM is \$31 million of which 65% is allocated to salaries and fringe benefits.

As of October 2025, USM has 447 Employees: 94 full-time Faculty members, 194 part-time Faculty members (this includes adjuncts), 135 full-time Staff members, and 24 part-time Staff members.

ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

Despite changing demographics nationwide, and some external voices questioning the value of higher education, USM has continued to grow its enrollment and market share over the past decade—both via retention and recruitment. To increase student interest, USM has both extended its programmatic and extracurricular offerings—including athletics—and improved its promotional and funnel nurturing processes.

As a result, USM's incoming undergraduate cohorts have been on a growth trajectory since the fall of 2013. Since 2020, incoming classes have numbered between 275 and 310 students, with high water marks in 2021 (298), 2023 (a record 309) and 2025 (301).

University-wide, the enrollment management operation has also made additional human capital investments, adding dedicated positions for health care program admissions and online program admissions.

A key effort moving forward is the implementation of the Saint Mary Way (SMW) constituent service project—a tenant of the university's latest strategic plan. The SMW approach is intended to help the university stand out from its peers, increase conversions, grow student and family satisfaction, and, ultimately, grow perspective student referral—a important step in a time of ever-increasing advertising costs.

ADVANCEMENT

With over 20,000 active USM alumni—undergraduate and graduate—USM's Advancement office seeks to celebrate their accomplishments while earning the financial backing needed to continue to support future generation of Spires in their pursuit of educational goals. Our high percentage

of students with financial need rely on the efforts of advancement.

Advancement focuses on expanding the university donor base, including foundation giving. USM has raised \$5.04 million in FY22, \$3.9 million in FY23, \$6.4 million in FY24, and \$4.5 million in FY25. Of that total, foundations have played a major role: FY22 - \$3.3 million, FY23 - \$1.9 million, FY24 - \$3.5 million, FY25 - \$2.7 million). The university has also secured many key federal grants, including a nearly \$2 million grant from the National Science Foundation to support STEM students with financial need.

The university's endowment has grown by over 50 percent over the past decade and now stands at \$30 million.

FACILITIES

The University of Saint Mary anticipates capital facility needs in the range of \$5–7 million over the next five years, aligned with the 2023/2026 strategic direction and a tailored 2025 Campus Master Plan. This investment supports a comprehensive portfolio of projects that address academic modernization, residential life, infrastructure renewal, and athletic enhancements. Priority initiatives include the creation of a new Interdisciplinary Simulation Lab in Berchmans Hall, the development of HyFlex instructional and large meeting spaces in Xavier and Mead Halls, the establishment of an athletic training center, and phased renovations to the residence halls.

These efforts are complemented by critical infrastructure upgrades, including transformer replacements, tuckpointing, HVAC modernization, and lifecycle replacements. The capital improvements are essential for preserving USM's historic campus, enhancing student learning environments, and supporting modest enrollment growth. Funding for these projects will come from existing reserves set aside for capital projects, pledges receivable, and targeted fundraising.





CURRENT LEADERSHIP

On November 11, 1858, the first group of Sisters arrived by a steamer boat to serve and make their home in Leavenworth. They had responded to the call of Bishop John Baptist Miege who invited them to “Come North.” About a year later, the community of 16 began teaching boys in one schoolhouse and girls in another, which eventually became “St. Mary’s Academy for Young Ladies,” the precursor to the University of Saint Mary.

The SCLs continued to expand their ministries to healthcare, social services, pastoral work, and spiritual development—focusing their time on service to the poor and vulnerable. Today, those ministries continue to be served by both the University of Saint Mary and the SCLs.

Under the 25-year leadership of current president Sister Diane Steele, USM has grown into an area force in health care education—developing well-regarded new programs addressing positions of critical need, from nurses to physical therapists, to occupational therapists, to social workers. Our graduates fill the ranks of area hospitals, attend preeminent local medical schools, and serve the greater Kansas City community in dental and medical practices.

During her tenure, the university also saw a building and renovation boom – most notably the Campus for Tomorrow capital campaign. Guided by Sister Steele, the Campus for Tomorrow effort saw the construction of a new athletic complex (Charles J. Berkel Memorial Stadium) as well as the complete renovation of Saint Joseph Dining Hall and conversion of the De Paul Library into the Keleher Learning Commons. Other major projects during her term included the construction of two residence halls – Berkel Hall and Steele Hall – the addition of a Human Anatomy Lab, and the conversion of Berchmans Hall into the university’s health sciences building.

The University is eager to welcome a president who can build on that foundation and who values the USM mission and the critical—yet challenged—role that higher education serves in our society.

USM embraces shared leadership through the empowerment of faculty and staff. A 7-member senior leadership team meets weekly with the president and features key leaders from across the University, including vice presidents representing Academics, Finance & Administration, Student Life & Facilities, Student Success, Athletics, Advancement, and Admissions & Marketing. The Faculty Senate approves and advances major academic decisions including program development and launch, curriculum changes, and general education requirements.



ABOUT THE PRESIDENT POSITION

LEADERSHIP AGENDA

The University of Saint Mary is at a crossroads in its history and presents a unique opportunity for presidential leadership. As the University embarks on this pivotal leadership transition, it is essential to acknowledge both the accomplishments of the past and the dynamic environment in which higher education institutions now operate. The next President will not only be tasked with upholding the traditions and values that define the University of Saint Mary but also with steering the institution through the complexities of a rapidly changing academic landscape. By leveraging the University's strong foundation and fostering innovation, the new leader will play a critical role in ensuring USM remains resilient, relevant, and responsive to the needs of current and future generations.

The University seeks an energetic, mission-driven and inspiring leader who will build on the success of the past decade with its unique contributions, expand its assets and increase outreach to surrounding communities, and communicate a compelling vision that inspires the campus community, alumnae/i and philanthropic community to advance the University's pursuit of an even brighter future. Key priorities for the next President include:

Develop and pursue a unifying shared vision for the future building on its mission and past success. A presidential transition is a significant change for USM that provides an opportunity for a fresh approach to strategy, vision and innovation. The university has made important additions and innovations, such as specialization in health care education, that can be built upon in an increasingly turbulent time in higher education where the value of a degree is under question. New technologies and the use of artificial intelligence will demand an understanding

of challenges and opportunities ahead and strong presidential leadership will be critical to lead into the future. Engaging effectively with a variety of stakeholders within and outside the campus community, the next president will develop a bold and compelling shared vision that will utilize USM's mission and strong identity as launching points for imagining a new future. The next President will have the opportunity to build on the current strategic plan, *The Pathway to Growing and Thriving*, and to collaboratively develop transformational programs for the future and new partnerships that will enhance USM's reputation and mission.

Reinforce and build on the strong sense of community during a time of significant presidential transition. The University has a distinctive and strong sense of shared community and belonging among students, faculty, and staff. There is a notable transparency in the community where information and data are openly shared and communicated in monthly university assemblies. Following a long-serving and successful leader, the new President will need to be a visible and present leader, apply strong listening and communication skills, while taking necessary decisive action. The President will be expected to continue to utilize the University's mission and values as foundational for all decision-making processes. The new President will inherit a seasoned and experienced team of senior leaders and will be expected to work effectively with faculty in a shared governance model.

Ensure financial sustainability and attention to facilities and technology needs of the university. The University is in sound financial standing with an increase in net assets, an endowment which has grown, a low debt covenant of under \$3 million, and a stable

ABOUT THE PRESIDENT POSITION (CONT.)

enrollment growth trajectory resultant from retention, recruitment strategies, and new programs that attract students. However, the University serves first-generation college students and low-income students, with 99% of students receiving financial assistance, and demands for assistance will only continue to grow.

Facilities and campus infrastructure also require ongoing investment and maintenance needs. While there are new buildings on campus, there are historic buildings on campus that need attention. There is anticipation of capital facility needs over the next five years that is projected at \$5-7 million. The current residential students have exceeded capacity on campus, and some students are currently housed in off-campus housing. The new President will be expected to build upon and strengthen the current financial position through fundraising and development of new funding streams to address both financial aid needs, facilities investment and technology upgrades.

Consequently, it will be essential for the new President to foster collaborative partnerships and strategic alliances—both within the university and with external entities—to maximize resources and address these infrastructural challenges. This proactive approach, combined with careful long-term planning, will ensure that the University of Saint Mary's physical environment continues to meet the evolving needs of its diverse student body, while also enhancing the overall campus experience and reinforcing the institution's commitment to academic excellence and student success.

Expand fundraising through alumni expansion and development of alternative funding streams.

Philanthropy and fundraising will be a high priority for USM's next President. There will be a need to expand the friend-raising and relationship building among alumni/ae and among foundations and the business community in both Leavenworth and the greater Kansas City area. With a shared vision and strategy for innovative initiatives for the future, the 10th President will have a platform to raise visibility and donor support and build on/expand long-term relationships with new sources of funding.

In addition to strengthening philanthropic efforts, the new President will be called upon to cultivate strategic partnerships and deepen engagement with the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, the sponsoring order whose commitment to USM's Catholic mission, history, and core values provides a vital foundation for the University's ongoing success. By fostering increased collaboration, open dialogue, and shared initiatives with the Sisters and other key stakeholders, the President can help realize innovative opportunities that support the institution's growth, enhance its impact, and reinforce its legacy of service, excellence, and community stewardship.

Collaborate and deepen the engagement with the sponsoring order, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth.

As mentioned above, the University and the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth both share a strong commitment to the University's mission, history and values as a Catholic institution, rooted in the traditions and charism of St. Vincent de Paul and the spirit of Mother Xavier Ross. The mission and the values of community, respect, justice, and excellence, permeate the campus community. As neighbors sharing a beautiful campus and property, and at this time of presidential transition and change, it will be important for the new President to collaborate, increase dialogue and work closely with the sponsoring order to fully realize the mission of the university and opportunities for shared generative strategy that will build on the past success and realize future opportunities that present themselves to address social, economic and environmental crises of our time.

This enhanced partnership will be instrumental in shaping innovative strategies and programs that support the holistic development of students, advance USM's Catholic mission, and respond thoughtfully to the evolving needs of the campus community. Through a unified approach grounded in tradition and forward-thinking leadership, the University of Saint Mary will continue to thrive as a place of learning, service, and spiritual growth for generations to come.

REQUIRED AND DESIRED ATTRIBUTES

To successfully fulfill these ambitious priorities, the next President must possess not only a deep commitment to Catholic higher education but also the ability to inspire confidence and unity throughout a time of transition. Navigating the evolving challenges of the higher education sector will require strategic foresight, resourcefulness, and a collaborative spirit that brings together diverse voices from across the University of Saint Mary community. By championing inclusive dialogue, embracing technological advancements, and fostering meaningful partnerships, the President will help ensure that USM remains a place where students are empowered to thrive academically, personally, and spiritually. This moment in the University's history calls for a leader who can balance tradition with innovation, safeguard the institution's core values, and boldly guide the university toward a future of continued excellence and service.

The next president of the University of Saint Mary must meet three criteria:

- A Catholic who supports the USM mission, vision, and values
- A demonstrated track record of leadership experience in higher education
- An earned doctorate or terminal degree

ABOUT THE PRESIDENT POSITION (CONT.)

In addition, the ideal candidate would also possess and successfully demonstrate many of the characteristics, skills, and experiences listed below.

- Excellent communicator with strong interpersonal skills; the ability to develop relationships and communicate effectively with students, faculty, staff, the Board of Trustees, the Sisters of Charity, alumnae/i and donors, and externally with the broader community.
- Bold, collaborative, and visionary leadership, including the ability to think strategically, engage with others, take calculated risks, foster innovation, ensure implementation, and build a culture of collaboration, transparency, and accountability.
- A commitment to Vincentian values and an understanding of the significance of Catholic identity and mission and how it permeates the culture of the University.
- Experience and displays student-centered learning; evidence of a caring presence and “heart” for students.
- Strong financial acumen and business skills, the ability to make and execute sound financial decisions, a track record of aligning resources to reach strategic priorities and willingness to challenge the status quo and make difficult decisions when needed.
- Successful friend raising and fundraising experience including developing philanthropic relationships with key groups (alumnae/i, foundations, community and

business leaders) and in partnership development with businesses, community organizations/foundations and other institutions.

- A track record of innovation, creativity and the ability to navigate change.
- A person of integrity and authenticity and a “servant leader,” who fosters trust, displays empathy, and demonstrates humility and a strong ethical compass.

Furthermore, the next President should be adept at fostering an environment where innovation and growth are encouraged at every level of the university. This includes cultivating a spirit of inclusivity and respect across the campus community, empowering faculty and staff to pursue excellence, and facilitating opportunities for professional development and collaboration. A forward-thinking approach to challenges, particularly in the rapidly evolving landscape of higher education, will be essential. The President must also be committed to advancing the university’s reputation within the region and beyond, actively engaging with external partners and leveraging technology to enhance learning and operational efficiency. By embodying these qualities, the President will play a pivotal role in shaping the University of Saint Mary’s future, ensuring that its traditions are honored while boldly embracing new possibilities for academic achievement, service, and institutional sustainability.





THE APPLICATION AND NOMINATION PROCESS

The University of Saint Mary is being assisted by Academic Search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications are invited and a conversation with the consultants is encouraged before the submission of an application, so they can share information that might be helpful in discerning your interest and preparing materials. If you are interested in the position, please arrange a confidential discussion by contacting:

Suzanne K. Mellon, Ph.D., Senior Consultant and Senior Executive Coach

Suzanne.Mellon@academicsearch.org

[Direct booking link to schedule a call](#)

or

Disa Mason, Consultant

disa.mason@academicsearch.org

[Direct booking link to schedule a call](#)

The search committee will begin reviewing applications in December. Though applications will continue to be accepted until the position is filled, only those materials received by January 15, 2026 are assured full consideration.

Applications and nominations should be sent electronically (PDF preferred) to USMpresident@academicsearch.org.

Applications must include a cover letter that addresses the leadership agenda, responsibilities, and qualifications described in this position prospectus; a curriculum vita; and a list of at least five professional references with an email address and a note indicating the candidate's working relationship with each. References will not be contacted without the explicit permission of the candidate.

The University of Saint Mary is an Equal Opportunity Employer (EOE).

ABOUT ACADEMIC SEARCH

Academic Search is assisting University of Saint Mary in this work. For more than four decades, Academic Search has offered executive search services to higher education institutions, associations, and related organizations. Academic Search was founded by higher education leaders on the principle that we provide the most value to partner institutions by combining best practices with our deep knowledge and experience. Our mission today is to enhance institutional capacity by providing outstanding executive recruitment services, executive coaching, and transition support, in partnership with our parent organization, the American Academic Leadership Institute.

