



Mercy Way

for these times...
and the future

Covenant 2022

**CONFERENCE *for* MERCY
HIGHER EDUCATION**

Covenant

Mercy Higher Education Covenant

Agreed to by the University of Saint Joseph, the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and the Conference for Mercy Higher Education.

Preamble

The *Constitutions* of the Sisters of Mercy regarding institutional sponsorship contextualize the spirit of this Covenant:

"As Sisters of Mercy we sponsor institutions
to address our enduring concerns
and to witness to Christ's mission.
Within these institutions,
we, together with our co-workers and those we serve,
endeavor to model mercy and justice
and to promote systemic change
according to these ideals."

—Constitutions 5

The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas have promised to carry out their mission and witness to Christ's mission in their sponsored colleges and universities. The elected leaders of these treasured institutions join with the Sisters in that mission, which is of immense value to the Sisters of Mercy and to the Church. A mutual recognition of that value and an ownership of that mission are the foundations of a covenant relationship.

Ex corde Ecclesiae, an apostolic constitution on Catholic Higher Education issued by Saint John Paul II, notes the following essential characteristics of the Catholic university:

Since the objective of a Catholic University is to assure in an institutional manner a Christian presence in the university world confronting the great problems of society and culture, every Catholic University, as Catholic, must have the following essential characteristics:

1. *a Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the university community as such;*
2. *a continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research;*

Mutual Commitment

This Covenant names mutual accountabilities for the Conference for Mercy Higher Education, acting on behalf of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, for the Board of Trustees, particularly the Chair of the Board, and for the University of Saint Joseph President; this Covenant defines each role in terms of responsibilities and functions of the University of Saint Joseph.

A renewal of this Covenant by the President of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, by the Chair of the University of Saint Joseph Board, by the President of the University of Saint Joseph, and by the Executive Director and the Chair of the Board of the Conference for Mercy Higher Education will occur in concert with the *Mission Self-study and Peer Review* conducted by CMHE and the periodic follow-up to that decennial review. The intent of this renewal is to strengthen mutual bonds, promote communication, and to enable a sustainable future for the Mercy mission within Catholic higher education. We – each and all– commit to a process of reflection, informed discernment and values-driven decision-making.

Mutual Accountabilities to Sustain the Commitment

As a ministry of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, and charged with ensuring the on-going attention to and further development of the Catholic and Mercy identity of its institutions, the **Conference for Mercy Higher Education** will:

- ❖ Support the on-going conversation about the role of the Mercy mission and critical concerns of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas in the educational mission of the institution via a resource-rich website, annual meetings, specific programs, cohort gatherings, and other forms of communication.
- ❖ Develop, foster and support, in concert with the mission officers, board orientation and formation multi-year programs that focus on the institution's educational mission through the lens of Mercy in higher education.
- ❖ Develop a program for the formation of lay persons for future positions on the institutional board.
- ❖ Ensure regular communications via biennial conversations with the Board Chairs and Presidents of the member institutions relative to issues of Catholic identity and the Mercy mission in higher education. The recommendations of the *Mission Self-study* and the *Visiting Team's Report* will inform these discussions.
- ❖ Schedule the institutional *Mission Self-study and Peer Team Review* on an eight to ten-year basis and schedule the five-year follow-up report following the full mission peer review.

- ❖ Participate in significant moments in the life of the colleges/universities, namely, presidential inaugurations, celebrations of Mercy Heritage, celebrations of Mercy Day/Week.
- ❖ Identify a CMHE representative to serve in the presidential search process for each institution.
- ❖ Design with the Institute Leadership Team a “missioning” of each president-elect as s/he begins a leadership role in the Mercy higher education.

As the sponsored institution desires to continue its Catholic identity in the Mercy tradition, the **University of Saint Joseph Board** will:

- ❖ Integrate the Catholic identity and distinct Mercy mission of the institution within Board discussions and decision-making.
- ❖ Perform the fiduciary responsibilities entrusted to the institutional board.
- ❖ Recruit, hire, evaluate and support a president who understands and actively supports the university mission as a distinct and separately incorporated entity, but also one that shares in the mission of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas.
- ❖ Ensure through the work of the appropriate board committees that the process of recruitment, election, orientation and ongoing education of trustees promotes understanding and respect for the religious identity and mission of the institution and the authority and responsibility that the Sisters of Mercy have to ensure this identity.
- ❖ Elect a board chair who is or who is willing to become deeply grounded in the mission and identity of the University of Saint Joseph.
- ❖ Ensure the institution’s participation in the Mission Self-study and Peer Team Visit and receive the CMHE Visiting Team Report on the agreed-upon cycle of institutional reviews.
- ❖ Participate in on-going programs designed by CMHE and the institutional mission officer to educate the Board on issues related to the Catholic, Mercy identity of the institution.

As the appointed leader of the sponsored ministry, the **University of Saint Joseph** President will:

- ❖ Affirm the Catholic, Mercy identity and mission of the institution as a key priority, in both word and deeds.
- ❖ Refer to the *CMHE Statement on the Catholic Identity and Mercy Mission* of member institutions as well as *Ex corde Ecclesiae* when developing new plans, programs, and policies.
- ❖ Provide opportunities for the campus community—students, faculty, staff and board members—to develop an awareness of the Mercy tradition and the legacy of the Sisters of Mercy. These opportunities are often expressed through celebrations of Mercy Day, through prayer and service opportunities as well as in on-boarding and on-going orientations.
- ❖ Promote and encourage the integration of mission and identity, as appropriate, in the institution's curriculum, programs, policies and practices through the allocation of appropriate resources.
- ❖ Ensure opportunities on campus for worship, spiritual reflection and a display of religious symbols that reflect the institution's Catholic, Mercy identity and encourage a culture of faith for all.
- ❖ Maintain communication with the Conference for Mercy Higher Education related to significant issues of Catholic identity and the Mercy mission. CMHE will request a biennial communication and follow-up in reference to the Mission Review findings and recommendations.
- ❖ Foster the relationship between the University and local Church authorities, especially with the local ordinary, by keeping these authorities informed about speakers, events, and key moments in the institution's academic and spiritual life.
- ❖ Participate as an active member of the Conference for Mercy Higher Education, particularly through the Mercy Presidents Council.

Implementation

1. The University of Saint Joseph Board Chair, the University President and the CMHE Executive Director will convey the significance of this Covenant to their respective members at their annual board meetings.
2. The President of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas (or her designate), the Board Chair of University of Saint Joseph, the President of the University of Saint Joseph, the Executive Director for CMHE and the Chair of the CMHE Board will meet biennially to discuss this Covenant and to share perspectives on the sponsorship relationship and the University's Catholic identity and Mercy mission. This meeting may take place in person, at the biennial leadership program, or by some other electronic means of communication and discussion.
3. The Covenant will be signed as new presidents assume their leadership roles and as the Mission Peer Reviews and follow-up reports are presented and discussed between the Institution and the CMHE Board of Directors.
4. Should additional conversations concerning the depth and breadth of the Catholic identity and Mercy mission at the University of Saint Joseph be required at any time, the Executive Director will notify the University President and Board Chair in writing as to the specific concern(s) that indicate a failure to meet the accountabilities of the Covenant and request a conversation and, if necessary, subsequent follow-up report(s) to be shared with the CMHE Board of Directors and the Institute Leadership Team. If these subsequent conversations and reports do not satisfy all parties, the unresolved issue(s) will be brought before the Institute Leadership Team, with a recommendation for specific action to be taken by the Institute Leadership Team. All efforts will be made to continue the institution as a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Mercy, but it is recognized that on-going sponsorship in Mercy requires attention to and the fulfillment of the accountabilities named in this Covenant.
5. Additional processes and reference materials are provided in the Supporting Documents in the electronic copy of the Covenant.

Covenant Signature Page

Having read the above Covenant between the University of Saint Joseph and the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, to be facilitated by the Conference for Mercy Higher Education, we, the signers below, affirm the importance of the Sisters of Mercy in exerting influence in their sponsored ministries of higher education, consistent with their call and commitment. We further affirm that the leaders of our Mercy colleges and universities are convinced and fully supportive of the value of the institution's Catholic, Mercy identity. These leaders are indeed partners in the Mercy charism in higher education. Together, we affirm this Covenant as a spiritual and moral guide to deepen a critical relationship that has endured over decades.

University of Saint Joseph Leaders:

Rhonda C. Free

President

March 19, 2022

Date

B. B. B. B.

Board Chair

March 19, 2021

Date

Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas:

Patricia McDermott H. Ryan

President

2/5/2022

Date

Conference for Mercy Higher Education:

Julia Cavallo

Executive Director

2.5.22

Date

Jane Gentry Ross

Board Chair

1/27/2022

Date