



URSULINE
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Ursuline Identity Assessment Process

Prepared by
Ursuline Education Network

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Ursuline Essential Characteristics Self-Assessment Process



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Overview

Ursuline schools exhibit strong belief in and faithfulness to their Ursuline identity and heritage. These hallmarks made an Ursuline institution strong and unique in the past, and certainly continue to do so.

Ursuline Education Network (UEN) exists to be of service to Ursuline sponsored schools by fostering collaboration among the schools, promoting the preservation and development of the Ursuline charism, and fostering educational excellence, innovation and global connectedness.

To that end, UEN is happy to unveil a self-assessment process that offers each Ursuline school an opportunity to examine its adherence to the Ursuline values and charism on which it was founded. UEN offers this opportunity for an Ursuline school to maintain and strengthen its identity now and into the future. Based upon the Ursuline Essential Characteristics that give an Ursuline school a unique identity that sets it apart from other excellent educational institutions, the purpose of this process is for the school community to deepen its commitment to those values. This process will also serve to strengthen the Ursuline culture and values of the school.

In creating this self-assessment process, UEN seeks to honor the particular expression of the Ursuline charism that each school has developed; while, at the same time, acknowledging the characteristics we hold in common. The process uses the wording of the Characteristics of an Ursuline Education developed in 1998 by the schools in cooperation with the North American Ursuline Educational Services (NAUES), today known as Ursuline Education Network. In the original document, these characteristics are listed as “Essential Characteristics of an Ursuline Education”. Again, this new tool values the school’s own expression of the characteristics, since it reflects the uniqueness of each Ursuline school.

Step #1: The process invites a school, using the “Ursuline Essential Characteristics 1998” document, to connect its expression of Ursuline values and charism to one or more of those characteristics identified in 1998. In so doing, a school can easily see how its own unique expression of Ursuline identity and culture is connected to our rich history and to Ursuline schools everywhere. We would also suggest that each school share its unique expression of the Ursuline Essential Characteristics with UEN, so we can share it with all the schools. Our interconnectedness is one of our strengths.

Step #2: The school then decides to complete the Self Study. In doing so, the school evaluates its faithfulness to living the Ursuline values as it has expressed them. We have supplied the Components of the Process in an attached document.

Step #3: The final phase of the process involves a validation of the Self Study Results and Action Plans by a Visiting Team comprised of educators from other Ursuline schools, chosen from a list of volunteers created by UEN. The Team will validate the school’s self-assessment, offer commendations and suggestions. This interaction will have a two-pronged result: it will strengthen the school that has entered into the process and it will strengthen the bonds among schools and educators in the Ursuline network.

Upon successful completion of the process, UEN will award a plaque to the school, and a letter of affirmation stating that the school is true to St. Angela Merici’s Counsels and Legacy, which form the basis for our Ursuline values and charism.

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the living presence of St. Angela among us, this process will be the impetus for Ursuline schools to “continue steadfastly the work they have begun.” (Last Counsel)

Ursuline Essential Characteristics (1998) And St. Angela's Counsels from which they sprang



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Below is a list of the Ursuline Characteristics compiled in 1998 by North American Ursuline Educational Services. We invite you to connect your own unique expression of the Essential Ursuline Characteristics to these. In so doing, a school can easily see how its own unique expression of Ursuline identity and culture is connected to our rich history and to Ursuline schools everywhere. We would also suggest that each school share its unique expression of the Ursuline Essential Characteristics with UEN, so we can share it with all the schools. Our interconnectedness is one of our strengths.

If you see students who are fainthearted, timid and inclined to give way to discouragement, comfort them, encourage them. If you see others who are presumptuous and afraid of nothing, instill some fear into them. Be concerned and careful to know and understand the behavior of your students and to be aware of their needs. (Second Counsel)

1. **Nurture the individual:** An Ursuline education fosters respect for the uniqueness of each member of the community and encourages the spiritual, mental and physical growth of each person.

You will accomplish more by kind words and a courteous manner than by anger or sharp rebuke, which should never be used except in necessity. (Second Counsel)

Remain in harmony, united together, all of one heart and one will. Be bound one to the other by the bond of charity, respecting each other, helping each other and bearing with each other in Jesus Christ. (Last Counsel)

Be gentle and compassionate towards your dear students. (Second Counsel)

2. **Form Community:** An Ursuline education forms and supports a nurturing family/community spirit.

If according to times and circumstances you should be obliged to make fresh rules and change certain things, do it with prudence and sound advice. (Last Legacy)

Have hope and firm faith in God who will help you in everything. Pray to God. Since God has entrusted this work to you, God will give you the strength to accomplish it, provided nothing is lacking on your part. (Introduction to the Counsels)

3. **Develop leaders who serve the community:**
An Ursuline school fosters servant leadership.



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Encourage your students to continue steadfastly the work they have begun. (Last Counsel)

4. **Academic Excellence:** An Ursuline education inspires academic excellence and intellectual curiosity.

Do something. Get moving. Risk new things, stick with it, pray, and then be ready for big surprises. (Introduction to the Counsels)

5. **Service/Social Consciousness:** An Ursuline education regards service as an integral part of mature Christian living.

Have hope and firm faith in God for God will help you in everything. (Introduction to the Counsels)

Comfort them, encourage them so that they may remain constant. Let them hold with absolute certainty that they will never be abandoned in their needs. (Fifth Counsel)

6. **Attitude of openness and optimism:** An Ursuline education instills an attitude of living in hope and trust in a loving God.

They should have Jesus Christ as their only treasure. May the strength and the true consolation of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (Seventh Counsel)

7. **Christian spirituality:** An Ursuline school, based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, nurtures spiritual formation, cultivating faith development and Catholic Christian identity.

Understand this, I am now more alive than when I was on this earth; I see more clearly and hold more dear the good which I see you constantly doing. And now, even more than before, I want, and am able to help you and do good for you in all sorts of ways. (Introduction to the Counsels)

8. **Spirit of St. Angela:** An Ursuline education emulates the spirit of St. Angela and instills Ursuline values.

Components of Self-Assessment Process



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PHASE ONE*

Preparation

1. Initial conversation between UEN and school administration.
 - a. It is suggested that the school appoint a steering committee
 - b. Set date for UEN to meet with the steering committee to preview process.
2. Meeting of UEN with school administrators and steering committee.
 - a. Review process and expectations
 - b. Set timeline for the stages of the process
 - c. Steering committee links school's expression of the Ursuline charism with the 1998 Essential Characteristics
 - d. Steering committee decides how best to engage the various constituencies of the school

PHASE TWO

Self-Study Process

3. School Community Meeting, led by Steering Committee, outlines/explains the process and the linking of the school's expression of its Ursuline charism to the 1998 Essential Characteristics.
 - a. School Community representatives in attendance
 - School leaders
 - Faculty
 - Staff
 - Board chair/members
 - Parent Club(s) representatives
 - Student representatives
 - b. Elements of the meeting
 - Energize the community about the vitality of the Essential Characteristics, their connection to the school's documents and the connection to all other Ursuline schools

- Give an overview of the process, including the role of UEN, the background of the process, the purpose, the steps, the timeline and the end result
 - Emphasize the importance of the contribution of all constituencies in forming the growth plan
 - Build ownership of the process and product among all
 - Ask representatives to communicate information about the process to their groups
4. Steering Committee plans an Inservice for a School Community-wide reflection process
 - a. Purpose is to have constituencies reflect on their lived experience of the Ursuline Essential Characteristics
 - b. This reflection can be conducted through small group conversations composed of members of the identified constituency groups, i.e. faculty, Board, administrators, etc.
 - c. Groups use Worksheet #1 – Self-Study: Strengths and Worksheet #2 – Self-Study: Challenges to record evidence of the school's expression of the Essential Characteristics and suggest improvements for each. Each participant will need a copy of Ursuline Essential Characteristics.
 - d. Compilation of reflections is given to the Steering Committee by the established deadline.
 5. Steering Committee analyzes the group reflections
 - a. Reviews all group reports
 - b. Prepares feedback for the groups citing areas that both indicate strong adherence to the school's Ursuline charism and areas that seem to require improvement.



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6. Steering Committee leads a school-wide reflection on results of the process to date
 - a. Presents results of school-wide reflection process, including areas of commendation and suggested areas of growth in the Essential Characteristics
 - b. Focuses on the areas the process indicated need most attention
 - c. Facilitates small and large group process to determine priorities
 - selects 2 or 3 of the Essential Characteristics that the school wants to focus on during the five year period
 - suggests goals, actions, timeline, person or group responsible for the 2 or 3 Essential Characteristics selected
 7. Steering Committee develops the School Growth Plan
 - a. Analyzes material generated through the school-wide reflection, especially outcomes and action steps for the Characteristics selected
 - b. Uses Worksheet #3 to outline plan for each
 8. Steering Committee presents School Growth Plan to various constituencies
 - a. Presents draft to various groups
 - b. Facilitates process to solicit feedback
 9. Steering Committee reviews feedback and revises the School Growth Plan
 - a. Takes all feedback into consideration, including the amount of energy and commitment demonstrated around the various goals, desired outcomes and action steps
 - b. Produces final draft of School Growth Plan, and determines what is feasible and has community support. Can use Worksheet #3 or some other format.
 10. Steering Committee prepares the Self-Study Document incorporating
 - a. A short narrative (1-2 pages) about significant events in the life of the school that have contributed to the strengthening of its Ursuline identity/culture
 - b. The process used to develop the Self-Study data
 - c. Worksheet #1
 - d. Worksheet #2
 - e. Worksheet #3
 11. School President or Head of School submits report to the School's Board of Trustees for their review and approval.
 12. School Administration/Steering Committee sets date and establishes process for Visiting Team
 - a. Consults with UEN in the previous school year to finalize dates and secure members of the team - 2 or 3 members, including UEN representative
 - b. Establishes schedule for Visiting Team members to meet with various constituencies
 - c. Sends members of Visiting Team the School Growth Plan and schedule for the visit
- ### PHASE THREE
13. School Visit
 - a. Purpose
 - Continue conversation on role of the Essential Characteristics in life of the school
 - Validate findings as reported in the Self-Study
 - Provide fresh perspective and offer new insights into living the Ursuline charism
 - b. Duration of visit: one and a half to two days
 - c. Components of Visit
 - Tour of school, meetings with Administrative team and Steering Committee
 - Meetings with 2 or 3 focus groups composed of various constituencies



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- Time for visiting team reflection and sharing of insights to build and compile an accurate picture of the school community and their awareness of the Growth Plan
 - Formulation of an oral report containing initial commendations and comments on the Growth Plan to be shared with Administrative team in private and later with the school community at a concluding celebration
- d. Visiting Team prepares a written report including commendations and recommendations and sends to school administration and Steering Committee within a month after the School Visit
14. School response to the written report
- a. Steering Committee and Administrative Team revises the School Growth Plan based on recommendations in the Visiting Team report, with specific steps and timelines for achieving designated action steps
 - b. Steering Committee presents Revised Growth Plan to the faculty
 - c. President (or Head of School) submits the Revised Growth Plan to Board of Trustees for approval
 - d. President (or Head of School) informs UEN that the process has been completed and the Board has approved the School Growth Plan
15. UEN presents a letter of affirmation and a plaque to the school, recognizing that the school is true to St. Angela Merici's Counsels and Legacies as expressed in the Essential Characteristics.

PHASE FOUR

Implementation of the School Growth Plan

16. The President (or Head of School) appoints an Implementation Committee to oversee and Coordinate efforts to implement the Growth Plan.

PHASE FIVE

Year one of next round of self-assessment process

- * Each Phase may be completed in a year but each school can establish a time-line that fits its schedule. A school can undertake this process in conjunction with its accreditation process.

Worksheet #1

Ursuline Essential Characteristics



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Self-Assessment: Strengths

Number and Title of Essential Characteristic

How is this Essential Characteristic expressed in your institution's documents?

Cite evidence that the institution is integrating this essential characteristic in its everyday life
In Curriculum

In Extra-curricular Activities

In Campus Ministry

Worksheet #1

Continued



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In Professional Development
for Faculty and Staff

for Board

for other Parent Groups

In Advancement

In Admissions

Worksheet #2

Essential Elements



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Self-Assessment: Challenges

Number and Title of Essential Characteristic

How is this Essential Characteristic expressed in your institution's documents?

What challenges/areas for improvement have surfaced?

In Curriculum

In Extra-curricular Activities

In Campus Ministry

Worksheet #2

Continued



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In Professional Development
for Faculty and Staff

for Board

for other Parent Groups

In Advancement

In Admissions

Worksheet #3

Essential Characteristics School Growth Plan



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Number/Title of Essential Characteristic

How this Essential Characteristic is expressed in the institution's documents

Challenge/Room for Improvement

In Curriculum

1 of 8

Goal/Desired Outcome

How will improvement be measured?

Steps

Timeline

Resources Needed

Person/Group Responsible

Worksheet #3

Essential Characteristics School Growth Plan



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Number/Title of Essential Characteristic

How this Essential Characteristic is expressed in the institution's documents

Challenge/Room for Improvement

In Extra-curricular Activities

2 of 8

Goal/Desired Outcome

How will improvement be measured?

Steps

Timeline

Resources Needed

Person/Group Responsible

Worksheet #3

Essential Characteristics School Growth Plan



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Number/Title of Essential Characteristic

How this Essential Characteristic is expressed in the institution's documents

Challenge/Room for Improvement

Professional Development – Faculty/Staff

3 of 8

Goal/Desired Outcome

How will improvement be measured?

Steps

Timeline

Resources Needed

Person/Group Responsible

Worksheet #3

Essential Characteristics School Growth Plan



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Number/Title of Essential Characteristic

How this Essential Characteristic is expressed in the institution's documents

Challenge/Room for Improvement

Board

4 of 8

Goal/Desired Outcome

How will improvement be measured?

Steps

Timeline

Resources Needed

Person/Group Responsible

Worksheet #3

Essential Characteristics School Growth Plan



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Number/Title of Essential Characteristic

How this Essential Characteristic is expressed in the institution's documents

Challenge/Room for Improvement

Parent Groups

5 of 8

Goal/Desired Outcome

How will improvement be measured?

Steps

Timeline

Resources Needed

Person/Group Responsible

Worksheet #3

Essential Characteristics School Growth Plan



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Number/Title of Essential Characteristic

How this Essential Characteristic is expressed in the institution's documents

Challenge/Room for Improvement

Campus Ministry

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Goal/Desired Outcome

How will improvement be measured?

Steps

Timeline

Resources Needed

Person/Group Responsible

Worksheet #3

Essential Characteristics School Growth Plan



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Number/Title of Essential Characteristic

How this Essential Characteristic is expressed in the institution's documents

Challenge/Room for Improvement

Admissions

8 of 8

Goal/Desired Outcome

How will improvement be measured?

Steps

Timeline

Resources Needed

Person/Group Responsible
