

ST. FRANCIS HIGH SCHOOL

VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT

FEBRUARY 26 - MARCH 1, 2006

St. Francis High School

Sacramento, California

Focus on Learning

Visiting Committee Report

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Thank You Thank You Thank You

The Visiting Committee thanks the entire St. Francis community for their hospitality, and for the warm welcome we received this week. We are especially grateful for the care and professionalism exhibited by the Leadership Team that directed this process.

In particular we would like to thank

- The Diocese of Sacramento and the Department of Catholic Schools for their vision and support for quality Catholic education to the young women of the Sacramento area
- The President, Marion Bishop and her Board, who were willing to take on the difficult task of redesigning St. Francis over the last five years
- The administration, especially Andreas Agos, Principal and his staff, who along with the Leadership Team made this FOL process a smooth and effective vehicle of growth for the St. Francis school community
- Mrs. Kay Gaines, Self Study Coordinator, who handled all the requests of our committee and made our visit enjoyable
- Mrs. Lori Dwyre, who responded to all of our technological needs and always assisted us with skill and professionalism
- The faculty and staff for their dedicated commitment to the assignments and meetings that made this process so successful
- Mrs. Ingrid Niles and Mr. Roberto Espinosa who provided us with delicious meals, snacks and desserts
- The students who continually demonstrated their dedication to the student outcomes expressed in the self-study to us through their friendliness, competence, love of their school, and values.
- The parents, for the love they give to their children, demonstrated through the supportive and generous partnership they have formed with the school community
- The benefactors of the St. Francis school community, whose generosity, goodness, and vision have provided the resources needed to provide the quality education and beautiful facilities we experienced during our visit.

Chapter 1: Student Community Profile

St. Francis High School is a diocesan Catholic college preparatory high school for young women located in Sacramento, California. Established by Bishop Armstrong of the Diocese of Sacramento in 1941, the school was first staffed by the Franciscan Sisters of Penance and Christian Charity, who were joined later by the Notre Dame Sisters. The school moved to the newly constructed Bishop Armstrong High School in 1956, and to its present site in 1964. In 1975 the two orders of sisters withdrew and were replaced by sisters of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus who served the school until 1999.

In 2001-02 the school adopted the president/principal administrative model that set the stage for a significant expansion of the school. In 2001-03, the Diocese of Sacramento began a capital campaign from which the school raised \$5.5 million dollars to support the first phases of a \$25 million expansion. This phase of construction was completed in 2004 and included a new performing arts complex, new science laboratories, a new gymnasium and fitness center, administrative wing, and library.

Located near Highway 50 in the middle of the city of Sacramento, close to two light rail stations, St. Francis serves a wide geographical area in the greater Sacramento area. Students are drawn from a number of key communities including Carmichael, Rancho Cordova, Arden, Arcade, Citrus Heights, Orangevale, Folsom, Elk Grove, South Sacramento, Land Park and the Pocket, and some from Roseville and Davis. These areas follow the freeway corridors, especially Highways 50 and 99 and Interstates 5 and 80. 58% matriculate from the Catholic grammar schools in the Sacramento Diocese, with 30% from public and 12% from private grammar schools. Between 1 and 2% of St. Francis students have documented learning disabilities.

Student enrollment increased from 787 in 2000 to 955 in 2005-06 and is projected to top out at 1022 in 2007-08. The school plans to remain 70-71% Catholic and to maintain or slightly increase its current level of ethnic diversity which is 68% white, 8% multi-ethnic, 11% Hispanic, 6% Asian, 4% Black, and 3% Pacific Islander. The school's ethnic makeup roughly approximates that of Sacramento County. St. Francis is one of the two most ethnically diverse Catholic high schools in the Sacramento Diocese. A slight decline in the number of Catholic school elementary students and the desire to increase enrollment has resulted in increasing numbers of new students coming from public and independent schools. The school has 400 applicants for the class of 2010, up from an average of 350 eighth grade applicants in the last four years.

St. Francis has increased tuition and fees from \$6,300 in 2001-02 to \$10,000 in 2006-07. These increases were necessary to offer competitive salaries and fund increased benefits, financial aid, and student programs. A sign of parent support has been the success of the annual auction, crab feed, golf tournament and other fundraisers.

Since 2001 the school has increased its financial aid from \$174,000 to \$465,000 for 136 students. Currently 15% of families receive financial aid as the school draws closer to its goal of meeting all documented needs.

Student Achievement

The students consistently perform above state and national averages on PSAT, SAT, and ACT tests. Mean SAT scores have held steady since 2000, reflecting a 75-point verbal and 36-point mathematics score over the mean for California. Student scores on the California State University Math and English Proficiency Exams achieved the highest combined math/English proficiency rate of 32 Sacramento area high schools. In 2004-05, 96 students sat for 185 AP exams with a pass rate of 90%.

The mean weighted grade point average for students ranges between 3.2 and 3.3. 81% of SFHS graduates enroll in four-year colleges, and 19% in community colleges. 27% attend the California State University system, 22% matriculate to a campus of the University of California, and 30% to private colleges.

Applicants take the Scholastic Testing Service (STS) placement test in January of each year. Composite scores for entering students since 2000 fall between the 66th and 69th percentile as compared to the national mean of 50. The school has included the goal of recruiting, enrolling, and retaining qualified female applicants in its action plan.

There is consistent evidence that the St. Francis community is fulfilling its mission to provide a quality Catholic college preparatory education for young women. Every graduate attends college and the faculty is generally highly qualified. The school has developed a strong religious studies curriculum and established a five person Campus Ministry team which serves its student population through a variety of prayer opportunities in the school day and a program of monthly prayer services, school wide liturgies, and a four-year retreat program. The St. Francis community participates in the life of the Catholic Church in Sacramento and the nearby communities. The school provides superb co-curricular programs designed to address the emotional, social, and physical need of its young women.

The number of full-time teachers has expanded significantly since 2000, with the biggest percent increase in the Performing Arts and Technology. Currently the school has 49 full-time and 18 part time teachers. Nearly all teachers in every department except Mathematics, have a major, minor, or masters in the subject taught.

The school chose 12 areas for goals and objectives in its WASC/Strategic Planning Process. These areas go beyond the normal WASC Action Plan and provided much needed guidance and structure to the major program and facilities upgrades that accompanied a 31% increase in enrollment since 2000.

In the last five years St. Francis has redesigned its governance structure, increased enrollment by more than 30% and initiated and finished most of an ambitious facilities improvement plan. The energy and vision for the future of St. Francis and Catholic Education in the Sacramento area has generated widespread community support. The Board, Parents' Organization, alumnae, students, and the Diocese of Sacramento provide

a strong foundation of support and expertise as St. Francis moves into the second decade of the 21st century.

Chapter II: Progress Report

What appear to be St. Francis' major changes and follow-up processes since the last accreditation self-study?

The St. Francis community's response to the recommendations from the last accreditation has helped to significantly transform the school. Evidence of growth and improvement in the school is clear.

Highlights of these changes include:

- The transition to the President/Principal model of administration
- The decision to undertake a Strategic Planning Process integrated into the WASC/WCEA Self Study
- The launching and completion of a successful \$5.5 million capital campaign and the second phase of a new capital campaign
- The initiation and completion of a major building project
- The development of new technology infrastructure and training.

It is clear that St. Francis has experienced significant growth and expansion and secured a much more stable and prosperous future as a result of its previous accreditation process. That process resulted in an Action Plan with four major recommendations:

1. *That the school community members establish a monitoring process of the schoolwide action plan, including achievement of the ESLRs.*

This has been addressed at faculty/staff meetings at the beginning of each year where progress on the Action Plan is reviewed. The ESLRs were also extensively addressed during the 2003-05 Strategic Planning two-year process. Students met in January of 2005 to study each ESLR in depth, to describe how the school supported each, and to make recommendations on how to improve support.

2. *A continued effort by the administration to explore better use, scheduling, and expansion of facilities, especially in the areas of fine arts, physical education, and maintenance storage.*

This issue has been addressed by the completion of a new performing arts center with seven arts classrooms, a new library, gymnasium, and new science classrooms. Additional phases of the Strategic Plan await funding in the future.

3. *Representatives from key stakeholder groups create an effective annual master school calendar that addresses the priorities of the curricular and co-curricular programs.*

The Assistant Principal for Student Activities in the spring of 2000 created a process of calendar building that has addressed this issue. Calendar meetings are

held in the spring involving all stakeholders. The calendar is built step-by-step, balancing academics, athletics, the arts, and co-curricular needs.

4. *The administration and faculty ensure that technology-assisted training and instruction is utilized appropriately across the curriculum to enhance the knowledge, skills, and career aspects of student learning.*

This issue has been addressed first in 2000 by the hiring of Director of Technology and a network support person. In the fall of 2002, a third position to support faculty and student training was added. The school has purchased two laptop carts for students and nearly 50 laptops for all faculty who wanted them and provided training and support in their use. Teachers are expected to post assignments on *eChalk*, which is also used as the email system. Twenty teachers have been trained in the *Intel Teach to the Future Program* and the school's new technology plan (2005-08) supports the expansion of hardware, software, and student and faculty training.

To what extent has progress been made on all recommendations from the last full visit?

St. Francis has responded to the recommendations from the previous WASC accreditation. The school has addressed major recommendations from the 2000 visit as well as other areas identified since that visit. There are a few areas that were partially or not adequately addressed due to the scope and time frame for these recommendations. Details about how these have been addressed are in Chapter III of the Self Study.

The areas addressed include:

- Strengthen the school's Catholic identity and ensure that programs, personnel, and activities truly reflect the ESLRs
- Provide additional support for SAT Subject test
- Strengthen students' commitment to academic honesty
- Align departments with the ESLRs
- Enhance the sense of community and collegiality among staff
- Maintain a balanced calendar and healthy levels of school involvement for students and staff
- Hire and retain qualified teachers
- Conduct a formal assessment of the goals and operations of the Development Office
- Increase scholarship endowments.

Areas for major emphasis 2006-12:

1. While the school has developed and funded its technology plan, faculty use of this technology for instruction and communication with students and among faculty is average for a school of this caliber.
2. Professional Development, while improved from 2000, is below what the school needs to help teachers and administrators advance to a level where student learning is impacted in an extraordinary way.
3. The major focus of a WASC/WCEA self study is the degree to which curriculum and instruction results in students learning at the levels expected for a college preparatory school. The Action Plan needs a much stronger focus on this area. It has 12 goals, which are twice as many as WASC recommends. We suggest that many of the Strategic Plan's goals that focus on enrollment, governance, facilities, and advancement become part of one Action Plan item about fulfilling the Strategic Plan.
4. Progress has been made on improving salaries. The school continues to lose talented teachers and counselors to higher paying schools. While the Board has expressed a desire to raise salaries, they remain considerably below average when compared to the public school salaries in the Sacramento area.

Chapter III: Self Study Process

St. Francis High School has clearly accomplished parameters one, two, and three. Parameter four (*The development of a schoolwide action plan that integrates subject area/program and support plans to address identified growth needs*) was addressed with great energy and care and has resulted in the transformation of the school's facilities and its governance structures. For a variety of reasons, this action plan may have too many objectives and need some clarifications. The fifth parameter (*The development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the plan.*) is planned by the leadership of the school and will need to be written into the action plan. We believe that by casting a wider net of accountability, the spirit and excellence of this school will be further enhanced.

This process appeared to be driven by the need to merge both the WASC/WCEA process and a strategic planning process led by a consultant from Catholic School Management. As such it produced twelve objectives that focused on many aspects of the school supportive of student learning, but not strict WASC/WCEA criteria. The Leadership Team will consolidate the plan into fewer goals.

I. Involvement and collaboration of all stakeholders in the self-study.

To begin the process the President, Principal, and Self Study Coordinator met to begin a strategic planning process in 2003, and then to integrate the WASC/WCEA process into the Strategic Plan. The self-study process was formally introduced to the school community in 2004-05 and surveys involving all stakeholders were developed. All members of the community met in home groups and focus groups to assess the ESLRs. Focus groups, home groups, and the leadership team met throughout the school year to analyze the evidence gathered, to assess various programs, and to identify strengths and growth areas. The leadership team, in collaboration with the home groups, completed the Action Plan in the fall of 2005. At this time the Strategic Plan and the WASC/WCEA Self Study were integrated, resulting in this twelve-goal action plan.

2. The clarification of the school's purpose and the expected school-wide learning results.

St. Francis High School has a clear statement of philosophy that reflects the commitment of the larger school community, the faculty and administration and the School Board to the mission and Catholic identity of the school. The Mission Statement was created in 1998 and revised and updated in the Strategic Planning process in 2004-05. Likewise, the nine ESLRs were created in 1998-99 and revised in 2004-05. It reflects the school's motto, *Pax et Bonum* (Peace and Goodness) reflecting the school's patron and previous association with the Sisters who administered the school up to 1975. The school community wholeheartedly supports its philosophy of educating the whole person and respecting the dignity of each community member in the context of providing a quality college preparatory education for young women.

3. The assessment of the actual student program and its impact on student learning in relations with the criteria and the ESLRs.

The ESLRs are derived from the ESLRs developed for the 2000-2001 Self Study. They reflect the richness of Catholic tradition that is part of the St. Francis culture developed from the different eras of its history. In 2004-05 every student in the school joined in a collaborative effort to identify ways they saw how each ESLR was translated into action at the school. They then suggested ways the ESLRs might be more effectively implemented. In the spring of 2004-05, the faculty and staff conducted a similar activity. It appears that the school has been working towards student achievement of outcomes similar to these ESLRs for many years. What is new for this self-study is the writing of the ESLRs into course descriptions and department handbooks, and their review by the Strategic Planning Committee.

4. The development of a schoolwide action plan that integrates subject area/support program and support plans to address identified growth needs.

The schoolwide Action Plan was developed from the growth needs identified in the focus group reports and the Strategic Planning process. It identifies twelve goals: Catholic Identity, Ownership/Governance/Administration, Enrollment/Retention, Curriculum, Co-curricular, Technology, Guidance, Staffing, Facilities, Finance, Advancement, and School in the Community. The Visiting Committee believes that this plan could be strengthened considerably if the Leadership Team reorganized it into the four categories of the Self Study as outlined in Chapter 5. We also suggest that goals and objectives in the Action Plan be written as supporting areas of curriculum, instruction, and student achievement. This would bring the plan into full alignment with WASC criteria.

5. The development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the plan.

The core leadership team developed the accountability system of the Action Plan as it considered both the growth areas identified by the focus groups and those identified by the Strategic Planning process. The current accountability systems for the plan appear to be vague in many areas. Conversations with the core leadership team and administration revealed that their detailed action steps and timelines for many of these objectives are available, but have not been written in detail in the boxes on the Action Plan. The Action Plan would fully meet the WASC/WCEA criteria if it included more specific data regarding the action steps, persons responsible, timelines and assessment. The success of this administration in implementing the last plan and the rebuilding of much of St. Francis High School gives us confidence that the school will achieve the steps in the Action Plan.

Chapter IV: Focus Group Reports

Category A: Organization for Student Learning

A1: PHILOSOPHY AND MISSION CRITERION

To what extent:

- has the school established a clear statement of philosophy that reflect the beliefs of the institution, a commitment to Catholic identity, thoroughness of instruction, focus on the needs of the whole person, and recognizes the dignity of all members of the school community?
- does the philosophy and mission reflect parents as the primary educators and teachers as facilitators of learning?
- is the mission defined further by the adopted expected schoolwide learning results that form the basis of the educational program for every student?

The statement of philosophy of St. Francis High School has been in existence for over twenty years and traces its roots to the founding of the school in 1940. This philosophy builds on the founding purpose of the school and its early history and traditions. The Mission Statement was created in 1998 and revised in 2004-2005 to emphasize the Catholic mission of the school. The current mission statement was the work of the Strategic Planning process (2003-2005) involving the principal stakeholders of the school. The Mission Statement has been widely shared with all of the school's constituents. The school's motto, *Pax et Bonum* (peace and goodness), has been re-emphasized and widely publicized. *Faith, excellence, leadership, and service* have been identified as the four pillars of the St. Francis community.

The nine ESLRs were created in 1998-99. All nine are based on the school philosophy and are meant to apply to all St. Francis students. They are reviewed each year for relevance and implementation. All course syllabi were rewritten in 2003-04 to incorporate the ESLRs. The school is determined, by virtue of its mission and the ESLRs, to exceed state standards. Recent work on the mission and standards also moved the school to add service learning to the curriculum. Faculty, parents, and students have responded positively to the ESLRs and their review is an ongoing project. The ESLRs are included in all principal publications and activities of the school.

The school states in the Self Study that parents are recognized as the primary educators of their daughters. The school's outreach to parents encompasses a wide variety of communications and activities: newsletters, emails, handbooks, mailers, retreats, educational evenings, parent organizations and fundraisers.

Areas of Strength

1. A strong school-wide commitment to the mission, philosophy and ESLRs
2. Expansion of communication channels within and outside the school
3. Widespread and enthusiastic parental support

Areas for Growth

1. Consider reformatting the ESLR's into a presentation that is more accessible to students as part of their day-to-day life at the school.

2. Continue to emphasize communication as a means of assuring that the mission of the school is widely understood in the Sacramento community and that feedback from all St. Francis constituencies is a vital part of the decision making process.

A2: GOVERNANCE CRITERION

To what extent:

- *does the governing authority committed to sharing the Catholic vision adopt policies which are consistent with the school's philosophy and mission and support the achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results for the school?*
- *does the governing authority delegate implementation of these policies to the professional staff?*
- *does the governing authority monitor results?*

The school is an asset of the Diocese of Sacramento. The Bishop is the head of the school and delegates general governing responsibilities to the Superintendent of Catholic Schools. The Bishop appoints the President of St. Francis and approves the President's selection for principal. The diocesan school mission is the foundation of the St. Francis mission and philosophy. After the Sisters withdrew from the school in 2000, the governance of the school was reorganized in the President/Principal model the following year. The school board is advisory to the President. The members are appointed by the Bishop on the recommendation of the President. School Board membership represents all school constituencies. The Board advises on major issues of school management and Catholic identity, recommends policies, reviews the strategic plan, and participates in the Bishop's evaluation of the President every three years. The Board created the twelve goals that form the core of the Strategic Action Plan.

The three primary adult support groups are the Parent Guild, the Boosters' Club and the Patrons of the Arts. Each group works with a member of the administrative team to build community among all constituencies and to raise money for operations. The presidents of the three groups form a team to coordinate the work of all groups.

The daily operations of the school are organized along the traditional model of principal, assistant principals and other delegates with specific duties. The Bishop appoints a chaplain who works with Campus Ministry staff to lead and coordinate religious activities.

Areas of Strength

1. Clear and effective organizational plan for administrative responsibilities
2. Increased number of administrative support personnel, allowing for greater distribution of responsibilities
3. An evaluation process for teachers and staff that is inclusive and provides effective feedback
4. Policies that have been developed in accordance with the school's mission, ESLRs and Strategic Action Plan
5. The twelve goals for future growth developed by the school board

Areas for Growth

1. Greater representation by faculty and staff representatives on school board committees
2. Annual refinement of teacher and staff evaluation processes
3. Creation of a staff evaluation process to give feedback and support for administrators, chaplain, and department chairpersons

A3: SCHOOL LEADERSHIP CRITERION

To what extent:

- *does the school leadership encourage the cultivation of Catholic values and the spiritual formation of the school community?*
- *does the school leadership make decisions to facilitate actions that focus the energies of the school on student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results?*
- *does the school leadership empower the staff?*
- *does the school leadership ensure shared accountability for student learning?*

The school leadership had made Catholic identity more visible over the past six years in programs as well as in iconography in classrooms and on the campus. Findings and surveys indicate a strong Catholic presence in the daily life of the school community. The school leadership encourages and facilitates the active exercise of Catholic faith and activities for the faculty and staff. The school day begins with a prayer over the public address system and classes begin with a prayer and student petitions. The programs and staff of Campus Ministry have been expanded including the addition of a full-time chaplain. Annual awards assemblies recognize students from all classes who, through their community service, live out the Church's social justice teachings. The Pax et Bonum award is given to a senior who best exemplifies *peace and goodness* throughout her four years at St. Francis. Fostering life-long commitment to service is central to the mission of the school.

The school's leadership has revised the Parent-Student Handbook and other school documents to include comprehensive written policies relative to diocesan, administrative, faculty, staff, student and parent practices and procedures. Policies have been clarified and procedures introduced for resolving conflicts. The campus realized increased opportunities for faculty and staff involvement in planning and decision-making as part of the transition to the new administrative model. The school leadership has invited the faculty and staff to collaborate with it in the organization and operation of the school. The school leadership recognizes the importance for excellent internal communication for faculty, staff and the administration.

School leadership has enlarged the technology staff and increased the availability of technology to faculty and staff. The principal's support for academic excellence was apparent in the establishment of two assistant principal positions – one for academics and one for student affairs. The principal, assistant principals, and department chairs share responsibility for teacher evaluation. The school provides in-service opportunities for faculty and staff and promotes professional development.

School leadership empowers the faculty and staff to think and act creatively in developing curriculum. Emphasis is placed on analyzing test scores, developing new courses, evaluating AP courses, improving reading and writing courses, and maintaining the quality of the Great Books program. School leadership's emphasis on promoting student academic excellence can be seen in the hiring and support of highly qualified teachers. The teachers are supported by the school leadership through delegating responsibility for implementing school policies; giving teachers broad discretion in program and curriculum design; providing a positive working environment; supporting professional development; and affirming and rewarding faculty and staff success. The daily block schedule for faculty, staff and students allows flexibility and better pacing for the multi-faceted curriculum. The schedule also allows for better organization for liturgies, meetings and other activities. Beginning with the school year 2005-06, most students may take a maximum of eight classes and no more than three AP classes each semester.

Areas of Strength

1. Across the board support for Catholic values and identity
2. Collegiality among school leadership, faculty and staff
3. Collaborative decision-making
4. Highly qualified teachers
5. Strong support for professional development
6. Support for increased technology for student learning
7. Across the board improvement in communication to and among all constituencies
8. Curricular decision-making guided by test scores and student achievement

Areas for Growth

1. Assess the terms, schedules and duties of department chairpersons and provide additional professional development and evaluation of their work
2. Expand the use of technology for teacher-student-parent communication and for student learning
3. Pursue increased teacher and staff compensation and benefits
4. Research "best practices" employed by other schools and non-profits for faculty and staff and implement as feasible.

A4: STAFF CRITERIA

To what extent:

- *are the school administration and staff qualified for their assigned responsibilities?*
- *are the school administration and staff committed to the school's philosophy and mission?*
- *does the school administration and staff engage in ongoing spiritual and professional development that promotes student learning?*
- *do the administration and staff lead by example and work to create a community of faith?*

The members of the school leadership and administration are highly qualified for their assigned responsibilities. The school leadership seeks teachers who are professionally qualified (masters degrees and/or credentials). Parents and students appraise the teaching

staff as highly qualified. Catholic identity is a priority for the school leadership. All teachers are required to complete diocesan catechist training. This practice identifies all teachers as sharing in the responsibility of Campus Ministry.

School leadership supports professional development for teaching and non-teaching staff and provides funds from the school budget when possible. Guidance counselors, librarians, technology staff and other support staff also benefit from the support of school leadership for staff development. Faculty and staff find St. Francis High School to be a positive working environment. They feel appreciated and supported by students, parents and one another. Student discipline problems are minimal and do not interfere with student learning or academic success. The faculty evaluation form was extensively revised from 2003-2005. This was a collaborative process between the administration and faculty. Philosophy, mission and ESLRs form the common goals of the administration, teachers and staff at St. Francis.

Areas of Strength

1. Implementation of Faculty Evaluation Process
2. Implementation of Non-Teaching Staff Evaluation Process
3. Graduates credit SFHS with fostering their spiritual and social growth and leadership skills
4. Strategic Action Plan that guides staff development

Areas for Growth

1. Continue efforts to achieve fair and competitive staff compensation
2. Research and implement “best practices” for employees and for student learning in the classroom

A5: SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT CRITERIA

To what extent:

- *does the school have a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that reflects the school’s philosophy and mission?*
- *does the school environment foster community and the achievement of religion and educational goals?*
- *does the school environment foster community and the achievement of religion and educational goals?*
- *is the school environment characterized by a respect for differences, trust, caring, professionalism, support, and high expectations for each student?*

The school has created a safe and healthy learning environment which fosters community and the achievement of religious and educational goals. This environment is characterized by trust, professionalism, high expectations for each student, and respect for diversity. The ESLRs form the foundation for all courses, Campus Ministry, extra-curricular activities, parent events and school service projects. The school provides personal counseling and referrals, help with conflict resolution, health awareness programs (addictions, abuse, STDs, etc.), and accommodations for learning and physical disabilities. Students are supervised by staff at all times. A multitude of activities and strategies are employed to promote an environment characterized by trust, respect, mutual-support and achievement. A specialized Safety and Security Team has been established to promote a safe and caring environment at St. Francis.

The school is committed to creating a Catholic Christian climate through the four-year theology curriculum; faith building activities such as daily prayer, retreats and liturgies; required community service; religious symbols around campus; parent participation; rules for student behavior; and role modeling by the faculty and staff. Faculty and staff enjoy one another's company and work well together. In addition to classroom learning, students benefit from teacher and parent organized field trips, Parent Lunch Days, hosting Japanese exchange students, overseas summer trips and other such activities.

Areas of Strength

1. Attention to safety and security
2. Parent involvement and support
3. Faculty and staff support for student life
4. Large variety of learning opportunities for students
5. Expansion and improvement of physical plant.

Areas for Growth

1. Explore additional opportunities for student leadership and formalize leadership training for all students
2. Develop the service learning program
3. Explore ways to further emphasize religious education in all campus activities and within the daily life of all students
4. Seek methods to enhance and broaden student involvement in all campus activities and improvements.

A6: REPORTING STUDENT PROGRESS CRITERION

To what extent:

- *does the school administration and staff regularly assess student progress toward accomplishing the school's expected schoolwide learning results?*
- *does the school administration and staff report student progress to the rest of the school community?*

The school uses diverse methods to assess student progress toward accomplishing the ESLRs and to report student progress to the rest of the school community. These include progress reports, report cards, parent contact via email, teacher feedback on student work and news releases. Teachers' methods for assessing achievement of the ESLRs include: tests and quizzes; long-term projects; student oral reports, power point, and brochure and poster presentations; teacher led discussions; close reading and student led discussions; daily homework; and group work. The administration assists teachers in assessing student progress by monitoring teacher grading; reassessing course syllabi; reviewing ESLRs; and improving efforts to meet the needs of lower-skilled students. The academic leadership works closely with teachers (especially those new to teaching) to develop individual and departmental resources and practices to monitor student learning. Standardized test scores are also used to assess student progress.

The Guidance Department intends to implement a plan whereby students and their parents can develop a four-year academic plan designed to provide preparation for

standardized tests and college. A greater use of technology to share student grades and progress with parents is planned for 2006-07. The newly expanded Alumnae Office and programs will enable the school to do more follow-up studies than have been done in the past.

Areas of Strength

1. Variety and consistency of assessments for learning
2. Frequent and consistent reporting to parents and students
3. Increased use of technology to maintain contact
4. Consistently high standardized test scores and GPA's that predict student preparation for college and achievement after graduation.

Areas for Growth

1. Increase/improve teacher/parent contact
2. Expand alumnae feedback
3. Assure strong academic preparation leading to high performance on SAT Subject Tests.

A7: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS CRITERION

To what extent:

- *does the school leadership facilitate school improvement which is driven by plans of action that embody faith formation and enhance quality learning for all students?*
- *does the school leadership have school community support and involvement?*
- *does the school leadership effectively guide the work of the school?*
- *does the school leadership provide for the accountability through monitoring of the schoolwide action plan?*

The school leadership is dedicated to school improvement in all areas detailed in the Strategic Action Plan and Self-Study. The annual review of progress in meeting Action Plan goals is a collaborative effort of school leadership, the School Board, parents and students. The many changes of the last six years forced the stakeholders to develop short and long range plans for development and improvement. The change to all lay leadership; the introduction of the President/Principal Model; a major capital campaign; the acquisition of adjacent property; the doubled size of the campus; growing student enrollment with additional faculty and staff; and the growth of other internal offices and services have all been achieved by dedicated school leaders who are guided by well-developed action plans and have the support of the whole school community. The ultimate goal of all this planning and building has always been to maintain a school founded on faith formation and quality learning for all students.

The school has in place a well-developed ten-year Strategic Action Plan that identifies twelve goals for the school to accomplish. The plan identifies the necessary actions, responsible parties, resources, timeline and evaluation/assessment mechanisms. The plan also identifies which ESLR(s) each of the twelve goals addresses. The school leadership effectively guides the work of the school by inviting all stakeholders to participate in developing plans for school improvement; putting in place a long-range Strategic Action

Plan; increasing faculty and staff participation in the work of school improvement; and incorporating the ESLRs into all aspects of St. Francis education.

Areas of Strength

1. Incorporation of ESLRs into all aspects of St. Francis education
2. Outreach to all stakeholders to participate in strategic planning process
3. Senior exit interviews and president's interviews with approx. 30% of parents
4. Principal's meetings with small groups of students to gain student views.

Area for Growth

1. Schoolwide commitment to the implementation and ongoing evaluation of the Strategic Action Plan.

Organization for Student Learning - Evidence

- SFHS Focus on Learning Self-Study Report
- Review of school communication vehicles
- Tour of campus and observations
- Meetings with WCEA/WASC Leadership Team
- Meetings with Administrative Leadership and Staff
- Meetings with Focus Groups and Home Groups
- Survey Results
- Information and Data, including Strategic Plan, available to visit team
- Formal and informal conversations with students
- Meetings with academic departments
- Informal conversations with faculty and staff
- Meeting with school board
- Conversations with parents and alumnae
- Classroom observations.

Category B: Curriculum and Instruction

B1. WHAT STUDENTS LEARN

To what extent:

- *does the school provide a challenging, comprehensive and relevant curriculum for each student that fulfills the school's philosophy and mission, strengthens Catholic identity and results in student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results through successful completion of any course of study offered?*

St. Francis Catholic High School provides a challenging, coherent and relevant curriculum for each student. As a college preparatory institution, the school outlines programs for students that allow them to enter college immediately following graduation, with 99 – 100% of students continuing their education. Ninety five percent of the seniors are eligible for the CSU system and 65% are eligible for the UC system. The Guidance Department attempts to monitor the progress of each student and communicates with the student and her parents. Students have the opportunity to enroll in Advanced Placement courses in many subject areas; in addition the school continues to explore additional AP

offerings. Student performance on the AP exams indicates that these courses are designed for success.

An additional academic opportunity for students is the possibility of taking some community college classes on the St. Francis campus through a cooperative relationship with the local community college district. Recent enrollment increases have led the school to explore additional support services and curricular offerings for students who may not be fully prepared to enter into the traditional St. Francis curriculum, even though they come from Catholic feeder schools. True to its Catholic mission, the school has sought ways to provide a program for these students that is challenging yet supportive, preparing them for life-long learning.

Since the last WCEA/WASC visit, new courses have been added throughout the curriculum. The current needs of students have been taken into account through the adjustment of content and methods. Technology will be integrated in a systematic approach to developing research and communication skills. The faculty in each academic department meets on a regular basis to review curricular offerings and evaluate possible refinements based on student achievement and grading assessments. Curriculum offerings and content are reviewed every year. Staff development, professional reading, and state standards are taken into account. A modified block schedule was adopted in 2004-2005 in response to student stress. In addition, students may not take more than eight classes per semester, with honors or AP classes limited to three per student per semester. PE offerings now include yoga and karate. Class sizes average 25, with some classes being held to smaller numbers.

Catholic identity is strengthened through the four-year academic curriculum in theology, the community service requirement, and many opportunities for faith-filled experiences. These opportunities include liturgies, prayer in the classroom, and curriculum studies that include religious and ethical issues.

Areas of Strength

1. The school mission and ESLRs are the driving force behind the development of academic policies and curriculum.
2. Students see their courses in all academic areas as preparing them for college and engaging them in interesting and effective learning experiences.
3. There is an effective, inclusive and organized approach to curriculum development.

Areas for Growth

1. Assure that all teachers are using opportunities for parent communication effectively.
2. Fully implement the technology plan.

B2. HOW STUDENTS LEARN

To what extent:

- *does the professional staff use research-based knowledge about teaching and learning?*

- *does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students at a high level of learning consistent with the school's philosophy and mission and expected schoolwide learning results?*

The school has employed a variety of professional development and other training opportunities to increase staff skills in research-based and active learning techniques. The use of the Great Books approach to critical reading across several curricular areas speaks to a student-centered, active approach to learning. The incorporation of small-group, cooperative learning approaches as well as peer review of student work in a variety of student disciplines is a plus, particularly in the all-female student body. The exploration of a service learning approach in some disciplines is further evidence of the school's effort to integrate relevant learning. Teachers use a variety of learning experiences to actively engage the students in the learning process.

Faculty and administrators are members of ASCD and have attended several workshops. They have brought these ideas to their classrooms and shared them with their colleagues. The school's desire to explore training in differentiated instruction and learning differences highlights the school's efforts to provide the best alternatives for all of its students. The Visiting Team's conversations with Focus Groups, Home Groups, and the Leadership Team indicated a strong desire, after five years of emphasis on new facilities and enrollment expansion, to redirect significant time and resources to professional growth for faculty, staff, and administration. This included the need to professionalize the role of department chairpersons by offering additional time and training in the areas of instruction, teacher observation and evaluation, and leadership.

Technology in different forms is widely used throughout campus. The school has provided training opportunities for faculty to increase use of technology in the classroom and is in the process of providing hardware (school-issued laptops) to facilitate the work and planning of staff members. The *Intel – Teach to the Future* program is being implemented at the school. Two faculty members have been trained as master teachers and are in the process of training other staff. The school's increased emphasis on the use of technology to support curriculum as well as to increase communications with families and alumnae underscores a very important learning tool for the 21st century.

Areas of Strength

1. Christian values are reinforced in all curricular areas.
2. Teachers give generously of their time and expertise to their students and to each other.
3. Courses are created or revised to meet the demands of students and parents for strong college preparation for all levels of students.

Areas for Growth

1. Expand teacher training in differentiated instruction and learning differences in order to implement additional effective strategies for all levels.
2. Provide support for special needs students beyond the current level.

B3. HOW ASSESSMENT IS USED

To what extent:

- *is teacher and student use of assessment frequent and integrated into the teaching/learning process?*
- *are the assessment results the basis for measurement of each student's progress toward the expected schoolwide learning results?*
- *are the assessment results the basis for regular evaluation and improvement of curriculum and instruction?*
- *are the assessment results the basis for the allocation of resources?*

There are many indicators that the assessment of student progress and performance is a major focus at the school. St. Francis Catholic High School uses teacher and student assessment in order to improve its programs. Teachers use regular classroom assessment tools (tests, projects, portfolios and discussions) in order to evaluate student learning. Departments utilize independent assessments (SAT I, SAT II, ACT, and AP exam results) to compare the school's unique learning goals with achievement across the nation. These assessments are aligned with California State Standards and the ESLRs. Individual student progress can be tracked regularly so that intervention can occur if necessary. School administrators evaluate average quarter grades given by each teacher and compare them to department and school averages. Administrators discuss significant deviations with department members.

The school uses the assessment tools outlined above to evaluate achievement of several of the ESLRs. Teacher observation, parent and alumnae feedback, and student evaluations help to measure the school's accomplishment of its ESLRs. The senior exit interview provides reflective communication from students who have benefited from the school's program. Students also have the opportunity to evaluate classes and sports programs, providing feedback for improvement.

Test scores and college acceptance data are followed closely. There are some changes being made in the AP and Honors program to allow younger students to take more AP and Honors classes. The school has gathered feedback from its alumnae regarding college preparedness.

The school's recent capital campaign, facility expansion, and increases in personnel and programs to support student program planning (Guidance) and development (Campus Ministry and health) all point to the school's commitment to achieving the ESLRs. The plan to create an Individualized Curriculum Program for all students is also a positive.

Areas of Strength

1. Assessments are frequent, used to evaluate programs, and are aligned with standards and ESLRs.
2. The teacher evaluation process has been significantly strengthened.
3. The school has created senior exit interviews as an assessment tool for achievement of the ESLRs.

Areas for Growth

1. Continue to assess the adequacy of programs for students with skill deficiencies and learning differences, for regular college preparatory students, and for high-achieving students.

2. Provide training for teachers in differentiated instruction to better meet the needs of a diverse group of learners.

Curriculum and Instruction - Evidence:

- SFHS Focus On Learning document
- Interviews with Guidance Department
- Interviews with various student groups
- Interviews with Principal and Assistant Principal for Academics
- Evidence provided by teachers
- Evidence provided by Leadership Team
- Classroom observations
- Interviews with Leadership Team
- Interviews with faculty members by department
- Campus tour and observations
- Interviews with Focus Groups and Home Groups (including parents and alumnae)
- Survey results
- Review of school communications
- SFHS Strategic Plan
- Meeting with SFHS School Board.

Category C: Support for Student Spiritual, Personal, and Academic Growth

C1. CAMPUS MINISTRY/COMMUNITY BASED SERVICE LEARNING

To what extent:

- *do students grow as persons of faith through appropriate and meaningful experiences of prayer, liturgy and community-based services learning?*

The environment at SFHS fosters the growth of students as persons of faith, which is commensurate with the ESLRs. Students have opportunity for involvement in the faith life of the school, including schoolwide liturgies, grade level liturgies, and retreat liturgies. The community participates in a daily schoolwide prayer, followed by prayer in most classrooms throughout the day. Spiritual retreats are offered to include all four grade levels.

Community Service is an important part of the experience at SFHS. This is a student led program with student leadership overseeing and directing its programs, activities and involvement of volunteers. Students are required to provide 50 hours of Community Service for graduation, and many also participate in other service activities through the school.

The school chapel has been rededicated and is available for liturgies, public prayer services, and private prayer. A Campus Life Center was established in 2004, which houses the school chaplain and the offices of Campus Ministry, Community Service and

Student Activities. The visiting team recommends that the school explore the interconnectedness of Campus Ministry with the day-to-day operation of the school.

Areas of Strength

1. St. Francis High School has a strong faith community that includes the participation of students, parents, faculty and staff.
2. Campus Ministry programs and personnel have been expanded to offer many new programs for students including expanded retreats for all grade levels and a full Kairos Program for seniors.
3. All students participate in community service and are encouraged to take leadership roles in contacting agencies, planning, organizing their peers, and carrying out their commitments.

Areas for Growth

1. Examine the demands upon the Campus Ministry staff created by the expanded retreat and Community Service programs to assure that students have adequate support and guidance in the various programs, as well as the coordination between Campus Ministry and school operation.
2. Expand the outreach to parish priests to create a bond between students and parishes.

C2. STUDENT CONNECTEDNESS

To what extent:

- *are the students connected to a system of support services, activities and opportunities within the school's community of faith that meet the challenges of the curricular/co-curricular program in order to achieve the expected schoolwide learning results?*

The support systems currently in place at SFHS are commensurate with the ESLRs. There are many different examples of support systems due to the school's Catholic identity, college preparatory orientation, and philosophical commitment to educating the whole person.

The school schedule was adapted to allow for assemblies, worship services and community lunch periods two days a week. Students may arrange their schedule so that they have a free period during the day in which they may utilize the library facilities, the Campus Life Center, Serra Court, the Guidance Department, and tutoring opportunities. Teachers have regular preparation periods to work collaboratively and tutor students.

The Guidance Department provides guidance in personal, academic, and college counseling. One counselor specializes in crisis and personal counseling of students. Counselors also work with parents to find outside resources for students, depending on the needs. Counselors are to be commended for the care and concern they demonstrate to students despite difficult circumstances (relocation of facilities, technological challenges, and loss of personnel in midyear).

Library and technology support services as well as academic and spiritual leadership services are readily available to students.

Many students are involved in athletics, with over half of the students participating in at least one of the twelve sports offered. Intramural sports are offered through the office of Student Activities.

Areas of Strength

1. Student spiritual services
2. Meeting places available and accessible to students
3. Library support services
4. The range of co-curricular programs available to students.

Areas for Growth

1. Offer greater support for students with special needs.
2. Place greater emphasis on support for the Guidance Department in order to attract and retain highly qualified counselors.
3. Ensure completion of ceiling-to-floor walls in the Counseling Center to ensure privacy for students receiving counseling.
4. Provide support and training to counselors and all academic support staff in the use of Education Edge and other web-based counseling services.
5. Increase efforts to educate students and families about healthy life choices.

C3. PARENT/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

To what extent:

- *does the school leadership employ a wide range of strategies to ensure that parental and community involvement is integral to the school's established support system for students?*

The school employs various strategies to involve parents and other community members in support of the school. Parents are recognized as partners with the school in the academic, moral, and spiritual development of students. Parents and other community members are involved in advisory groups, volunteer services, fundraising, and developmental efforts.

The leadership at St. Francis embraces parental involvement as an integral part of school life as evidenced by the following:

- Family Liturgies
- Parent Evenings
- Auctions and other fund raisers
- School publications for parents
- Parent Service Program
- Parental involvement in the Focus on Learning process

Areas of Strength

1. The school offers parents a variety of opportunities to be involved in the spiritual, academic, and extra-curricular lives of their daughters.
2. Parents offer enthusiastic support for school programs, pledging time, talent, and financial support that allow the school to offer its many student programs.

Area for Growth

1. Seek ways to balance the many offerings of the school for parent involvement with the demands of family life.

Support for Student Spiritual, Personal, and Academic Growth - Evidence

- SFHS FOL Document
- Interview with Guidance Department
- Interviews with parents
- Interviews with Focus Groups and Home Groups
- Interviews with administration, faculty, and staff
- Leadership Team attendance at Ash Wednesday Liturgy
- Interviews with Campus Ministry staff
- Interviews with SFHS Leadership Team
- Campus Tour and observations by Visiting Team
- Interviews with various student groups
- Campus tour and observation by Visiting Team of existing facilities
- Evidence provided by faculty and Leadership Team

Category D. Resource Management and Development

D1: RESOURCES CRITERION

To what extent:

- *does the school demonstrate responsible stewardship?*
- *are the resources available to the school sufficient to sustain the school program and effectively used to carry out the school's philosophy and mission and student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results?*

The school clearly demonstrates responsible stewardship. The change to an all-lay leadership and staff in 2000 and the introduction of the President/Principal model the following year forced the administration to be creative and daring in assembling the resources and building the financial model for the expansion of the school. The financial planning and administration of the school is well organized and collaborative in execution. The President, Principal, School Board, and Finance Committee work together to assure the financial well being of the school. The Director of Finance consults with the Diocese on important financial matters such as tuition, budget, teacher salaries, loans and large expenditures. The cornerstone of the school's financial management is the ten-year financial plan developed in 2002. The operations of the finance department were completely upgraded in 2001 – personnel were added, new accounting software and a new system of tuition collection was introduced, and a reorganized budgeting system was established.

The financial management of the school is directly influenced by the philosophy, mission and ESLRs. The school's mission and assessment of learning results influence resource allocation decisions. The most visible example of this is the use of school resources in the completion of a \$25 million campus expansion to build new facilities and renovate existing facilities to enhance all areas of student life. A Capital Improvements Plan has been adopted to continue campus build-out through 2014. The long-range resources plan includes the acquisition of property, currently owned by the State of California, adjacent to the campus.

Finances are allocated in a manner consistent with the purpose of the school and student learning expectations. Where assessment indicates needed improvements requiring additional resources, departments make recommendations to the administration or include resources in annual budget requests. This process has resulted in additional teaching positions, expanded athletic team offerings, and increased extracurricular activities. The greatest growth in recent years has been in the area of non-teaching positions. The creation of the President's Office and the expansion of Finance and Development to address the long-term growth of the school have resulted in eight new positions in the past three years.

In all areas, the school allocates finances in a manner consistent with its purpose. These include the spiritual development of students, the quality of academic programs, co-curricular offerings, and excellence in the arts and athletics. The dramatic expansion of the campus in the last several years addressed many of the needs in these areas.

The persons responsible for the management of resources have been diligent in their efforts to improve the salary and benefits program for employees. It is the intent of the school to acquire, maintain and develop a well-qualified staff. Resources have been allocated to create schoolwide programs serving the needs of the whole student. These include student health and safety, Community Service, and Campus Ministry. Resources have also been allocated to an additional 62,000 square feet of new facilities as well as technology development, an expanded and well-qualified maintenance department, campus safety, and additional instructional materials.

Areas of Strength

1. The sound and effective financial structure of the school
2. The use of resources to expand and build out the campus
3. The use of resources to provide the best possible education for students
4. Increased use of NCLB funds for faculty development.

Areas for Growth

1. Complete the Procedures and Policy Manual for the Finance Department
2. Continue to manage parking lot traffic flow
3. Plan for long-range technology needs
4. Continue to work on compensation issues

5. Continue outreach to corporations and other entities to increase services and materials.

D2: RESOURCE PLANNING CRITERION

To what extent:

- *Do the governing authority and the school execute responsible resource planning for the future?*

The school has conducted an extensive resource planning process for the future. Catholic School Management was contracted in 2002 to guide the school through a strategic planning process. All stakeholders participated in a process to identify the needs of the school and to create the Strategic Action Plan. The school has developed a ten-year financial plan, doubled the size of the campus, constructed and refurbished several buildings, and studied available demographic statistics in preparing projections for future enrollment. The school is attentive to the requirements of the diocese for attention to the needs of Catholic families in the Sacramento area and for sound fiscal planning and for building endowments. St. Francis High School's plans are consistent with the diocesan vision.

Areas of Strength

1. A ten-year financial plan which provides a sound framework for decision making
2. Collaboration in resource allocation and financial planning
3. A strategy for the allocation of resources which is driven by the mission of the school.

Area for Growth

1. Continue to reevaluate the assumptions in the financial plan

D3: SCHOOL FINANCES RESOURCES CRITERION

To what extent:

- *are the school's financial resources adequate to fulfill its mission and programs?*
- *are the school's financial operations conducted with integrity and in accordance with acceptable accounting practices?*

The school's financial resources are adequate to fulfill its mission and programs. The school's financial operations are conducted with integrity and in accordance with acceptable accounting practices. The school's budget is mission and program driven. The school is audited annually according to generally accepted auditing standards.

Area of Strength

1. The school's budget is balanced.

Areas for Growth

1. Create and implement a process of documenting verbal pledges for donations
2. Explore strategies to increase endowment in order to ensure the long-term financial viability of the school.
3. Fully explore all options to enhance on-campus athletic field space and facilities.

D4: ENROLLMENT RESOURCE CRITERION

To what extent:

- *are the school's admissions policies and procedures consistent with its philosophy?*
- *are the school's marketing, recruitment, and public relations efforts effective in attracting qualified students?*
- *is enrollment targeted to maintain effective and meaningful curricular and co-curricular programs that meet the philosophy and goal expectations of the school?*

The school's admissions policies and procedures are consistent with its philosophy. The school's marketing, recruitment, and public relations efforts are effective in attracting qualified students. The enrollment is targeted to maintain effective and meaningful curricular and co-curricular programs that meet the philosophy and goal expectations of the school. The school's admissions policies and procedures are designed to attract young women representative of the diversity within the diocese. The school also seeks young women who desire the type of educational experience St. Francis provides and who will successfully accomplish the ESLRs.

The Admissions Office is well supported by the administration and Finance Office. The Admissions Office provides the usual array of activities and informational materials needed by families and potential applicants. The school requires the HSPT and interviews each applicant and her parents as part of the application process. Providing families with information regarding available financial aid is a key piece of the admissions office's outreach to families.

Area of Strength

1. The school maintains its high regard in the community and attracts adequate numbers of applicants to assure the fulfillment of budgetary and enrollment goals.

Areas for Growth

1. Increase funds for financial aid
2. Study demographic data and adapt recruitment efforts accordingly
3. Provide a program for students entering with skills below the diocesan competency standards and investigate the need for a resource specialist.

D5: DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES CRITERION

To what extent:

- *has the school an effective development/fundraising program that is consistent with school philosophy?*
- *is there evidence of development planning?*

The school has an effective development/fundraising program that is consistent with the school philosophy. There is ample evidence of development planning. The school has allocated resources to enhance the organization and effectiveness of development efforts, which are consistent with the school philosophy. The Advancement Office is well equipped and staffed. Catholic School Management assisted the school with development planning in 2003-04 and 2004-05. The Advancement Office continues

efforts to strengthen annual fundraising, increase parent and alumnae involvement in volunteer activities and giving, and cultivate the support of local businesses. The school is planning a capital campaign in 2006-07 to pay down the expansion debt, provide funding for remaining campus expansion projects, increase endowment and purchase of adjacent property. The school has experienced a welcome increase in alumnae support in recent years. Monies raised by the alumnae are traditionally targeted for financial aid. The Advancement Office sponsors a wide variety of events and sends the *Pax et Bonum* magazine twice a year to current families, past parents, alumnae and friends of the school. Other newsletters and bulletins are used to publicize projects and events. Email has been added to the list of outreach methods to parents, alumnae and others. Overall, the Advancement Office is growing and finding new ways to increase the resources available to the school.

Areas of Strength

1. The school has increased development efforts resulting in more individuals involved in the planning process and increased donations.
2. The school continues to search for efficient and effective use of funding to best serve students
3. The school is highly regarded in the community.

Areas for Growth

1. Continue to improve development strategies and programs to maximize donations from all sources.
2. Increase efforts to educate the community about the mission of the school and the need for financial support
3. Increase efforts, within the Advancement Office, to reach alumnae
4. Increase efforts to solicit support from area businesses and corporations.

Resource Management and Development - Evidence

- SFHS Focus on Learning Self-Study Report
- Review of school communication vehicles
- Tour of campus and observations
- Meetings with WCEA/WASC Leadership Team
- Meetings with Administrative Leadership and Staff
- Meetings with Focus Groups and Home Groups
- Survey Results
- Information and Data, including Strategic Plan, available to visit team
- Formal and informal conversations with students
- Meetings with academic departments
- Informal conversations with faculty and staff
- Meeting with the School Board
- Conversations with parents and alumnae
- Classroom observations.

Quality of School's Programs

General Comments

The Visiting Committee commends the school for responding to and going beyond the recommendations of the last accreditation process. Evidence points to the involvement of the entire school community in the process of school improvement. The process leading up to this WASC/WCEA visit has reinforced the pattern of honest self-evaluation and growth. The extensive self-study, as well as on-campus interviews with representatives from every sector of the school community, indicate the school's clear understanding of its mission, goals, purpose, and affect on the lives of students.

The important evidence that supports both the schoolwide areas of strength and the critical areas for follow-up include: the school's extensive self-study, meetings with the Leadership Team, schoolwide focus groups, home groups, students, the School Board, and individual stakeholders; observations of all classrooms and school areas, (library, visual and performing arts areas, computer lab, athletic facilities, campus life center, counseling, cafeteria, admissions, administrative offices). As the school community completes the first part of its major building project, its ability to fulfill its mission, priorities, and plans for the future have been enhanced.

Schoolwide Areas of Strength

A: Organization for Student Learning

1. Energized, involved, enthusiastic students, who value their experience at St. Francis High School.
2. The commitment of the entire St. Francis High School community to its Catholic identity.
3. The vision, leadership, and planning skills of the President and her administrative team and their commitment to student achievement of the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results.

B: Curriculum and Instruction

4. A dedicated, caring, professional and generous faculty and staff, who provide a challenging, coherent, and relevant curriculum for student achievement of the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results.
5. A cohesive and challenging college preparatory curriculum that reflects the mission and principles of the school, and facilitates the achievement of the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results.

6. A comprehensive and high quality performing and visual arts program that is strongly supported by the school community and focused on student learning.

C: Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

7. Parents who are committed to quality education for their daughters and are involved in a myriad of ways in the activities of the school.
8. The integration of genuine faith experiences into students' lives, and the encouragement and enablement of students to lead their peers in worship, service, retreats, activities, and athletics.
9. A community supported athletic program that is focused on athletic excellence, student participation, and the fostering of school spirit.
10. The rich and diverse co-curricular activities such as those promoting student leadership and service, academic teams, and student-created clubs.

D: Resource Management and Development

11. A commitment to develop the resources necessary to accomplish the school's goals.

Schoolwide critical issues for follow-up:

The visiting Committee concurs with the schools identified areas that are outlined in the schoolwide Action Plan. These are summarized below:

1. That the school leadership team and Development Office explore strategies to increase the percent of current and past parents and alumnae who contribute to the Annual Fund and endowment.
2. That the school leadership annually reassess and revise a comprehensive plan to strengthen guidance and counseling services in the long-range areas of counselor retention and college counseling. In addition we recommend that the school resolve issues such as ongoing training and technological support, enhanced communication between the registrar and the Guidance Department, and the construction of appropriate private counseling spaces.
3. That the school leadership and the School Board lead the school community in implementing a unified Action Plan derived from the Strategic Planning and Self Study processes as revised by the Leadership Team between March 1, 2006 and June 30, 2006.
4. That the school leadership team develop and implement a comprehensive technology master plan that assures the integration of technology into all aspects

of the school as outlined in the Action Plan.

5. That the school leadership increase efforts to emphasize processes that decrease stress and promote emotional and physical health in accordance with the ESLRs.

In addition the Visiting Committee has identified the following areas that need to be strengthened:

6. That the school leadership offer additional support for research-based professional development in the areas of instruction, curriculum development, and technology for teachers, counselors, and administrators.
7. That the school leadership provide additional time and professional development to department chairs in the areas of leadership and teacher observation and evaluation.
8. That the school leadership explore ways to increase the interconnectedness of Campus Ministry with the core leadership processes in accordance with the Action Plan to strengthen its Catholic Identity.

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Chapter V:

On-Going School Improvement

The schoolwide Action Plan was developed from the growth needs identified in the focus group reports and the Strategic Planning process. It identified twelve goals: Catholic Identity, Ownership/Governance/Administration, Enrollment/Retention, Curriculum, Co-curricular, Technology, Guidance, Staffing, Facilities, Finance, Advancement, and School in the Community. Each goal is followed by a series of objectives and the sections required by the FOL Accreditation Manual (p.28). The Action Plan does not have an introductory section that describes the plan.

Do the action plan sections address the *critical areas for follow-up*?

The Visiting Committee believes that the Self Study does address many of the *critical areas for follow-up* identified in their Self Study. The areas for growth of the Schoolwide Action Plan were chosen by the Leadership Team to address the growth areas identified in the focus group reports and the Strategic Planning Process. Besides curriculum and instruction, the plan addresses a wide range of needs supportive of student learning in the areas of Ownership/Governance, Enrollment/Retention, Advancement, Staffing, Facilities, and Finance. We suggest that these needs be placed under the category of Resource Management and Development. The Committee believes that this action plan will address the critical areas for follow-up when it is revised as outlined below.

Will the action plan steps enhance student learning?

There is no question that the action plan steps will enhance student learning in the identified areas of Catholic identity, curriculum, special needs, technology, and co-curricular. The Visiting team notes that there was no mention of support for research-based instruction or research-based professional development in the areas of curriculum and instruction in the Action Plan. The Visiting committee believes that these areas are foundational to student learning and that the action plan would be strengthened by their inclusion. The Self Study does include the need to support professional development in these areas in the "Areas for Growth" on p. 59.

Is the action plan a "user friendly" schoolwide action plan that has integrated all major school initiatives?

The Visiting Committee believes that this plan will be more user friendly while continuing to integrate all major schoolwide initiatives with two significant adjustments that bring the plan into full alignment with the WASC/WCEA criteria: First, that the Leadership Team take some or all of the goals in the area of Resources and Development and place them in that category. Second, that the *Curriculum* goal be reworked to offer greater support for programs that directly effect student learning. These may include areas such as research-based instruction and professional development, assessment, and processes similar to *Backward Design* (Understanding by Design, by J. McTighe)

curriculum development. These research-based practices would assist faculty in the delivery of curricula designed to improve student learning tied to clear standards.

Is the Action Plan feasible within existing resources?

The Visiting Committee sees clear evidence in our visit and in the Self Study of the ability of the school to gather and provide the resources to carry out this plan. We note that the major emphasis these last six years has been to provide the energy, and personal and financial resources for the implementation of the President/Principal Model, major new buildings, and a 30% increase in enrollment. We commend the school leadership for this wise and appropriate use of resources. The Leadership Team is instituting a feasibility study in the summer of 2006 to determine the level of support and existing resources for the next phase of the capital campaign and to continue the improvement of curriculum and instruction.

Is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, schoolwide and system wide?

The school community recognized the Focus on Learning process and the long range Strategic Plan should be integrated into one action plan. Recent history suggests that the school leadership and community are committed to the WASC self-monitoring process of the St. Francis Action Plan. The school's leadership team has expressed a high degree of commitment to its Action Plan as evidenced by the Visiting Committee's conversations with them. The Leadership Team recognizes that it needs to set in motion the specific steps outlined in the Action Plan as well as the Visiting Committee's recommendations for improvements in the plan.

Significant resources that support school improvement include:

- A strong sense of Catholic identity, mission, and philosophy
- An effective administrative team, faculty, and staff
- Resources identified in the self study (not in the Action Plan itself)
- Governance which is committed to school improvement

Impediments to school improvement that the school will need to overcome in order to accomplish any of the action plan sections:

As stated above, the school will need to reorganize the Action Plan into the four WASC categories and add specific action steps, persons responsible, and timelines to accomplish them. The Visiting Committee believes that St. Francis High School's Action Plan will be highly effective in accomplishing the critical areas of growth they have identified. We recommend the following modifications:

1. That the Action Plan be reorganized into the four categories of the Self Study.
2. That Category 4 *Resource Management and Development* includes the goals for ownership and governance, enrollment, advancement, staffing, facilities, and finance.

3. That in Category 2 *Curriculum and Instruction* is reworked to offer greater support for programs that directly effect student learning. These may include areas such as research-based instruction, assessment, and processes similar to Backward Design Curriculum Development.
4. That when the “persons responsible” are identified as a group, the Leadership Team names the specific person responsible.

Existing factors that support school improvement:

The St. Francis Community has a history of effective accomplishment of past self-studies and of long-range plans. Both this self-study process and interviews with the Leadership Team indicate that the school will move vigorously and effectively to achieve its Action Plan. The integration of the *Focus on Learning* Action Plan with the Strategic Plan will provide strength and direction for the school’s future growth as well as assuring careful monitoring of the process.

The Visiting Team agrees that the leadership and staff are committed to carrying out the Action Plan and supporting all areas of school improvement. The Leadership Team has committed to revising the Action plan as suggested in this document and to a greater emphasis on professional development for faculty and administration.

In summary, the school is poised to move forward with energy and purpose as the entire St. Francis High School community engages in the collaborative processes needed to carry out this ambitious and comprehensive plan for ongoing improvement. The programs as outlined should certainly help each student develop her gifts and talents to become a model of *Pax and Bonum* (Peace and Goodness) through leadership and service.

Impediments to School Improvement that the school will need to overcome in order to accomplish any of he action plan sections:

The Strategic Action Plan is more comprehensive than a traditional WASC/WCEA plan because it incorporates both the Strategic Plan and Self Study. This is a strength, because the President's Office and Development are intimately involved in much of this plan. It may be an impediment because of the comprehensive nature of this plan. The visiting Committee believes that a possible impediment to the completion of this plan is the need for the school to fund its debt along with its commitment to purchase adjacent property and develop it into athletic fields.