



School of St. Mary  
**Meeting of the School Advisory Council (SAC)**  
January 21, 2026  
Minutes

**Council Members Present:** Katelyn Belcore, Courtney Bott, Kate Burke, John Hancir, Jimmy Griffin, Kelly Graham, Liza Jessen, Sabrina Jerina, Michelle Kijek, Maria Monroe, Margaret Hogan, Brittany Ruef, Chris Schenkel, Emily Sturges, Kathy Thompson, Eileen Weber, Jen Zeit, Rob Busam, Justin Fisk, Meredith Leggitt, Kristina Madsen Lowery, Fr. Ted Munz

**Council Members Absent:** Natalie Agostinelli, Maeve Curran, Erica Cook, Diana Hand, Derek Sarmas, Brooke Bohnker, Christine Porter, Ashley Madsen, Kathleen Brill

**SOSM Visitors Present:** Janice Looby, Lauren Perkaus, Kara Jacobs, Kevin Nugent, Alison Bartusiak, Alyse Alban

**Agenda Highlights:**

**1. Opening**

- Council Chair Eileen Weber called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM and welcomed Fr. Ted Munz as our new Administrator to the meeting.
- Fr. Ted Munz led the Council in an opening prayer.
- Chair Weber welcomed visitors and reviewed meeting protocol.
- Approval of Minutes: The November 19 meeting minutes were approved by the council.
- Chair Weber announced that with the departure of Mandy Castle as the Enrollment Director, Melissa Haak, Director of Marketing will be joining SAC as a faculty representative. Student Life Committee co-lead Peter Hartman resigned from SAC this month due to work demands.

**2. Pastor Administrator Report (Fr. Ted Munz)**

- Fr. Munz introduced himself to the SAC and shared background on his career, noting that much of his experience has been in Catholic education. He expressed a strong passion for faith formation and education and emphasized his commitment to supporting the School of St. Mary during his six-month assignment. Fr. Munz highlighted the formative impact of Catholic education on young people and encouraged the council to think boldly and collaboratively about the future. He shared a vision of SOSM as a model for

Catholic education within the Archdiocese of Chicago, grounded in excellence, possibility, and shared leadership.

### **3. Principals Report** (Kathy Thompson and Maria Monroe)

Principals Thompson and Monroe submitted a written Administrative Report to the SAC and shared the following updates:

- Mid-year student academic assessments are currently underway across both campuses in all grade levels.
- The social studies curriculum will be reviewed and updated in preparation for the next academic year.
- Staff training, professional development, and collaboration remain a priority. Mid-year grade-level meetings are in progress, along with staff-led weekly breakfast meetings. Overall morale and sense of community are strong across both campuses. Faculty intent-to-return forms will be distributed in February.
- Since Christmas break, SOSM has welcomed three new students, with an additional student scheduled to begin in February.
- The Daddy/Daughter Dance held at the PGC was well-attended and a successful community-building event. The principals extended special thanks to faculty members Taylor Mitchell, Natalie Agostinelli, and Nikki Graham for organizing and leading the event.
- Catholic Schools Week begins Sunday, 1/25 with a student-led Mass at 10:00 a.m. Class showcases will take place throughout the week. Parents are encouraged to attend the showcases and parent-focused coffee discussions. A full schedule of events will be shared via email.
- The principals thanked SAC committees for their continued collaboration and partnership, noting that numerous meetings over the past several months have helped advance key initiatives.

### **2026–2027 Budget Planning**

- The 2026–2027 budget development process is beginning. An Archdiocesan budget workbook will be distributed on February 19. Principal Thompson will lead the budget development using inputs from the SAC Finance Committee and Fr. Munz. Fr. Munz affirmed his support and empowered Principal Thompson to take ownership of the budget process this year.
- Council members emphasized that the 2026–2027 budget should be built to support the long-term vision for the school, rather than focusing solely on meeting a specific target number, as has happened in the past.
- The Parish Finance Committee has formed a new budget subcommittee, which includes SAC members Liza Jessen and Kelly Graham, along with COSM parishioner Joe Talanges, who will be available to provide additional support.
- The SAC Finance Committee noted that preliminary budget work could begin prior to receipt of the Archdiocesan workbooks, provided there is greater transparency in current monthly financial reporting. As an example, the “fees” line item was identified as

lacking detail. The committee recommended itemizing the fees category in the 2026–2027 budget to better understand current spending and inform future planning.

#### **4. Faculty Comments (Margaret Hogan)**

- Margaret Hogan expressed appreciation and gratitude to Liza Jessen and family for hosting the faculty holiday party and noted the outstanding energy and dedication of the staff this year.
- Margaret also thanked Kelly Graham (as President of the Parents Association) and all the Parents for the generous Christmas Monetary Gift, sharing that it was both noticed and deeply appreciated by faculty and staff.
- She noted a positive development from moving the weekly UGC masses to the gym while the church is under construction – noting the intimate setting and the strong level of student involvement and engagement.
- She shared excitement for Catholic Schools Week, highlighting a full schedule of activities including “Spelling, Religion, and Geography Bees,” career days, alumni participation, and classroom door decorating.
- Mrs. Hogan reflected on a key goal with the sixth-grade class this year: fostering a sense of belonging and family. She noted that many aspects of the school year are going exceptionally well at both campuses.

#### **5. Committee Reports**

##### **Development (Diana Hand and Maeve Curran)**

Committee leads were unable to attend this month, so Chair Weber gave a brief overview of their report.

- Fundraising update: Two corporate donors have been secured to date; individual gala contributions are ongoing.
- Committee recommendation: Include a part-time Development position in the 2026–2027 budget to focus on revenue generation and relationship-building. Emphasis was placed on the need for a clear fundraising strategy with defined goals and the value of a dedicated development professional versus reliance on volunteers.
- This role previously existed at the school and church but has not been filled in recent years.

##### **Ad Hoc Security (Jenn Zeit and Katelyn Belcore)**

- The Ad Hoc Committee goal is to secure a dedicated, uniformed School Resource Officer (SRO) shared between both campuses to enhance student safety.
- The estimated annual cost is approximately \$150,000. Potential funding options include a per-student assessment of \$250–\$300, supplemented by fundraising.
- The committee noted that school security ranks among the top three questions raised by prospective families. Council members agreed, while also noting that perspectives on its importance vary among families and that further discussion is needed.
- The Council requested that, if the proposal moves forward, SRO costs be incorporated into the operating budget vs. additional assessments.
- The Archdiocese is aware of the proposal and has an existing contract framework in place based on arrangements at other schools in the diocese.

- Mark Long, former LFHS SRO, is currently attending school masses. If budget permits, the committee expressed interest in hiring him for the next school year.

#### **Student Life** (John Hancir)

- All-school masses and cross-campus projects continue to strengthen school community engagement.
- Winter basketball season is underway, with girls' and boys' teams for grades 4–8. All interested students can participate.
- Spring sports registration will be released next week, including boys volleyball, track, and golf.
  - An open track coaching position was noted, with consideration given to a teacher filling the role.
- Planned summer facilities improvements include refinishing and refurbishing the gym floor and bleachers, painting, and new mats, with an estimated total cost of \$100,000. The gym is a key selling point for the school; the floor has not been refinished in approximately 20 years.
- PGC offers a wide range of after-school clubs, providing additional income opportunities for teachers, extending the school day for working families, and offering high student engagement.
- Updates on the Athletic Director role will be shared in March.

#### **Marketing & Enrollment** (Melissa Haak)

- Current SOSM enrollment is 379 students; 82% of families have re-enrolled for the 2026-2027 school year. PreK3 and 7th grade are both at 100% re-enrollment.
- Preschool enrollment is nearly full; current marketing focus is on increasing enrollment at the UGC campus.
- Student retention goal for grades 4–8 is 90%; current retention is approximately 80%.
- Principal Thompson and Rebecca Hartman, Director of Admissions, continue targeted outreach efforts.
- Chair Weber is organizing two brunches in February and March for K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade moms and 4-6<sup>th</sup> grade moms to help foster parent connections and build on the positive SOSM community spirit. All are encouraged to attend and spread the word to friends.
- New family tours remain strong across both campuses, with 9 tours in December and 11 tours in January.
- Christmas cards were sent as a welcome touchpoint to new families.
- A Junior Kindergarten information night will not be held this year due to near-capacity enrollment.
- A “Move Up Night” is being planned for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders to visit and learn more about the UGC campus.
- An additional retention event is under consideration, with ideas including a basketball clinic or math night to add value for families.

#### **Finance** (Meredith Leggitt)

- The Finance Committee report submitted was based on November actuals; December financials were received last night (January 20).

- Parish Finance Committee lead and SAC meeting guest, Alison Bartusiak, noted she is committed to working closely with the Committee to ensure timely delivery of the reports as needed.
- As discussed in the Principals Report, there is currently a lack of clarity on the current year's finances—forecasted numbers differ from actuals, so no definitive commentary can be provided at this time. A critical review is planned over the next two months.
- All agreed the school is entering a new era, with a strong emphasis on clear and consistent financial communication.

**Other Committee Highlights:**

- **Legislative Action** (Emily Sturges) – Researching the Parents Education Endowment Fund (currently at \$2.7M); could provide a strong long-term solution for funding needs.
- **Catholic Identity** – Hallow survey will be sent to faculty after Catholic Schools Week.
- **IT** – The Technology Committee recommends adding a full-time IT Director position in the 2026–2027 budget. The Committee has identified an outside vendor to assist with an IT assessment plan to identify areas for improvement; this is a critical component of the budget planning process.

**Visitor Comments:**

- SOSM parent Kevin Nugent noted that a well-structured capital plan could drive significant giving, rather than relying solely on smaller, year-round parent donations.
  - The Council agrees that an integrated fundraising strategy is needed, rather than separating efforts.

**5. Next Steps**

- The Executive Committee is developing a draft Strategic Plan, with a SAC workshop scheduled for Thursday, February 26, 6:30–8:30 pm.
- Key deliverables over the next six months include creating and finalizing the 2026-2027 academic year budget and the approval of the SOSM Strategic Plan.
- All Committees should continue their independent work and collaborate with the Executive Committee, Kathy, and Maria as needed.
- Chair Weber encouraged all council members to be present and actively contribute to community-building.
- Next SAC Meeting: Wednesday, March 18, 2026, at the UGC MPR.

**6. Closing**

- John Hancir closed the meeting with prayer
- Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM

**Respectfully submitted by:** Kate Burke, SAC Secretary