

SELF-STUDY VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT

NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS

FOR

SAINT MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL

2525 North Third Street

Phoenix, Arizona

Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix

PREPARED FOR:

WESTERN CATHOLIC EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

February 9, 2009 – February 12, 2009

The Visiting Committee wishes to congratulate the Saint Mary's High School community: administration, faculty staff, students and parents. Through the self-study, interviews, observations, group meetings and gathered evidence, it is apparent that the entire school community was involved in and is committed to the process of *Focus on Learning*.

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Chapter I: Student/Community Profile

Saint Mary's High School operates in the Diocese of Phoenix under authority of the Bishop and the direction of the Executive Director of Education and Evangelization. Saint Mary's High School is centrally located within the Phoenix metropolitan area and its students come from 95 different feeder schools within the city of Phoenix and Maricopa County.

The Saint Mary's High School community is committed to serving a culturally diverse student body. While predominantly Catholic, the student body is culturally, socio-economically and academically diverse. Almost half of the population is Hispanic followed by Caucasian, multi-racial and black. Over the last five years, student body statistics have remained consistent with the key exception of a 48% decline in the Caucasian population. Notably, there was also a 15% decline in the Catholic population from 737 students in 2007 to 637 students in 2008. Currently more than half of its students receive financial aid.

The faculty at Saint Mary's High School is predominantly Catholic, Caucasian, lay and male. More than half of the faculty has a degree beyond BA/BS. Faculty/staff statistics have remained consistent since the last accreditation.

It is the mission of Saint Mary's High School to provide a Catholic education within a faith-filled Catholic community to all students who desire such an education. Saint Mary's High School promotes values consistent with Christian ideals and work ethic. Central to its mission are the *Six Traits of a Knight/Lady Knight*: Reverence, studiousness, respect, courtesy, loyalty and obedience. These personal characteristics, as intended by the Franciscans founders have been at the core of the Saint Mary's High School culture for decades and are complemented by the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results, which are intended to characterize their graduates. The ESLRs, which were developed during the last accreditation process, are measured through surveys given to seniors and alumni two years after graduation. On the average, both seniors and alumni have responded positively when questioned about their academic preparation, faith formation, leadership and social skills.

Academically Saint Mary's High School strives to be challenging while meeting the needs of a very academically and culturally diverse population. The 28 credits required for graduation exceed the state requirement. Honors courses are offered in the core disciplines for students who meet the requirements and who desire a more challenging curriculum in order to pursue a college education. Advanced Placement courses and dual enrollment courses are offered for students who seek both college acceptance and credit.

SAT scores since 2004 have consistently been lower than both the State and national averages. ACT scores over the same period have been more consistent with the national averages, but still generally lower than the State. Advanced Placement scores, while lower than the averages, can be described as in a state of flux due to the recent development of the AP program resulting in a significant increase in the number of AP courses and students over the last five years.

An active, relevant and productive student life is promoted at Saint Mary's High School.

Christian Service is an essential part of student life and spiritual growth in this community, and 90 hours of service must be performed throughout the Freshman-Junior years. Saint Mary's High School students have a full slate of athletic programs, for boys and girls, in which to participate and compete at the Division 5A-I level, the highest in the State of Arizona. The school offers many clubs and organizations with many purposes (political, service-oriented, academic, etc.) in which students may get involved. More than 60% of students are involved in either athletics or activities.

Chapter II: Progress Report

At the three year mid-term visit in February of 2006, five directives were given for attention between 2006 and 2009.

The first directive was to move from six to seven periods to maximize curriculum opportunities. The school maintains a seven period schedule to include sufficient lunch breaks and faculty prep hours. This schedule was selected by a vote of the faculty. After revisiting the schedule each year, the faculty has chosen to maintain this schedule. The primary benefit of this schedule is an increase in credits needed for graduation and elective opportunities.

The second directive was to implement writing across the curriculum. The English department held an in-service for all departments reviewing the tools of basic writing and research skills, including 6+1 Traits of Writing Skills, Jane Schaeffer paragraph development, and Turnitin.com. The English department offers two remedial electives that focus on writing fundamentals.

The third directive required the use of standardized test results to define and modify curriculum. Saint Mary's uses the data from tests to place students appropriately, identify at-risk students and track student development. Standardized tests could be utilized more for curriculum modification. The exceptions are classes provided for freshman through junior years in remedial study skills, reading and writing. While acknowledging Saint Mary's efforts toward remedial student needs, the curriculum needs further development for college bound students and has yet to be addressed, i.e., incorporating SAT/ACT style questions consistently throughout assessments.

The fourth directive for Saint Mary's was to formulate a new strategic plan for the school. They have succeeded in formulating four goal areas: Student standards and expectations, facilities, technology and development. Sub-committees will continue developing goal statements, objectives and action plans through 2009.

The final directive involves change and tradition at Saint Mary's High School. The visiting team expressed concern over how the school would improve with new leadership and still observe the core experiences, values and traditions that have formed the school's unique character. Communication is seen as the key to this transition and several new meeting practices were implemented.

Chapter III: Self-Study Process

Comment on the school's self-study process with respect to the parameters and accuracy.

It is apparent that the community of Saint Mary's High School approached the self-study process seriously and collaboratively, and with a true willingness to effect change for the good of students. The entire community with direct involvement of administrators, teachers, support staff, students, and parents accomplished the five parameters of the self-study. Focus groups were comprised of administration, faculty and staff from all departments. A clear effort was made to include a diverse selection of students and parents. Using the FOL criteria as well as action plans and areas for critical follow up from the previous visit, the focus groups addressed all facets of the school's programs. The leadership team, drawn from all areas of school life, and the Self-Study Coordinator guided the process through gathering and examination of evidence, frank conversations, and collaborative decision making.

1. The involvement and collaborations of school community members in the self-study

All members of the school community were included. The school began the process of the self-study in the fall of 2007 – 2008 with the appointment of the Self-Study Coordinator and assembling chairs of the focus groups. Organization and analysis was completed by home groups, by focus groups, and by the leadership team. Evidence was gathered over a two year period from surveys of parents, students, and faculty which followed other survey work done in recent years. School documents, class materials, and student work at all levels was gathered and examined. Normal adjustments of personnel have required some shifts of committees and leadership, but there has been continuity of involvement through the process.

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

The ESLRs of Saint Mary High School were first developed as part of the self-study process in 2001. Since their introduction to the school community, they have been promulgated through all major school publications. The school has gathered data regarding senior student awareness and attainment of the ESLRs as a whole and each individual criterion. Teachers are asked to indicate in course materials how the ESLRs will be incorporated into their classes. The ESLRs were reviewed as part of the current self-study process.

3. The assessment of the actual program and the impact in student learning with respect to the criteria and the ESLRs.

Using the guidelines of the self-study all aspects of the school's programs were examined and discussed by focus groups and home groups. Efforts were made to comprehensively examine and document all findings in the self-study. Student learning is examined through a wide variety of assessment strategies including standardized tests, classroom work and tests. In all areas the school showed great willingness to critically assess the learning of students and to document their findings.

4. The development of a school-wide action plan that integrates subject area, program, and support plans to address identified growth needs.

From the self-study process, particular areas for improvement became apparent to the school community. Each of these areas of need is derived from growth areas identified in Chapter IV, viewed in light of the ESLRs. These general needs were developed into the three action plans. The Leadership Team, in collaboration with the entire faculty and staff, developed the plans with a focus on articulating the target, the process, persons responsible, and the anticipated results. Specific effort was made to create action plan goals that were achievable within the realities of the school.

5. The development and implementation of an accountability system for the accomplishment of the school-wide action plan.

Assessment targets are outlined in each action plan as well as a means to report this progress. The action plan directly addresses three areas of growth identified in the analysis of the school's programs.

Chapter IV: Quality of the School's Program

CATEGORY A. ORGANIZATION FOR STUDENT LEARNING

What currently exists

A1. School Purpose Criterion

Guide Questions: To what extent...

has the school established a clear statement of purpose that reflect the beliefs and philosophy of the institution?

is the purpose defined further by adopted expected schoolwide learning results that form the basis of the educational program for every student?

Saint Mary's High School has established a school Philosophy and a Mission statement that have a strong positive correlation to the school's Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs) and the Six Traits of a Knight/Lady Knight. The Philosophy and Mission statements reflect the Catholic faith as a basis for growth in the spiritual, intellectual and social needs of each person.

Saint Mary's High School acknowledges the importance of all the parties involved in the education of the whole student and shares the educational responsibility with faculty, staff, alumni and the student's primary educator, the parent. Parents and students are kept involved and informed of academic progress, general information, community and spirituality building activities and family nights.

Saint Mary's High School offers specialized staff to interact with students and families when circumstances warrant action to identify and assist at-risk students. Through these efforts and connections Saint Mary's High School has created a community that shares a deep commitment to Christ and along with parents, faculty and staff consistently reinforcing and modeling the school's Mission, Philosophy and ESLRs.

A2. Governance Criterion

Guide Questions: To what extent...

does the governing authority adopt policies which are consistent with the school purpose 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?

Saint Mary's High School has solid site leadership. It begins with and depends on the strong base provided by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix. At the school level the principal ensures that Saint Mary's High School builds on the Diocesan mission, policies and procedures in the development and implementation of new school policies. The Diocesan Executive Director of Education and Evangelization/Superintendent evaluates the principal yearly and monitors the school's progress regularly through reports and site visitations.

The Saint Mary's High School staff is aware of the Diocesan governing authority's role and strives to inform all community members as it relates to the school.

A3. School Leadership Criterion

Guide Questions: To what extent...

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 encourage commitment, participation and shared accountability for student learning?

Saint Mary's High School's school level leadership is organized with a descending order structure: principal, assistant principal, administrative team (Dean of Students, Athletic Director, Campus Minister, Finance Director and Development Director), department chairs, faculty and counselors. Administrative support, Cafeteria Supervisor, Activities Director, Athletic Director, Coaches and Club Moderators, Custodial and Cafeteria Staff are additional teams of support people in the Saint Mary's community.

The leadership team's focus is on spiritual development and academic achievement through realization of Saint Mary's High School's Mission, Philosophy and ESLRs. Through a variety of opportunities and resources provided by the school leadership to the students, they can experience many events that support and develop their spiritual formation and directly relate to the school's ESLRs. The school recognizes that there is a need for further growth in this area of assessment for the ESLRs.

As for academic achievement the leadership has enabled the department heads with the contributions of the department members to develop and implement strong academic programs that directly relate the ESLRs to course objectives. The entire Saint Mary's High School's staff is accountable for modeling, teaching and connecting academic content objectives to the ESLRs. This connection of objectives to the ESLRs can be found on all the syllabi.

The accountability has been aided by the formation of teams that are arranged by departments, specializations, club moderators, parents and alumni. In this arrangement every member of the community has an opportunity to be involved and make a difference in Saint Mary's High School's future and its successful melding of academics with the school's Philosophy, Mission, ESLRs and motto: "For God, Home and Country."

Other areas of focus by the Saint Mary's High School's leadership to increase the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results have been:

- Developing advanced curriculum including AP, Dual Enrollment, and Honors programs.
- Using information from the ACT testing program and writing across the curriculum to increase achievement.
- Working within the remedial curriculum to fill educational gaps and motivate the students toward their educational goals.
- Supporting the development of a strong co-curricular program to promote the social and personal growth of the students.

A4. Staff Criterion

Guide Questions: To what extent...

are the school leadership and staff qualified for their assigned responsibilities?

are the school leadership and staff committed to the school's purpose?

does the school leadership and staff engage in ongoing professional development that promotes student learning?

Saint Mary's High School has quality administrators and appropriately licensed, certified and classified staff who are committed to the realization of the school's Mission and Philosophy. The staff's additional documentation, including fingerprint cards, Catechist Ministry certification, Safe Environment training, Structured English Immersion records and other individual professional growth documents are kept in the principal's office. New teachers are observed at least twice a year and have the support of programs designed to aid them in their transition into the Saint Mary's community. Experienced instructors are observed formally and informally at least twice a year by the appropriate supervisor.

The Saint Mary's High School administration, faculty and staff are committed to the school's Mission Statement, Philosophy, Six Traits of a Knight/Lady Knight and ESLRs. Posted throughout the school, they serve as a valuable visual reminder to all of the school community. Saint Mary's administration and staff model spiritual and professional development through a variety of programs, in-services, and continuing education classes.

In these efforts the faculty is committed to creating a community of faith in which all staff and students feel welcome at Saint Mary's High School.

A5. SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Guide Questions: To what extent...

Does the school have a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that reflects the school's purpose?

Is the school environment characterized by a respect for differences, trust, caring professionalism, support, and high expectations for each student?

Saint Mary's High School is a community that is committed to Christ. The school believes that the fundamental role of parents is to encourage the development of faith and education. In addition, Saint Mary's High School students are expected to follow high standards of honesty and academic integrity.

Saint Mary's High School has policies and procedures in place that ensure a safe, healthy, nurturing environment. The school cafeteria provides nutritional selections following the guidelines of the Diocese of Phoenix School Wellness Policy. The staff is trained in all Diocesan required programs which include "Called to Protect for Ministers". Students are included in student training sessions to help them understand and be a part of the process of maintaining a safe school environment. A crisis plan is in place for emergency situations. The Dean of Students and the Principal are responsible for implementing this plan. The school has a closed-campus policy with a full time security guard on campus each day as well as an off-duty police officer during dismissal and for all school sponsored events.

In order to maintain a safe school environment, school handbooks clearly outline the policies and consequences regarding any form of harassment, weapons, possession and/or use of alcohol or drugs, and inappropriate computer and Internet use. Random drug testing has recently been added and has been well received as a program that adds to the safety of the school environment.

In support of the school Mission and ESLRs, the school provides various support for student academic, emotional and spiritual needs. The Student Study Team (a school-wide tutoring program) and Teacher Assistance Team (an administrative team focusing on at-risk students) provide academic assistance for students needing help. Quality speakers on current pertinent teen topics are provided for students to help them develop into well-rounded individuals and to deal with issues facing them. Students also have access to spiritual direction and counseling through the school chaplain, theology classes, regular liturgy and prayer, and yearly retreats.

A6. Reporting Student Progress Criterion

Guide Questions: To what extent...

does the school leadership and staff regularly assess student progress toward accomplishing the school's expected schoolwide learning results?

does the school leadership and staff report student progress to the rest of the school community?

Assessing student progress toward accomplishing the ESLRs is a constant challenge of Saint Mary's staff. A yearly senior exit survey and an alumni survey are given to assess progress toward accomplishing the ESLRs. Results of these surveys are viewed independently and as 3-5 year trends, and then shared with faculty and staff to assist with curriculum development.

The academic progress of the students is reported through the use of PowerSchool, report cards and celebrations of achievement. Saint Mary's High School believes that through student involvement in activities such as campus ministry, Catholic formation class, parish youth groups and extra curricular activities some of the intangible aspects of the ESLRs are addressed. The parent newsletter, *The Green Streak*, is sent to Elementary Principals, Saint Mary Advisory Board and posted on the school's website illustrating the multiple involvements of students participating in events that demonstrate support for the ESLRs.

The use of school and community publications keeps the wider community informed of the accomplishments of the school community. Recognition is also given to deserving students that have earned awards for scholarship, Christian service, athletics and military service commitments in the form of announcements, banquets, assemblies and printed articles.

Each year freshman, sophomore, and junior students take national standardized tests. The results of the EXPLORE, PLAN, and PSAT/NMSQT are shared with the respective students, mailed to the parents, provided to the administration and are disseminated to the department heads who then share them with their departments. Counselors correspond with parents to inform them of the scope of each year's program as well as the students' progress toward achieving their post-secondary goals.

A7. School Improvement Process Criterion

Guide Questions: To what extent...

does the school leadership facilitate school improvement which is driven by plans of action that will 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 accountability through monitoring of the schoolwide action plan?

The school leadership facilitates school improvement, driven by plans of action

embodying faith formation and enhancing quality of learning for all students. School improvement includes long range planning for facility development and financial stability, as well as providing faculty and staff with professional growth opportunities which enhance curriculum. The school leadership ensures accountability for student learning by fostering participation amongst faculty, staff, students, parents, and community resources. Assessing teacher and student performance through observation and evaluations helps measure the degree of academic success of their students. The student council leadership plays a key role in supporting the ESLRs through programs that increase the quality of learning.

The Advisory Board works on and oversees the continued evaluation of all phases of the School Improvement Strategic Plan. School leadership participates in the sharing of ideas that lead to implementing, setting and accomplishing goals specific to their plan. The Strategic Plan Committee communicates with all constituents in order to promote a community of buy-in, trust and commitment.

Department chairs play an important role in the school community. Chairs meet to discuss and develop agenda items for monthly staff meetings, which they also lead. They meet monthly within their own departments to discuss content based issues.

Areas of Strength for Organization for Student Learning Category

- There exists a solid connection between the content of the ESLRs, the Mission statement, the Philosophy, the school motto and the 6 Traits. This relationship connects the founding tradition of the school (the 6 Traits) to its future (ESLRs).
- Strong tradition of creating and promoting a family atmosphere in the school community where the parent is the primary educator.
- Saint Mary's High School offers a number of excellent opportunities to be a part of: liturgies, class retreats, reconciliation, class-time prayer, guest speakers, youth events, kits for the homeless, praying the rosary, soup kitchen work, gift bags for military personnel, to enrich the students' lives in connection to the ESLRs. The Theology department and the Campus Minister are vital connections to the spiritual opportunities provided to the staff.
- School policies and practices support core belief that students have the right to learn, teachers have the right to teach.
- Saint Mary's encourages and promotes all students to become active members of the school, home parishes and community and to give back to the less fortunate.
- Through the current publications, *Knightline*, *Green Streak*, and *the Round Table*, and daily announcements, community accomplishments are celebrated.
- The ESLRs are included in the syllabi of each content area.
- School leadership supports school improvement.

Key Issues for Organization for Student Learning

- Need to continue assessing the degree that students have internalized the 6 Traits and the ESLRs.
- Need to assess the staff in order to provide pertinent, research-based professional growth opportunities for all.
- Need to continue developing programs that encourage respect and appreciation for diversity and cultural differences.
- Because of constantly changing environmental issues, Saint Mary's needs to continue to implement security measures which maintain a safe and healthy environment.
- Need for ongoing collaboration with all constituents during school planning.

Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:

- Self-study Report prepared by Saint Mary's High School
- Meetings with leadership team and focus groups
- Interviews with school personnel

CATEGORY B. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

What currently exists

B1. What Students Learn Criterion

Guide Question: To what extent...

does the school provide a challenging, coherent and relevant curriculum that fulfills the school's purpose and results in student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results?

Every student is required to complete twenty-eight (28) credits for graduation. Students seeking university entrance follow a more rigorous program of study than students following a general studies curriculum. It should be noted that students participating in the general studies curriculum are not required to take Foreign Language, which prevents admission to State Universities. Core curriculum areas are assessed in five-year cycles at the Diocesan level. At the school level, the administration, department chairs, and teachers ensure content remains relevant. An example of this collaboration is the writing across the curriculum program shared by the English, Social Studies, Theology, and Science Departments. Evidence for success can be found through classroom observation and in surveys of past and present students; most recently the 2008 student survey: Expected School Wide Learning Results.

Saint Mary's supplements the core curriculum with classes for students with deficiencies in English, Reading or Mathematics. Advanced Placement and Honors courses are offered in five departments with Fine Arts Honors AP coming in 2009-10. Rio Salado Community College Dual Enrollment courses are also offered.

B2. How Students Learn Criterion

Guide Question: To what extent...

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

Saint Mary's utilizes the Rigor/Relevance Framework model for teaching that focuses on four components: Acquisition, Application, Assimilation and Adaptation to produce knowledge and action in the classroom. Several departments also use Bloom's Taxonomy when creating curriculum and assessments.

The English Department uses research-based knowledge to create a curriculum aligned at all levels. Using literature, active reading strategies, in-class discussion, debates and written assignments, English 1-2 provides a foundation in grammar, vocabulary and sentence structure. Using British Literature as a foundation, English 3-4 focuses on grammar, class discussions, collaboration analysis, peer editing, and several formal writing assignments. English 5-6 studies American literature, reinforcing skills from English 1-4 and introducing new skills such as student-driven classes, examination of themes relevant to students' lives, and MLA research papers. English 7-8 focuses on World Literature and strives to create writers that are effective in argumentative and persuasive discourse with a culmination project requiring them to read a novel, research the author and create a bibliography. AP English classes utilize a curriculum that centers on rhetorical and analytical responses regarding a variety of literary pieces. The department also offers developmental courses like Study Skills and Writing Fundamentals, allowing students to learn the basics at a slower, deliberate pace that prepares them to be successful as they move forward.

With the addition of the Piper facility, fine and performing arts are vital additions to the school's well-rounded curriculum. Teachers in the Fine Arts Department utilize multiple media resources including the Internet to research art and music history, as well as video, sound and lighting technology associated with drama productions. The hands-on work in each discipline creates independent thinkers and problem solvers.

The Math Department fosters an attitude of respect by carefully assessing each skill level, so students can enroll in classes that challenge without overwhelming them. As students master material, they can opt for more theoretical courses such as Rio Salado Dual Enrollment Pre-Calculus or AP Calculus. Students solve problems both verbally and in writing, thus promoting schoolwide improvement in those skills. Teachers show students how to master concepts by leading cooperative learning activities and engage students using graphing calculators, computers, Smart Boards and videos while utilizing clear classroom policies to ensure productivity. The department strives to lead with fairness and respect by offering constructive criticism and encouraging students to develop their God-given talents.

The Physical Education Department teaches lifelong health and wellness through nutritional choices and active lifestyles. Teachers remain current on research and trends in the field by reading health journals, attending fitness clinics and from experts in the industry. Students are taught to participate in individual and team sports, teaching them skills which will enable them to participate in activities throughout their lives. Instruction includes teaching physical skills, rules, and vocabulary, and understanding is assessed through written reports, oral presentations and tests.

Science Department courses are built on research-based knowledge of teaching and learning while incorporating the ESLRs. Classes stress laboratory activities because students learn best when they are actively involved. Science teachers use lecture, and technology like digital microscopes, Smart Boards, video clips and interactive web sites to augment instruction. In addition, Physical Science students prepare poster presentations, and Chemistry students present a research paper. Honors Anatomy and Physiology students evaluate case studies, and AP Biology students write sample essays in preparation for the AP exam.

The Social Studies Department uses proven methods and new research in teaching and assessment that is consistent with the *Mission Statement* and *Expected Schoolwide Learning Results*. Teachers are trained in SEI and accommodate all learners, including ADHD and ADD students. Methods used to engage students include: guest speakers, lectures, Socratic seminars, simulations, multimedia presentations and mock trials. Examples of technologies used include Smart Boards, lap-top computers and Internet video.

The Technology Department stays current through seminars, research and contact with experts in the field. Technology is a skills-based department, and students use hands-on techniques and cooperative learning during repetition and reinforcement of skills. Students' complete assignments using various software programs and most projects provide real-world application experience, which enhances future marketability for each student.

The Theology curriculum adheres to the teachings of the Catholic Church and the *ESLRs* by directing students to follow the Gospel, form a commitment to the Catholic Faith, respect the beliefs of others and make choices which reflect Catholic values. Theology 1-2 focuses on *Catholicism*, where students learn the basic tenets of the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Precepts of the Church and the Mass. Using a survey of the sacraments and saints, students are introduced to the truth that each person is called to holiness. Theology 3-4 studies the Hebrew and Christian *Sacred Scriptures*, where students study salvation history and Judaism's connection to Christianity. Students also reflect on their relationship with Jesus and examine the Church's foundation in the Scriptures. Theology 5-6 studies the Church as a major force in Western Civilization and examines *Catholic Justice and Morality*. Theology 7-8 studies *Sacramental Life and Christian Vocations*, where students explore the beauty of marriage and the modern family in light of Christ's teachings. Seniors can also enroll in *Catholic Formation*, where material from *Sacramental Life and Christian Vocations* is covered, and students experience ministry by serving the school and community at-large.

In World Languages, the first goal for students is to communicate a specific message successfully. The department's second goal is to help students become fluent speakers at the assimilation level where they become problem solvers. Language learning is "multi-sensory," so courses utilize audio-visual materials like music, news and movie clips. Student activities include reading about culture, politics and history in textbooks and on the Internet. Students learn through lecture, oral practice, collaborative group interaction and website activities. As they become proficient in their target language, students also develop leadership and become independent thinkers. Course placement is based on students' abilities and prior knowledge, so classes offer challenges and probable success.

B3. How Assessment Is Used

Guide Questions: 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?

Departments rely on a variety of common assessment tools such as tests, discussions, essays, individual performances, self-assessment, group presentations, research projects, team-building exercises, lab activities and homework. Assessments are used frequently and results are integrated in the teaching and learning process. Assessment results are the basis for evaluating curriculum and student progress toward ESLRs.

Using the PowerSchool program, grades are available on-line, which allows for easy, transparent access to student progress. This system promotes collaboration between teachers, students, parents, counselors and administrators to better manage students' academic careers.

Areas of Strength for Curriculum

- The school provides a Christ-centered, challenging and comprehensive curriculum, which is grounded in the school's Philosophy and Mission Statement, resulting in achievement of the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results.
- The faculty utilizes a variety of teaching and learning experiences to engage students at a high level that is consistent with Expected Schoolwide Learning Results.
- The school provides a solid Theology curriculum with clearly defined course objectives, expectations, and student-activities that promote student acquisition of Catholic values.

- There are opportunities for staff development with professional growth workshops, in-services, and meetings designed to promote and increase both knowledge and skill levels.
- The new Piper facility and adjustments to the schedule provide multiple opportunities for students to participate in fine and performing arts.
- All departments have participated in curriculum mapping to align curriculum with State and Diocesan standards.

Key Areas for Curriculum

- Need to follow through with the plan to develop a systematic approach for improving standardized test results.
- Need to develop and implement strategies to accelerate freshman academic success and philosophical buy-in.
- Need to implement a valid schoolwide, standards-based assessment process, representative of all course content to provide a just reflection of student performance.
- Need to continue to maintain and develop high-level curriculum that prepares students for post-secondary education.

Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:

- Self-study Report prepared by Saint Mary's High School
- Meetings with leadership team and focus groups
- Interviews with school personnel
- Classroom Visit
- Curriculum maps, department profiles, subject evidence and other documents provided by Saint Mary High School

C. SUPPORT FOR STUDENT PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC GROWTH

What currently exists

C1. Student Connectedness Criterion

Guide Question: To what extent...

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

Saint Mary's conducted a survey of the graduating class of 2008 student body to assess their overall spiritual experience. The results of the survey are the following:

- 85% acknowledged that their overall experience at Saint Mary's has helped them grow in knowledge and appreciation of their faith.
- 72% confirmed that their participation in community service as a student has been a meaningful experience that helped them grow.
- 79% described themselves as "Catholic" while 72% reported they believed that Jesus is present in the Blessed Sacrament.
- 41% attend Mass every Sunday, while 34% attend Mass a few times a year.
- 38% said that attending a class retreat/ Day of Reflection was the most important factor in helping them grow in appreciation of the Catholic faith while at Saint Mary's.
- 26% said that attending mass was the most important factor in helping them grow in their knowledge of the Catholic faith while at Saint Mary's.
- 60% stated that their theology classes were the most important factor in helping them grow in their knowledge of the Catholic faith while at Saint Mary's, while 11% attributed this to a class retreat and another 11% to guest speakers or presentations.
- 38% stated that they would like additional opportunities to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Students were also given the opportunity to provide anonymous written feedback. While a number of students gave positive feedback or no suggestions for change, there were some suggestions that were reported. They included: a) more All School Masses b) more opportunities to participate in Reconciliation c) more spiritual retreats d) more guest speakers who share their faith experiences e) more opportunities to learn about other faiths f) more discussion in theology about the challenges that face teenagers.

Saint Mary's has concluded that, to enhance the faith experience, they will increase the opportunities for All School Masses and Reconciliation services. Currently, Reconciliation is celebrated as a community once during Lent and once during Advent and there are eight All School Masses. Their other goal is to work on a way to present the Catholic faith to students so it relates to their lived experience. The Bishop appointed a chaplain at the end of the 2007-2008 school year who assists in accomplishing these goals.

Prayer is an integral part of Saint Mary's. The day starts with school wide prayer and students also say grace together in their classes prior to lunchtime. All presentations and assemblies begin with a prayer. Students report that about half of their classes begin with prayer. Sports teams attend Mass and pray together before games. There is an opportunity to participate weekly in praying the Rosary and twice weekly in Lectio Divina.

The All School Masses are planned by the senior Catholic Formation class. All students are required to participate in their grade level retreat which takes place once a year. Each retreat begins with Mass followed by several sessions led by student leaders to discuss various dimensions of faith. All other liturgical events are planned by Campus Ministry and the Theology Department.

There are a variety of activities that promote spiritual growth and celebrate the dignity of human life. One key program is the completion by each student of 90 community service hours (some of which must take place in the home parish) prior to graduation. Each club is also responsible for completing a service project. Lastly, a variety of activities during Catholic Schools week promote spiritual growth and school unity.

C2. Parent/Community Involvement Criterion

Guide Question: 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?

Saint Mary's has a variety of student services and student activities which are planned to enhance the total personhood of each student.

The Campus Ministry Department offers a variety of programs including: class retreats, Columbian Squires, Teaching Abstinence Program, opportunities to participate in the annual March for Life Conference in Washington D.C., Daily Mass, monthly All School Masses, Reconciliation services, and spiritual counseling.

The Guidance Department, which includes both academic advisors and a counselor, encourages and supports students in their academic, spiritual, and social development. The student to advisor ratio is currently 400 to 1. One academic advisor is assigned to the freshmen and juniors and one advisor is assigned to sophomores and seniors. The academic advisors and counselors meet with students as requested. The academic advisors make classroom presentations to all students in each grade level. Advisors administer standardized tests including the EXPLORE to all freshmen, the PLAN to all sophomores, and the PSAT to all juniors. The AIMS test is administered only to students who qualify for scholarship. They also maintain information on test preparation, scholarships, and post graduation options in the guidance center. Advisors communicate with parents throughout the year through meetings, phone calls, mailings, and e-mail as needed. A counselor on staff works with students on personal issues and provides families with appropriate referrals as necessary.

Saint Mary's library is a major component of the school's total educational program. Access to resources, including four online data base subscriptions and tools needed for learning, is provided in a safe and stimulating environment facilitated by the school librarian. The library supports the school's curriculum, meets the needs of individual students, and promotes the enjoyment of reading. In consultation with staff and teachers, the librarian helps in teaching research skills to students. The library opens early and offers a place for students to go after school to study with computer availability in a monitored environment from 3pm to 5pm. Three computer labs that are available to students for a half an hour before and after school.

Health services are available at Saint Mary's through the school's full-time registered nurse and an athletic trainer. The nurse is responsible for health services that may arise, administers medication to specific students, and maintains health records. The nurse communicates with teachers if health conditions arise with students. The nurse and the Dean are responsible for the organization of the random drug testing program. The Dean of Students receives the results and implements the consequences for positive tests. Students receive an immediate three day suspension and are required to receive an assessment from a certified counselor.

Saint Mary's strives to provide nutritious food choices which aid in overall student well being. During the last eight cafeteria inspections, it received six gold medals and two silver medals. Meal choices follow the Diocese of Phoenix School Wellness Policy, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and meet the guidelines set forth by the Arizona Department of Education Child Nutrition Program. The cafeteria opens at 6:30am and provides breakfast, snacks for break, lunch and often meals after school.

A daily Teacher-Student Period (TSP) is provided from 7:30am to 7:55am where students can receive one-on-one support from their teachers. Teachers are required to be present, and it is encouraged for students to take advantage of this opportunity. Academic peer tutoring is available from the National Honor Society members two mornings a week in the school library and after school as needed.

Students are encouraged to get involved in co-curricular and leadership activities to enhance their spiritual and community development. Students attend an annual club fair where they can learn about and sign up for clubs. Other opportunities for leadership are available through Student Council. Students can also assist in producing the school newspaper called the *Round Table* and the yearbook, *El Caballero*. These are year-long elective courses that students can enroll after completing freshmen year.

Saint Mary's is a member of the Arizona Interscholastic Association (AIA), 5A Conference Division I, and the Desert Valley Region. More than 60% of students participate in one or more athletic programs and 33% of the faculty and staff serve as coaches. The athletic program provides students numerous opportunities to excel, develop self-esteem and confidence, exert leadership, develop physical strength and skill, and inspire school spirit. Saint Mary's has an eligibility rule requiring that students pass all courses in order to participate in athletics. The following sports are offered: baseball/softball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, soccer, spirit line, swimming, tennis, track and field, and volleyball. School teams are supported enthusiastically by the entire Saint Mary's community including at pep rallies.

C3. Parent/Community Involvement Criterion

Guide Question: 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 Saint Mary's School Advisory Board helps with community by interacting and communicating with members of the Student Council, Parent Organization, Finance Office, Development Office, and the Principal. The board meets once a month between August and May and the meetings are open to the public. It addresses issues such as strategic planning, finances, technology, buildings, and grounds. The board which is comprised of volunteers consists of Saint Mary's alumni and parents of Saint Mary students.

The Saint Mary's Parent Organization (SMPO) provides support to the administration, staff, students, and parents through programs, services, and activities throughout the year. Some activities that they coordinate are organizing car pools, overseeing textbook exchange days, and recognizing seniors whose GPA is above 3.75. The SMPO holds meetings to provide an open forum for parents to talk about issues facing their students.

The athletic department has a number of booster organizations which separately support a number of athletic programs through raising funds, recognizing parents, celebrating seniors, and assisting with end-of-season banquets. Discussion has begun to resurrect a comprehensive booster club organization separate from the individual groups.

Students, parents, and staff join community-building activities, which include monthly All School Masses, school pep assemblies, athletic competitions, Freshman Parent Mixer Dinner, parent Back-to-School night, and fine arts performances. Communication is encouraged between all members of the community to provide a support system for the students. Parents and students are able to access student grades via the school system PowerSchool.

Saint Mary's has a strong alumni organization with members who support the school through academics, activities, athletics, and through generous annual contributions. Alumni communication is maintained through the quarterly newsletter called the *KnightLine* as well as through phone calls, e-mails, and other mailings. The Development office has increased their number of contacts and is working on providing new opportunities to connect alumni to the school.

Areas of Strength for Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

- The school provides a wide variety of curricular and co-curricular activities.
- Students demonstrate respect and acceptance of each other within the diverse student body.

- The school is committed to providing strong Catholic education with opportunities to develop each student spiritually, academically, socially, and personally.
- Many students take advantage of the 5A-1 sports program at the school.
- Teachers are available to help students one-on-one every day before and after school.
- The guidance department offers both academic and personal support to students.
- Many programs exist to enhance student's Catholic identity including Eucharistic Celebrations and the Christian service requirement.

Key Issues for Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

- Need for continued assessment and development of projects and programs that embrace cultural and economic diversity.
- Need to develop a formal process to address and track at-risk students who require accommodations in the classroom.
- Need to seek new ways to enhance the four-year academic planning process through the Guidance Department for college planning goals.
- Need to follow through on a plan to unite a comprehensive booster club and develop its parameters.

Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:

- Self-study Report prepared by Saint Mary's High School
- Meetings with leadership team and focus groups
- Interviews with school personnel
- School handbooks, schedules, and calendar and publications

D. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

What currently exists

D1. Resources

Guide Questions: 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?

Saint Mary's demonstrates responsible stewardship via ongoing efforts to attain and manage the available resources necessary to sustain the school program and to carry out the school's *Mission, Philosophy, and Expected Schoolwide Learning Results*. Five resources are central to achieving the desired outcomes:

1) The annual budget process is key to the financial health of Saint Mary's High School. The annual budget includes resource allocation for department expenditures, curriculum materials, professional development, athletics, student activities, administration, guidance counseling, maintenance, debt reduction, and capital expenditures.

The process begins in January; all areas of the school contribute with the Saint Mary's staff providing vital input regarding the allocation of resources that affect the learning environment.

First, the School Advisory Board Finance Committee, Director of Finance, and the Principal propose the preliminary budget. Then, the preliminary budget is presented to the Diocese in April. Next, the Diocesan School Board Finance Committee reviews the proposed budget along with the Director of Finance and the Principal. In late August—when enrollment numbers are confirmed—the operating budget is revised. Final budget approval occurs in September. The budget for 2008-09 is \$7,566,365, exclusive of endowment and investment funds.

Historically, a large portion of Saint Mary's student population has demonstrated financial need. In the 2008-09 school year, 59% of the families have demonstrated financial need totaling over \$3,000,000. The administration and the Development Office aggressively continue to address the challenge of the financial needs of Saint Mary's families. As of September 2008, more than \$2.5 million in financial aid has been provided to Saint Mary's students.

2) The Saint Mary's staff is one of its most valuable resources. Acknowledging this very important resource, the Diocese has raised the certified pay scale for contract employees to attract and retain quality staff members, moving closer toward parity with the public schools.

Professional development opportunities are made available to staff throughout each school year. Examples of past and present opportunities range from yearly Diocesan-sponsored Educator's Day to AP Summer Institutes to Smart Board training workshops to staff diversity training through Anytown Arizona to monthly staff prayer services.

3) Growth in available technology at Saint Mary's High School has been an important focus for the administration both to enhance the learning environment and to improve the efficiency of communication within the school. Since June 2005, the push for improvements in technology has resulted in the modernized networking of Saint Mary's four buildings, a new phone/e-mail system along with new intercom system, network computer access for the staff as well as internet access in all rooms, sixteen new Smart Boards (fourteen permanently installed and two portable), and, with the completion of Piper Hall in November 2007, the addition of three state-of-the-art computer labs. A Diocesan approved plan will guide technological pursuits through 2013.

4) Parent and student organizations are addressed in both D4. Enrollment Resources Criterion and D5. Development Resources Criterion.

5) The Saint Mary's Scholarship and Benefits Fund has contributed \$96,675 of financial aid to Saint Mary's families through endowed earnings and oversee the POSSE program which contributed \$114,000 in tuition assistance in the 2008 – 2009 school

year.

D2. Resource Planning

Guide Question: To what extent:

Does the governing board and the school execute responsible resource planning for the future?

The school leadership, relying on its strategic model, executes responsible resource planning to guarantee the financial health of Saint Mary's High School for the future. The Strategic Planning Committee meets regularly to ensure that the action plans and associated responsible parties are moving forward with the implementation of the established goals of the school's Strategic Plan.

In June 2006, Saint Mary's High School updated its Long Range Facility Master Plan. A preliminary building/space use program was developed, providing an essential decision-making tool for future phases of campus development. The construction of Piper Hall (November 2007) has heralded completion of the first major step of the school's Long Range Master Plan.

The annual budget process is vital to executing resource planning by allocating sufficient monies to fund school operations, including facility maintenance and the school's infrastructure. In the past six years, Saint Mary's has planned and executed numerous enhancements to the learning environment and the campus, ranging from modernizing the communication and alarm systems to refurbishing the gymnasium to remodeling of Celesta, Nevin, and Blaise Halls and re-roofing of the latter and upgrading the landscaping. Funds are specifically dedicated to the budget for replacement or upgrades of operating facilities that are aging or outdated—a proactive measure designed to preempt shortfalls in the event that costly equipment should break.

To meet its largest financial need—tuition assistance—Saint Mary's High School relies on two established endowment programs: the Scholarship and Benefits Fund established in 1979 and the Catholic Community Foundation (CCF). Only interest income is spent from the endowments funds, thus preserving the corpus in perpetuity; yet, these earnings provide tuition assistance for numerous students who have demonstrated financial need. Two alternating biennial events add monies to the Scholarship and Benefits Fund: the Hall of Fame Dinner and the Auction Dinner.

The Saint Mary's Development Office staff works closely with alumni and donors to solicit individual funds needed to provide tuition assistance, reduce debt, and assist with other various needs throughout the school.

D3. School Finance Resources Criterion

Guide Questions: 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?

With financial resources sufficient to fulfill its mission and programs, Saint Mary's High School operates on a balanced budget. Tuition remains the primary revenue stream, its importance supported with staff and technology devoted to tracking and maintaining the tuition revenue database.

The School Advisory Board Finance Committee focuses on three ongoing financial challenges: 1) fulfilling debt service requirements, 2) meeting the growth in operating budget, 3) anticipating the tuition assistance funds required for needy families.

The integrity of the school's financial operations with respect to acceptable accounting practices is verified by regular internal and external audits with Plante and Moran LLP who conducted the most recent audit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008. Saint Mary's has accounting systems, finance-related business processes, and internal controls that are in conformance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP).

These audits as well as the approval of the Principal and the Executive Director of Education guide the decisions of Saint Mary's Advisory Finance Committee. Additionally, the Advisory Board Finance Committee bases its fiscal numbers—in addition to tuition—on the fundraising efforts organized by the Development Office, which fall into three categories: Tuition Assistance, the Annual Fund and Fundraising, and the Capital Campaign Donations.

In concert with its mission statement, Saint Mary's High School is committed to doing everything possible so that no boy or girl who desires a Catholic education is turned away. The school is proactive in achieving this goal. From the moment a student applies to Saint Mary's until that student graduates, the Finance Director and Development Office continuously inform parents of the numerous financial aid options available to them.

Saint Mary's vigilance in caring for the needs of its students even encompasses the acquisition of textbooks. As a result of the school's having contracted with MBS Direct Textbooks in Columbia, Missouri (allowing the school to avoid the encumbrances of an on-campus book store system), parents now purchase their child's books directly from this vendor. At the start of each year, the school discreetly identifies those students who cannot afford to buy their books. To meet such needs, Saint Mary's has instituted a free lending library that serves many students.

D4. Enrollment Resources Criterion

Guide Questions: To what extent...

Are the school's admission policies and procedures consistent with its Philosophy?

Are the school's marketing, recruitment, and public relations efforts effective in attracting qualified students?

Is the enrollment targeted to maintain effective and meaningful curricular and co-curricular programs that meet the philosophy and goal expectations of the school?

Saint Mary's admissions policies and procedures play an important role in attracting, recognizing, and accepting students who will best meet the expectations of the school's Philosophy and Mission Statement. Through multiple sources of information and data (High School Placement test scores; 6th, 7th, and 8th grade standardized test scores; 6th, 7th, and 8th grade report card grades; elementary school teacher and principal recommendations; interviews; and discipline reports from the grade schools), Saint Mary's strives to admit qualified students who will have an opportunity to succeed by embracing the school's ethos.

A variety of marketing, recruitment, and public relations tools are used to attract qualified students: visits to Catholic grade schools; Diocesan elementary parent night orientations; video presentations; informational brochures (print and web form); advertisements in the *Catholic Sun*; Eighth Grade Days; and an Open House. At the latter two events, student ambassadors host tours while sharing their pride and love for their school with potential students and their families.

Established in early 2008, Saint Mary's Marketing Committee has helped define a school brand and has adopted a marketing strategy for student recruitment campaigns in 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. Within these campaigns, Saint Mary's places emphasis on sharing student's achievements and accomplishments publicly as the single most important tool for letting the community at large know how vital Saint Mary's High School continues to be to the greater Phoenix metropolitan area. The Development Office uses a variety of outlets to alert the public to such accomplishments, including periodic e-mail blasts, supplements to the bi-annual alumni publication (*The Knightline*), supplements to the monthly parent newsletter (*The Green Streak*), as well as periodic community-wide press releases and web-site postings.

Every member of the Saint Mary's community encourages all students during the application and acceptance process to get involved in co-curricular offerings while at the same time fostering family involvement in activities and organizations associated with the school. Students are offered a full range of athletics as well as a wide array of student clubs and activities with choices ranging from Art Club to Earth Club to Legion of Mary to the Newspaper to the Student Council, seventeen in all.

D5. Development Resources Criterion

Guide Questions: To what extent...

Has the school an effective development/fundraising program that is consistent with school philosophy?

Is there evidence of development planning?

The words of Saint Theresa of Avila, “Yours are the eyes through which [Christ] is to go about doing good; yours are the hands with which He is to bless people now,” form the core belief under which the Saint Mary’s Development Office operates. In the spirit of these words, the Saint Mary’s Development Office has instituted strategies and philosophies that work in tandem with the Mission and Philosophy of Saint Mary’s High School. Donors and volunteers throughout the community are invited to be active participants in the educational experience of each student. Parents and alumni are urged to participate in fundraising campaigns and other community-building events in order to provide an optimal learning experience for each student.

Fundraising has been instrumental in supporting the school’s Mission Statement. Established major events include: the Capital Campaign; the Annual Giving Campaign (\$55,000); the Annual Walk-a-Thon (\$55,000 - \$75,000); Catholic Tuition Organization of the Diocese of Phoenix Tuition Tax Credit (\$1,500,000); the Annual Fashion Show (\$35,000 - \$40,000); and in the fall, the alternating between the Bi-Annual Hall of Fame Dinner and the Bi-Annual Dinner Auction (each averaging between \$60,000 - \$70,000).

Saint Mary’s High School also places high importance on engaging students in fundraising efforts because such involvement reinforces the development of moral values and lifelong service, benefits closely tied to the school’s Mission and Philosophy.

Areas of Strength for Resource Management and Development

- The Administration and affiliated School Board Finance Committee execute responsibility in resource management and planning with a vision for both the present and long-term financial stability of the school.
- Financial operations are conducted with integrity and in accordance with generally accepted accounting standards.
- Teamwork within the school and throughout the community follows a common-cause approach to attaining and allocating resources in order to serve the needs of all students.
- The Mission Statement and Philosophy consistently underscore every decision involving financial matters because the students themselves are the chief focus of the school’s stewardship.
- The Director of Finance and the Development Office function as a proactive partnership, benefiting the school with their professionalism and commitment.
- Tradition unifies the Saint Mary’s family across generations in its pursuit of resources to sustain the oldest Catholic high school in Arizona.

- The school works hard to attain all appropriate title funds to benefit its students.

Key Areas Resource Management and Development

- Need to continue marketing and recruitment strategies in order to increase student enrollment.
- Need to continue to seek sources of income to offset tuition.
- Need to continue to seek financial resources to assist with debt reduction and operational expense support.

Evidence

- School Operating Budget
- Budgeted Financial Statements
- Diocesan School Board Finance Committee Report “School Budget Review”
- Audited Financial Statements

Part B: Synthesize the strengths and key issues from all categories into schoolwide strengths and schoolwide critical areas for follow-up.

Schoolwide Areas of Strength (list numerically)

1. A strong tradition and long history of serving the Catholic community of Phoenix.
2. A strong administrative structure and school leadership dedicated to school improvement.
3. A faculty and staff dedicated to student learning and success.
4. A respectful student body who appreciates their school and demonstrates a commitment to learning.
5. Sound financial practices providing balanced budgets, assistance for families demonstrating need, and planning for the future.
6. Demonstrated dedication to providing Catholic education to the broadest possible student population.
7. A well-maintained campus that meets program needs of the school and a master facilities plan to address future facilities needs.
8. Students have opportunities to witness and participate in the importance of growing in the love of God and others through service, prayer and liturgy.
9. The recent addition of the Piper Performing Arts Building, providing a theater, space for performing and visual arts, and additional offices and classrooms.
10. The addition of the seventh period expanding elective opportunities, particularly in the visual and performing arts.

Schoolwide Critical Areas for Follow-Up

1. Need for review and revision of the school-wide action plan.
2. Need for continued review of curricular offerings to best meet the needs of all levels of learners accepted to the school.
3. Need for continued analysis and disaggregation of data from classroom and standardized assessments in the development and revision of curriculum.
4. Need for ongoing training of faculty and staff in educational technology
5. Need to continue development of formal assessment and monitoring of at-risk students in order to provide appropriate support, curriculum, and accommodations.
6. Need for continued ongoing evaluation of ESLR attainment as a guide to curriculum and programs.

Chapter V: Ongoing School Improvement

- **Include a brief summary of the school-wide action plan**

As part of its self-study process, Saint Mary's High School has articulated three action plans. Each of these plans directly addresses a perceived area of growth from at least one part of the self-study report, and each supports the spiritual, personal and academic development of the students in light the ESLRs.

The first action plan addresses the spiritual identity of the school and a need to enhance the students' understanding and identity as a Catholic Christian community through presentations and activities. The plan outlines a six year presentation of topics, though it is unclear exactly how the rotation will be handled so students do not miss essential concepts.

The second plan addresses the academic life of the school through development of a standards-based assessment system. Through this professional development program, improving assessment techniques, the school hopes to gain better data relating to student learning while providing students better opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and ability.

The third plan addresses the need to provide a better foundation for the diverse population of students beginning in their ninth grade year. Through a new required course, ninth grade students will receive additional orientation to the school and skills development. This course will serve as a formation program for all aspects of school life.

Existing factors that support school improvement

- Dedication of faculty and administration to school improvement
- A demonstrated record of planning and follow through of action plans
- Adequate personnel and resources to achieve the stated outcomes

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

- There is a need to further refine and articulate the desired outcomes of each of the plans. Each plan is expressed to meet a well understood need, but the outcomes are less concrete.
- The first action plan which outlines the spiritual formation program will need further coordination with the coming national revision of theology curriculum by the United States Bishops' Conference.
- The new freshman course requirement will need to be reconciled with the 28 credit graduation requirement and the needs of the school's elective programs.

Soundness of follow-up process to monitor accomplishment of school-wide action plan

The process of monitoring the school-wide action plan is practical and comprehensive. Responsibilities have been assigned for the ongoing implementation of each step of the plan and for monitoring and documenting the progress in this area. Targets and processes for each action plan will need to be monitored and adjusted, and the plans as written make adequate provision for this.