



CHARACTERISTICS OF MARIANIST UNIVERSITIES

Marianist Universities Educate for Formation in Faith

(17.) *As higher educational institutions, Marianist universities have kept, along with education in the disciplines, a commitment to the development of the whole person, which includes the dimension of religious faith and its personal appropriation and practice.*

AGAINST THE SECULAR TREND

(18.) In this century, many institutions of higher education have become primarily job-oriented in nature; not as many of them continue to show a real interest in the liberal arts. Despite this trend, most colleges and universities in the United States explicitly supported, until the 1960s, a twofold educational purpose: the acquisition of knowledge and the formation of character. Catholic universities, however, display an expansive vision of education in their commitment to formation of character as critical to preparing for and living out one's vocation. Curriculum reflects this commitment with its consistent emphasis on the liberal arts, including the disciplines of philosophy and theology. Critical engagement in the liberal arts increases graduates' capacity to respond with understanding and practical wisdom to the challenging questions of contemporary living and to the ongoing invitation to deepen one's religious faith, both in understanding and practice. The stories, histories, indeed the wisdom of the past embodied in the great works of literature, including especially the Scriptures as they have been interpreted and enacted over the centuries, find an important place throughout university life. Thus, Catholic universities send distinctive graduates into civic society prepared to enact their vocations as their response to a call to use their gifts and talents ethically and in service to family and neighbors whether in the work place, the local community, the nation, or the world.

BOTH FAITH AND REASON

(19.) Catholic universities affirm an intricate, mutually enriching relationship between faith and reason, evident in retaining studies in philosophy and theology along

with science as integral to liberal education. Christians over the centuries have engaged with and found value in the intellectual currents of their day to deepen their understanding not only of the created order but also of the Creator. Faithful men and women from every age serve as inspiration and example for contemporary engagement in and development of Catholic intellectual tradition that touches on every field of knowledge. Faith expands horizons in the quest for truth that grounds justice and challenges reason to test its limits in pursuit of the common good. Reason informs faith with an intellectual rigor that summons humility and respect for all perspectives that contribute to our understanding of and commitment to the common good. Indeed, many graduates embody in their daily lives the creativity unleashed when faith and reason are joined in service to the common good.

THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN FAITH AND CULTURE

(20.) Catholic universities have a particular obligation to foster dialogue between faith and culture and to embrace the task in its complexity, given the multiplicity of faith perspectives and cultures that comprise our world. Dialogue serves the Marianist mission of educating the whole person when it enables participants to integrate the heart and the intellect as they express an informed understanding of their own faith and culture and engage in active listening to persons of other faiths and cultures, as well as those with no religious faith. To become an actual community of learners requires a dialogue marked by humility and trust among all participants who strive to move beyond simple tolerance toward respectful collaboration in our common educational mission. To the extent that this dialogue is accomplished, Marianist universities will be among those few places in the modern world where both an intellectual and a faith community remain in conversation.

FAITH IN THE SERVICE OF OTHERS

(21.) Formation in faith remains incomplete without

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understanding its social dimension. The Marianist founders exhibited a lively faith that attracted others to join them in small communities formed through prayer, study, and service within their own troubled society. Marianist universities continue this work drawing on the wisdom not only of the founders but also the social teachings of the entire Church. These teachings articulate a vision in the light of faith and offer guidance for the transformation of culture in service to the

common good and make abundantly clear that faith is more than personal belief. A strong sense of community, a commonly noticed quality of a Marianist university, helps all its members grasp more quickly the importance of solidarity in the faith-inspired work of cultural transformation.



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Marianist Universities Provide an Integral, Quality Education

(22.) *The foundations of excellence in education in the Marianist universities flow from our emphasis on the dialogue between faith and reason in the service of the common good. It is quality education because faculty, staff, administration and students collaborate together in attaining knowledge of the human condition within the larger community of all creation, applying both faith and reason in their quest for human meaning. It is integral or comprehensive because we seek to “humanize” this path of knowledge in such a way that it affirms the full dignity of each member of our learning community in curricular and extra-curricular experiences in the arts and professions. An integral, quality education in the Marianist University calls each member of the community to attentive presence, to participation in genuine community, and to competent and loving service.*

INTEGRATED LIBERAL ARTS AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

(23.) Marianist education is grounded in the liberal arts, linking theory and practice, liberal and professional education. It seeks to uncover and probe the deep questions of human meaning. It places this search for truth within a value-centered worldview that begins with the dignity of each person, living their life within an interconnected whole that we call “creation.” Believers and non-believers alike celebrate the mutual communion we share with all creatures and God who loves us all into being. Liberal education and the values we affirm inform our models of professional education through which our students are called to service for the common good of all in our local, national, and global societies.

AN INCLUSIVE AND UNIFIED DIVERSITY

(24.) Among the values informing our educational excellence are inclusivity, equity, community, collaboration, solidarity with the suffering and poor and a spirit of service. Through reflection, discussion and application, these values form the context of education of the whole person. This environment nurtures networks

of relationships characterized by attention to the needs of others and service to meet those needs both in and outside the university.

(25.) Faculty, staff and students work together to form a community of learning in service to the common good of all attending to both the formal and informal dimensions of education. Our Catholic and Marianist identity models inclusivity as an expression of God’s enduring presence in all of creation, weaving all human beings and every creature together in one community of creation. Inclusivity is also expressed in our welcoming hospitality to all who are attracted to our universities as students, staff or faculty.

(26.) Community calls us to equity in access to our institutions and the opportunities we provide, helping us to form mutual relationships of service and love with one another in the pursuit of our mission. These relationships nurture in us collaboration in all dimensions of our work, play and prayer in university, and open our hearts to the suffering and needs of others. This conversion of heart, letting go of the desires for only self-satisfaction and selfish success, leads each of us to service that uplifts the common good of the university community and reaches out to heal the communities we serve.

PROVIDE OUTSTANDING CURRICULAR AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING HABITS OF REFLECTION, STUDY AND SERVICE

(27.) Marianist universities foster this conversion of heart through an education of the whole person, developing their physical, psychological, intellectual, moral, spiritual and social qualities. Faculty, staff and students attend to fundamental moral attitudes and ethical decision-making, serious research and study, develop their personal talents and acquire skills that will help them engage with society and work for its betterment. Beneath all these efforts at integration lies the deeper level of the spiritual lives of the students, staff, administration

and faculty, lives that are strengthened through habits of service, reflection and silence. These habits foster liberating if sometimes sobering self-knowledge, sharpen critical thinking and support prudent judgment. At this deeper level of integration, faculty and students interpret the meaning and consequences of data, facts and events at the local and global levels. Challenging as it is, the Catholic and Marianist mission and identity of the university ought to be also experienced in appropriate ways in the classroom. They learn too, that the academic disciplines are valuable resources for contemplating not just themselves and their relationships, but also the larger world of commerce, government and culture in the presence of God and the light of the Gospel. The deeper a person's interior life, the stronger is their desire to learn and to act for ethical and wise ends.

A MISSION-FOCUSED COMMUNITY

(28.) The Marianist emphasis on attentive presence, genuine community, and a call to competent and loving service creates an environment for community building, teaching and learning that is inviting and invigorating to people from any and all faith traditions. The Catholic intellectual tradition is the common source for our intellectual and spiritual journey in the university. It reminds us that every authentic human activity seeking the truth, whether secular or sacred in its intent and

methodology, expresses human dignity. Human dignity itself is tied to the common good, which is inclusive of all of God's creation, seen in the countless interdependent systems that sustain life and allow life to flourish. The tradition presents the myriad faces of the mystery of God become Jesus, Son of Mary. The university, formed in this mystery, nurtures the many paths of knowledge that help us understand humanity. In coming to know our authentic humanity within creation, we come to know Jesus, Son of Mary, God-with-us.

(29.) The educational tradition and spirituality of the Society of Mary bring to the ordinary commitments of a Catholic university its distinctive qualities: education for leadership as service and an abiding respect for the complementary nature of a liberal education on the one hand and professional and technical education on the other. These mission-critical qualities are resourced and monitored by the members of the boards of trustees or regents in a continuous and collaborative conversation with administrators, faculty, staff and students.



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Marianist Universities Educate in Family Spirit

(30.) *Marianist educational experience fosters the development of a community characterized by a sense of family spirit that accepts each person and invites everyone in the university into the challenge of building community within and beyond our campus. Communal support for scholarship; friendship among faculty, staff, administration and students; active participation; and genuine presence (in the community) embodies the uniqueness of a Marianist educational experience.*

CULTURE OF ACCEPTANCE

(31.) Marianists have a strong sense of community, traditionally called a community with “family spirit.” The Marianist family spirit is a way of life with traits that are discernible in the communities it permeates. The members of the Society of Mary do not choose with whom they live, but in their openness, they choose to live in an intentional faith community where they are committed to learn, love and respect those in whose company they find themselves. This sense of family extends to all members of the educational community.

(32.) Every type of Marianist community accepts members in the same way that a family accepts theirs; committed to support their members for continued growth and development. The sense of family enables Marianist universities to challenge faculty, staff, and students to authenticity, excellence, and maturity; because the acceptance and love of a community gives its members the courage to risk failure and the joy of sharing success while remaining appropriately professional and impartial.

FOSTER FRIENDSHIPS

(33.) The culture of acceptance that Marianists call family spirit focuses on the quality of relationships among the members in the community. It is essential that all members embrace the diversity of cultures that surrounds them by communicating with respect and treating one another as equals. Over the long term, these habits acknowledge the value of inclusivity and the dignity of every member cultivating the ground in which genuine relationships can take root and flourish.

(34.) In particular, Marianist universities tend to the relationships among its community members (faculty, staff and students), supporting, challenging and recognizing excellence in teaching, research and advising. Further, Marianist universities emphasize the communal dimensions of research, professional development and experiential learning, challenging and supporting the need for interdisciplinary endeavors that allow for open dialogue between educators and students alike. This culture of continuous learning allows for relationships to develop and extend beyond graduation into alumni networks.

(35.) Such a vision of community and friendship runs the risk of misinterpretation. It must therefore be recalled that friendliness and hospitality are genuine expressions of a process that necessarily includes healthy discourse, disagreement and dialogue. Yet, those grounded in the Marianist vision of education recognize that only with precisely this mix of hardships and triumphs can authentic communities be formed. Growth in Christian faith is now what it has always been — inevitably an experience of entering an ancient and ever new community of unique individuals, all of whom sought and seek what it means to believe in the midst of the complexities and ambiguities that are inescapably part of living in a faith community that respects the achievements of reason.

FORM COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES AND STRUCTURES

(36.) The Marianist educational tradition has long been characterized by shared responsibility for decision-making at all appropriate levels. Effective collaboration requires good communication, clear lines of authority, just policies and respect for the principle of subsidiarity. Furthermore, the Marianist university cooperates with other educational works, diocesan structures, ecumenical and interfaith initiatives, national and international organizations and the civic communities in which the university lives. All these forms of collaboration require, above all, lay faculty and staff educated in and committed to the vision and mission of the founding religious community.



CHARACTERISTICS OF MARIANIST UNIVERSITIES

Marianist Universities Educate for Service, Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

(37.) *The Marianist approach to higher education is deeply committed to the common good. The intellectual life itself is undertaken as a form of service in the interest of justice and peace, and the university curriculum is designed to engage the classroom with the wider world. Marianist universities extend a special concern for those who are poor and marginalized, and promote the dignity, rights and responsibilities of all peoples.*

PROMOTE A SENSE OF WORK AS MISSION

(38.) At Marianist universities, in a unique way, we are called to a striking “both/and” approach to our work, our growth and development, and our understanding of what it means to be an active community of faith. We know from Blessed Father Chaminade’s teachings that “the essential is the interior.” We are called to look within ourselves, and constantly strive for growth in our own prayer life and self-understanding. Blessed Father Chaminade also said: “We are all missionaries, and we consider ourselves on a permanent mission.” It is the mission of witnessing to the good news of Jesus. Marianist universities, like all Marianist communities, exist not only for themselves but also for the sake of those beyond the community. We recognize through this duality of interior focus and an outward call to serve others that, being in a state of permanent mission, we are gathered and sent. We come together as a community — faculty, students, staff, administrators — to learn, be nourished, develop in formation of faith and justice and expand the previous confines of our heart and mind; we then are sent forth into the world to be agents of change. Marianist education requires that we constantly look to and work with others in a search for justice: that is, a search for right relationship with God, self, others and creation.

ATTEND TO THOSE WHO ARE POOR AND MARGINALIZED

(39.) In line with our Catholic social tradition, we remain

committed to particular awareness and preferential treatment of those who are poor and vulnerable. We are mindful of those who are often marginalized by society and use our resources to create a more equal playing field — at home and in our communities, locally, nationally and globally. We choose to confront social ills with a perspective that is both compassionate and controversial — to challenge the status quo in the search for the common good. This requires us to be creative and innovative as we consider our response to the problems of the world. It also demands that we be courageous; that we be modern-day prophets, bringing to light the hard and often uncomfortable issues of our day. A Marianist education teaches one to think critically, to advocate and act for justice, always supporting the dignity of each person, to engage in deep social analysis, and to undertake research and initiatives that address actual social and moral problems. We do so in the spirit of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*'s observation that “If need be, a Catholic university must have the courage to speak uncomfortable truths which do not please public opinion, but which are necessary to safeguard the authentic good of society.”

PROMOTE THE DIGNITY, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF WOMEN AND MEN

(40.) It is part of our responsibility as institutions built on the teachings of Christ to promote the dignity of all human persons. To do so authentically, we must acknowledge, analyze and deeply comprehend global disparities and the intersectionality of power systems and injustice at work in our communities. Our critique must be inclusive of reflection on the roles we play, as both individuals and institutions, in creating and perpetuating systems of injustice.

(41.) Marianist universities recognize the critical importance of leading by example, and therefore start at the nucleus — that is, our own institutions and policies — to establish just structures and fair procedures. We strive to offer educational opportunities to individuals

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from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. We commit to paying just wages to employees, eliminating gender inequity and providing a healthy professional environment for all faculty and staff. We encourage space for open conversation and dialogue on ways in which, as institutions, we can improve upon our care of and respect for the needs of all members of our community. We then have the courage to explore that conversation in light of the needs of the world. Marianist universities recognize that those training and forming students, both inside and outside the classroom, bear a special responsibility to help them become aware of the history and contemporary reality of inequity in our nation and world, and to eliminate it where it still exists.

WORK TO INTEGRATE THEIR COMMITMENT TO SERVICE, JUSTICE AND PEACE INTO THE UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

(42.) A primary goal of a Marianist University education is to create space and opportunity where all members have the chance to discern and live into their vocations. This means that students, through their academic scholarship, service work, experiential learning, engagement in the community and relationships built with peers, faculty and staff, are asked to enter into deep exploration of

self, faith and the world around them. We want our students to ask themselves: what are my gifts, talents, skill sets and passions? How do they meet the needs of the world? As faculty and staff at Marianist universities, we challenge and support our students in exploring these questions during their university education and beyond; we recognize and embrace the responsibility and privilege of creating space where this profound transformation and growth can occur. In his encyclical, *Laudato Sí*, Pope Francis clearly draws the connection between the common good, the poor and care for the earth our common home. Marianist education embraces this connection, instilling in our students a respect for the integrity of creation and a commitment to environmental justice.



CHARACTERISTICS OF MARIANIST UNIVERSITIES

Marianist Universities Educate for Adaptation and Change

(43.) *In the midst of rapid social and technological transformation, Marianist universities adapt and change their methods and structures so that the wisdom of their educational philosophy and spirituality may be transmitted more fully.*

EDUCATE TO SHAPE THE FUTURE

(44.) “New times call for new methods,” Blessed Father Chaminade often repeated. Blessed Father Chaminade’s pragmatic and visionary approach allows for reading the “signs of the times” and responding with attention to history and tradition, while considering innovative and practical solutions for current and future contexts. The Marianist university balances acceptance and adaptation with a faithful commitment to shaping a hopeful future. This commitment involves ongoing discernment, guided by the Marianist educational philosophy and Christian wisdom, and with careful attention to the many influences on students’ education including technology, globalization, and financial cost. Fulfilling the Marianist university mission in changing times involves openness, prayerful reflection and strategic planning.

EDUCATE PERSONS TO UNDERSTAND HOW TO LIVE AUTHENTICALLY IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

(45.) If the world of the future is to be more peaceful than the 20th century was, all must learn how to appreciate cultural differences and how to work with people very unlike ourselves. To this end, Marianist universities cultivate the skills required for dialogue, consensus, and teamwork that depend on the virtues of loving acceptance of others, and faithful dedication to a collaborative, honest, and hopeful search for truth. Marianist universities foster these virtues through intentionally uniting people from diverse backgrounds in community.

DEVELOP CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

(46.) Students need a substantive knowledge of the past, analytical tools for understanding the world around them and critical thinking skills to mindfully respond and shape the unknowable future. Marianist universities encourage research and collaboration across academic and co-curricular departments, highlighting the complementary roles the classroom, faith and student life play in deepening learning and understanding of truth. Members of Marianist learning communities seek truth with both the confidence that our learning has a goal, and the humility to recognize our dependence on others.

ADAPTATION TO LOCAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS THROUGH INCULTURATION AND INTERDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION

(47.) Marianist education benefits local communities through adapting to distinctive local culture and complementing this adaptation with global awareness. Marianist educators encourage connections, both real and virtual, to other cultures, with emphasis on those within the Marianist international educational network. Academically, Marianist universities offer integrated curricula to shape students’ understanding of interconnectedness of human knowledge as a foundation for effective action in an increasingly interdependent world. Marianist schools provide opportunities for students, faculty, staff and administrators to put this education into action through cross-cultural immersion experiences locally, domestically and abroad.