Mission Statement

Saint John’s High School is a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School. A Saint John’s Catholic education is rooted in the commitment of the Xaverian Brothers to bring Christ to life in young men. For over one hundred years, a religious and lay staff has assisted students in discovering and developing their God-given talents. As a college preparatory school, Saint John’s fosters the formation of the whole person: spiritual, social, physical, intellectual, creative, and aesthetic.

At Saint John’s, students pursue personal growth in an environment that recognizes a moral dimension of life. A challenging academic program encourages love of learning as a stimulus for continued intellectual development. Students learn to appreciate the world’s beauty while exploring, developing, and expressing their creativity.

Saint John’s is a Christian community, founded upon the idea of the interdependence of individual members. In that context, students shape their identities as unique individuals with mutual obligations. Respect and appreciation for individual differences and those who comprise the larger community is an important part of the growth process of a Saint John’s student.

In the tradition of the Xaverian Founders, Saint John’s High School has been committed to students from a diversity of backgrounds, and affirms its commitment to providing opportunities to families in need, to the marginalized, and the poor.
# Table of Contents


Part II: Recommendations and Action Timeline 9

Part III: Appendices

- Appendix A: Committee Membership 20
- Appendix B: Subcommittee Reports and Executive Summaries 22
  - Culture and Identity 22
  - Co-Curricular Activities and Programs 39
  - Student/Faculty/Staff Recruitment and Development 46
  - Marketing and Communication 50
  - Curriculum 53
- Appendix C: Resources
  - Bibliography 67
  - Other Schools 68
  - Proposal on Student Resource Groups 70

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

- Martin Luther King Jr.

Origins

Called by our faith and inspired by our mission, Saint John’s High School believes that each individual – student, faculty, staff, parent, guardian, board member, alumnus - is created uniquely in the image and likeness of God. Deeply rooted in our tradition as a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School, we are committed to “respect and appreciation for individual differences” and “the idea of the interdependence of individual members” of our community (Saint John’s Mission Statement). We believe that by celebrating our individual gifts and differences, as well as remaining a united community, we are embracing and reflecting the motto of the Xaverian Brothers, “In harmony small things grow.” It is within this light that we have assembled a Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce at Saint John’s High School.

Mr. Alex Zequeira, Headmaster charged the Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce -- comprised of approximately fifty students, faculty, staff, parents, alumni, and other community member volunteers -- to reflect on the following question: How does our mission-related value of respect and appreciation for individual differences manifest itself at Saint John’s? Over the past six months, Taskforce subcommittees considered this question, as well as many others, as they sought to generate a detailed list of initiatives and action items to ensure that each and every member of the Saint John’s community knows they are loved and valued. The following pages are a reflection of that work and are meant to serve as a guideline for the school in the years to come.

Historically speaking, the initial desire to begin an intentional conversation about diversity and inclusion at Saint John’s grew out of the 2013-2014 reaccreditation process through the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). As part of the process, Saint John’s underwent a self-study exercise, examining key areas within the life of the school. Diversity and inclusion quickly rose to the level of a major recommendation from both the self-study report and the accreditation committee. Specifically, the report stated:

Saint John’s High School states clearly in its mission statement that it is committed to students from a diversity of backgrounds and has created an impressive atmosphere of respect and appreciation amongst all members of its Catholic, Xaverian community. The
Visiting Committee recommends that the School continues its process, through dialogue and discernment, of promoting genuine global citizenship among its constituents (NEASC Report, p.28).

Diversity and inclusion has also become an important part of on-campus conversations surrounding student wellness at Saint John’s. Specifically, on Thursday, February 16, 2017, over 95% of the student body voluntarily participated in the Independent School Health Check (ISHC) survey. The ISHC survey was developed by the Mental Health in Independent School Communities organization, based at the Institute of Living in Hartford Hospital. It has been used with great success by many independent schools such as Deerfield Academy, The Rivers School, and Concord Academy. Remarkably, Saint John’s was the first Catholic school in the country to administer this assessment tool. Information gathered from the ISHC survey provided the administration with valuable insights into our campus climate, student stress levels, and other data pertinent to implementing meaningful wellness and inclusion initiatives at the school. All of this work speaks to Saint John’s commitment to truly know and understand our students, with the idea of being able to better serve the unique needs of each individual member. The information gathered from this survey will continue to shape both wellness and diversity and inclusion practices for years to come.

In all things, Saint John’s strives to form “men of faith and men of service.” The school maintains a strong commitment to social justice understood as a moral imperative that is complex, inclusive, and intersectional. We work to realize this commitment in a student body that is actively committed to serving the poor and marginalized communities of the Western Hemisphere. The Fundamental Principles, inspired by the life and vision of Theodore Ryken, founder of the Xaverian Brothers, state, “You were created by the God of love...to be a unique expression of that love. It is through you that God desires to manifest Love to the people of the world in these times and to offer them the freedom of the children of God.” At the heart of all diversity and inclusion work, therefore, is a call to social justice. It is impossible to have authentic dialogue about diversity and inclusion without first accepting that this is primarily a social justice issue and one firmly grounded in our moral framework as a Catholic and Xaverian institution.

Thus, rooted in our faith, expressed through our mission, catalyzed by our accreditation process, and reflecting the modern world in which we are all citizens, Saint John’s High School has fully embraced the need for authentic “dialogue and discernment” around issues of diversity and inclusion. The following report is an initial step in this important journey.

Formation of the Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce

In late fall 2016, Alex Zequeira created the Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce and asked Michael Nicholson (Dean of Students) and Stephanie Yuhl (Parent ’19 and Professor of History...
Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce: Committee Report

and Director of Montserrat, the first-year program at the College of the Holy Cross) to serve as co-chairs. Alex, Mike, and Stephanie met on December 15 to discuss the Taskforce’s charge, purview, and timeline. Alex made four things clear from the outset: first, the Taskforce constituted a beginning to what should become an ongoing commitment and process of enlivening Saint John’s mission through attention to diversity and inclusion; second, we should aim to be as organic (generated by our research, discussions, and discernment) and comprehensive (no issues were “off the table”) in our imaginings as possible; third, that we should focus our recommendations on actionable outcomes; and fourth, that the Taskforce work should be transparent and public, and that Taskforce co-chairs would have autonomy over the proceedings without interference from the administration – that is, Alex would step aside and both allow and trust the Saint John’s community and the Taskforce process to take its course.

On Friday, November 11, Alex sent an email to faculty, staff, students, parents, and alumni, inviting their participation in Saint John’s Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce. Drawing upon our mission statement, Alex asked all members of our community to reflect upon the seemingly simple, yet profound question: “What does ‘respect and appreciation for individual differences and those who comprise the larger community’ look like at Saint John’s High School?” Alex set forth the charge of the Taskforce to “assess issues of diversity and inclusion at Saint John’s, areas where we need to gather more information, and to develop an action plan that we, as a community, can use in moving forward.” In his invitation, Alex asked us to consider the question, “[Does] everyone have access to a seat at the table at Saint John’s?” Alex specifically sought a diverse array of voices and experiences, over time and across demographics, in the membership of the Taskforce.

On Saturday, January 7, over fifty members of the Saint John’s community (see Taskforce Membership - Appendix A), including current students, faculty and staff, parents, and alumni, gathered in the McCarthy Library to constitute the Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce. In the Xaverian spirit, we commenced our discussions with the following prayer from Xavier University:

Celebrating Diversity

Almighty God, through your Holy Spirit you created unity in the midst of diversity;

We acknowledge that human diversity is an expression of your manifold love for your creation;
We confess that in our brokenness as human beings we turn diversity into a source of alienation, injustice, oppression, and wounding.

Empower us to recognize and celebrate differences as your great gift to the human family.
Enable us to be the architects of understanding, of respect and love;
Through the Lord, the ground of all unity, we pray. Amen.
The Taskforce utilized the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) definition of diversity as our guiding language:

Diversity is who we are. It is quantitative. It is defined by “otherness.” Most obviously it is determined by race, gender, and culture. On a more subtle level, it includes class, sexual orientation, religion, ability, and appearance. As a democratic nation we define ourselves through diversity. We believe in equal opportunity and equal access. Diversity exists in spite of, and sometimes because of, the action we take.

Over the course of three hours, the group engaged in lively conversation about the state of diversity and inclusion at Saint John’s. During our deliberations, we emphasized that authentic inclusion is not just a form of integration, but rather requires the fundamental transformation of the dominant culture. Some questions that guided our interactions included: What does our faith and/or mission call us to be in relation to each other? What does Saint John’s do well in regards to diversity and inclusion, and what needs attention? Where has the school been and where are we heading? Does everyone have access to a seat at the Saint John’s table? If not, what are the barriers to participation and belonging and how might we remove those barriers? What does it mean to be a truly inclusive community? What training and support might faculty and staff require to do this work? What is campus culture like for students and faculty? What programming, support, and culture changes would benefit student community-building, moral formation, and learning? How can we best cultivate in our students the skills and understanding necessary to succeed as global citizens – men of faith and men of service?

After a rigorous brainstorming session, we divided into small thematic discussion groups to begin to identify challenges and opportunities. Out of these groups emerged our five Taskforce Subcommittees:

1) Culture and Identity (co-chaired by Tim Canfield ’96 and Eric Butler ’02, Director of Development and Leadership Giving);

2) Student/Faculty/Staff Recruitment and Development (co-chaired by Cedrick Boursiquot ’09 and Paul Brule ’86, Director of School Counseling);

3) Marketing and Communication (co-chaired by Warren Hayden ’81, Director of Alumni and Justin Smith, Director of Admissions and Enrollment Management);

4) Co-Curricular Activities and Programming (co-chaired by Stephanie O’Donnell, Library Director and Jared Magsino ’17); and

5) Curriculum (co-chaired by Kevin Browne, Religious Studies faculty, and Jeanne Depasse, Interim Principal).
Process

Subcommittees convened throughout January, February, and March to outline their agendas and conduct the research necessary to address their particular task. Each subcommittee was asked to identify driving questions to direct their inquiry and to begin to articulate effective responses. As evidenced by the attached subcommittee reports (see Appendix B), these Taskforce volunteers entered their work with enthusiasm and thoughtfulness.

Subcommittees conducted formal research and connected with area professionals to determine a range of best practices for fostering an environment that values and nurtures diversity and inclusion throughout an institution in visible and consistent ways.

Subcommittees provided initial draft reports to Taskforce co-chairs by late-March. All drafts were posted to a shared Google drive so that every member of the Taskforce could access and comment on the reports, as desired. We are happy to share access to the Google-drive, that includes many of the same resources listed in Appendix C, with the Board of Trustees.

On April 6, subcommittee co-chairs met again in the library for a two-hour session dedicated to processing the subcommittee draft reports. Together, we identified areas of overlap to streamline our recommendations. In this meeting, we distinguished three “buckets” in which our recommendations could be located:

1) Student Experience at Saint John’s, which refers to student learning, school culture and campus climate, retention, and sense of community and comradery (brotherhood);

2) Professional Life at Saint John’s, which refers to faculty and staff professional development, formation, and retention, the cultivation of professional community and, vitally, the currency of the curriculum;

3) Communicating our Message and Values, which refers to diversity and inclusion language of critical school documents and publications, all Public Relations ventures (such as branding initiatives, marketing and messaging to various audiences, both internal and external), and, importantly, the recruitment and retention of faculty, staff, and students.

Taken together, these three categories form a multi-dimensional and integrated snapshot of key elements of Saint John’s High School, at the center of which sit our charge: approximately 950 young men in the process of intellectual, spiritual, and personal formation.
Part II: Recommendations & Action Timeline

“The paradox of diversity is that we are unique and like no one else, we are each like some other people and unlike other people, and we are each like all other people.” – Dr. Deborah L. Plummer

Overview

The Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce fully embraced the Xaverian spirit of inclusion and social justice as it focused its recommendations and actions on creating an environment that helps students develop their whole person, cultivate a positive self-image, and become fully part of the community. We have sought to ensure that the Saint John’s mission statement is fully realized in our daily practice. We have taken our call from the Charism Statement of all Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools, as we “seek to develop school communities in which we foster the belief and attitude that we ’were created by the God of love, in God’s image and according to God’s likeness, to be a unique expression of God’s love.’” Therefore, the Taskforce has chosen to highlight the following themes and ideas as an overview to the specific recommendations and action items that follow.

Essential to our work is the idea of non-indifference. Many institutions rely on the strategy of “safe spaces” to support members of marginalized sub-groups find a place on campus. While a fully detailed consideration of this strategy can be found in the Culture and Identity subcommittee report, the Taskforce recommends instead that Saint John’s take the care of our community one step further and embrace an attitude and culture of “non-indifference.” As opposed to only setting aside spaces where certain groups of students feel safe, a culture of non-indifference would seek to create a school where all are known, empowered, loved, and valued. In a culture of non-indifference, all students, faculty and staff feel comfortable bringing their whole selves to campus, standing up for the marginalized, and saying something or doing something when they see actions that are not in line with our principles and core values. It is the responsibility of the school to create the conditions necessary for Saint John’s men to feel encouraged and able to speak up and be agents for the community (sometimes referred to as “brave spaces” – see article “From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces” in Appendix C). We believe that creating a culture of non-indifference is essential to the recommendations and action items of the Taskforce being realized.

The Taskforce also recommends three distinct yet interrelated action items: a Diversity and Inclusion Committee, a diversity audit, and an Office of Community Affairs. The immediate formation of a Diversity and Inclusion Committee, the composition of which is to be determined, will be the primary vehicle for the implementation of the suggested action
items. In the short-term, we also recommend that the school undergo a holistic and analytic diversity audit, one that looks at micro and macro issues, in order to best identity areas for growth in current programming as well as opportunities for new initiatives, many of which are listed below. Finally, as a long-term item, the Taskforce recommends the creation of an Office of Community Affairs at Saint John’s that would oversee diversity, inclusion, and non-indifference work (see the Culture and Identity subcommittee report). We especially recommend that Saint John’s consult with Keith Crowley, Principal of Saint John’s Prep and Amit Taneja, Associate Dean for Diversity and Inclusion/Chief Diversity Officer at the College of the Holy Cross, two generous, local colleagues with expertise in the field.

The following recommendations and action items are areas we think need attention as we seek to be our best selves and fully live our mission. As stated in the introduction of the report, all information and data was collected and placed in three categories: Student Experience, Professional Life, and Communicating our Message and Values. We have prioritized recommendations as immediate (0-6 months), short-term (6-18 months), or long-term (18-36+ months). As Alex said from the start, this Taskforce constituted a beginning to what should become an ongoing commitment and process of enlivening Saint John’s mission through attention to diversity, inclusion, and non-difference. We are honored to have been part of this process, grateful for the good will of the school administration, and we look forward to the collective dialogue and work in the years ahead.

**Recommendations and Action Items**

I. **The Student Experience at Saint John’s**

The Student Experience at Saint John’s refers to those items pertaining to learning, school culture, campus climate, retention, and community/comradery (the “brotherhood”).

**Immediate Priorities (0-6 months)**

1. Develop Student Resource Groups (SRG’s)

The goal of these affinity groups is twofold: first, to provide space and support for particular groups within the student body; and second, to be fully inclusive (open to all students), creating not only an ally support system for those who may feel marginalized within the school, but also providing our students from within the dominant school culture an opportunity to learn, discuss, engage with, appreciate, and celebrate those individual differences amongst their classmates.
2. Develop an Internal Mentorship Program
The Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools website states, “The Xaverian charism is, at its core, relational. Therefore, an XBSS school strives to create an atmosphere in which relationships can grow and strive.” To help facilitate this process, we propose that Saint John’s create an internal mentorship program in which all willing faculty and staff adopt a group of mentees with whom they will work to develop a meaningful relationship.

3. Affirm and Expand the Role of Campus Ministry with regard to Inclusivity Efforts
Campus Ministry should continue to build upon interfaith and ecumenical opportunities that represent the rich religious diversity of our community and continue to integrate opportunities for reflection and contemplation for all students. Saint John’s is unapologetic and proud of its Catholic identity – the same identity that calls us to relationship with all of God’s children.

4. Reimagine Prom as Open to All Students
We recommend that the prom is presented to students as a year-end celebration where each student is entitled to take up to one guest of his choice. This would allow students to attend alone, if preferred, participate as a group of friends, or take a male or female friend to accompany him as part of the celebration.

Short-term Priorities (6-18 months)

1. Develop an External Mentorship Program for Students
We recommend that the school recruit external mentors (alumni, parents, community leaders) to actively engage with our community through many current programs (e.g.) Junior Career Night, Entrepreneurship Club/Course, etc., and other proposed initiatives (e.g. Student Resource Groups) that relate to diversity, inclusion, and non-indifference.

2. Review Current Extracurricular and Co-curricular Programming
Review current extracurricular and co-curricular programming (including athletics, the arts, etc.) for opportunities for diversity and inclusion initiatives (History Club, Culinary Club, Book Club, etc.). With this information, consider the possibility of creating new clubs/SRG’s and programs that reflect diversity and inclusion practices (a Multicultural Club, etc.).

3. Establish Alternative Forms of Work Study
A third of our student body is on some form of financial aid, including many of our students of color. We recommend developing further options for students on financial aid that are dignified and eliminate stigmatization.
4. Emphasize the Role of School Counseling and the Gregory Academic Center
    Saint John’s continues to diversify, not just racially, socioeconomically, or religiously, but also in terms of students with learning differences and mental health issues. The School Counseling Office, in conjunction with the newly opened Gregory Academic Center, should continue to emphasize its role in helping students with learning differences.

5. Develop Parent/Family Outreach and Programming
    Saint John’s views its relationship with students and families as a partnership, and therefore must create venues for critical reflection and dialogue on raising and educating young men. In particular, we recommend relevant and sensitive programming for “nontraditional” Saint John’s families who may feel disconnected from the perceived dominant culture of the school.

Long-term Priorities (18-36+ months)

1. Partner with Saint John’s Prep to better understand their Diversity and Inclusion efforts
    Saint John’s Prep (SJP) has a long-standing, robust, and well-developed Office of Multicultural Affairs and Community Development (MACD). By partnering with them, both schools create a stronger professional development network for our faculty and staff and provide a greater, more diverse extension of ‘the brotherhood’ for our students.

2. Normalize Interactions with Female Students
    As attendance at school dances has declined in recent years, it has become increasingly important to offer opportunities for Saint John’s students to interact with young women. Saint John’s might partner with girls from other schools’ clubs (engineering, investment, etc.) and share programming to educate our students on sexual harassment/assault (bystander training, for example), sexist rhetoric, and feminism. All Saint John’s graduates leave their single-sex educational space and enter a world where they need to be able to function appropriately and respectfully with female peers.

3. Consider Hiring a Mental Health Professional
    As students with mental health issues and learning challenges fall under a broader definition of diversity, consider adding a mental health professional to staff as part of a comprehensive plan to address multiple segments of the school population.

II. Professional Life at Saint John’s

Professional Life at Saint John’s refers to those items pertaining to professional development, faculty and staff formation and retention, and community cultivation.
Immediate Priorities (0-6 months)

1. Diversity and Professional Development
   We strongly recommend that the Professional Development Committee select diversity, inclusion, and non-indifference as the theme for the upcoming school year. As part of this work, relevant workshops and conferences (NAIS, SEED, etc.) for faculty and staff should be explored. We also recommend that the Professional Development Committee utilize both external professional training programs as well as speakers from within the community.

Short-term Priorities (6-18 months)

1. Examine the Current Curriculum
   We recommend that a subcommittee of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, comprised of teachers, students, and alumni, continue to study and discuss how diversity, inclusion, and non-indifference are represented in the curriculum and in classroom practices.

2. Diversity and Inclusion Training
   Saint John’s should research and require ongoing (not a one-time event) diversity and inclusion training for all faculty and staff, as well as for all new employees. This will allow all employees to stay current and to work more effectively within our increasingly diverse community.

3. Hiring for Diversity
   Saint John’s must consider strategies for recruiting and retaining a faculty and staff that reflect the demographics of the student body. In the meantime, we should consider utilizing external mentors for our students and SRG’s.

Long-term Priorities (18-36+ months)

1. Physical Space
   Saint John’s should examine spaces on campus to experiment with non-traditional classrooms and resource areas (furniture other than desks, etc.) to encourage more inclusive and creative pedagogies to nurture student self-awareness and voice.

2. Incentivizing Diversity, Inclusion, and Non-indifference Training
   We recommend that Saint John’s create meaningful incentives for faculty and staff to attend training that leads to tangible returns in regards to diversity, inclusion, and non-indifference efforts (creating/revising a course, establishing an SRG, etc.).
III. Communicating our Message and Values

Communicating our Message and Values refers to those items pertaining to critical school documents and publications and public relations (marketing and branding initiatives/messaging). These initiatives are relevant to the recruitment and retention of faculty, staff, and students. The proposed Office of Community Affairs will be essential to this process.

Immediate Priorities (0-6 months)

1. Examine Language and Visuals of Current School Documents
   Saint John’s should adopt and infuse critical school documents/media and publications with language that captures institutional goals, practices, and mission as they relate to diversity, inclusion, and non-indifference. Statements should reflect the Xaverian mission rooted in the gospel message of inclusivity and love of all.

2. Keep Legal Protection Language
   Saint John’s should adopt a position of inclusivity that is rooted in the profoundly inclusive message of the Gospel, while reserving its lawful rights to take actions designed to sustain its Xaverian, Catholic tradition, such as hiring for mission.

3. Empower Students
   We must empower our students to take ownership of and positively shape school culture. Student voices are essential in the rebranding and messaging of diversity, inclusion, and non-indifference at Saint John’s.

Short-term Priorities (6-18 months)

1. Draft Two Policy Statements: Non-discrimination & Inclusion and Diversity, Inclusivity, & Non-indifference
   We recommend that Saint John’s formally draft a statement of non-discrimination and inclusion for its faculty and staff members (an employee agreement) as well as a statement of diversity, inclusivity and non-indifference for its entire community.

2. Ongoing Revision of Marketing and Branding Initiatives
   Saint John’s should regularly review and revise its marketing and branding initiatives and documents to reflect ongoing cultural evolutions in coordination with the Admissions Office and Alumni Office.
## Summary Recommendations and Action Items

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<tr>
<th>STUDENT EXPERIENCE</th>
<th>PROFESSIONAL LIFE</th>
<th>COMMUNICATING OUR MESSAGE AND VALUES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IMMEDIATE (0-6 months)</strong></td>
<td>Diversity Committee</td>
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<td>Student Resource Groups</td>
<td>Professional Development Theme / Identify Conferences &amp; Workshops</td>
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<td>Internal Mentorship Program</td>
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<td>Reimagine Prom</td>
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<td><strong>SHORT TERM (6-18 months)</strong></td>
<td>Diversity Audit</td>
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<td>External Mentorship Program</td>
<td>Review Curriculum / Explore Faculty, Staff, Alumni Stories</td>
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<td>Review Extra- and Co-Curricular Programs</td>
<td>Diversity and Inclusion Training</td>
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<td>Hiring/Recruiting Initiatives</td>
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<td>Partner with Saint John’s Prep</td>
<td>Examine and Reimagine Physical Space on Campus/Pedagogy</td>
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In addition to the resources listed below, we especially recommend that Saint John’s consult with Keith Crowley, Principal of Saint John’s Prep and Amit Taneja, Associate Dean for Diversity and Inclusion/Chief Diversity Officer at the College of the Holy Cross, two generous, local colleagues with expertise in the field.

Akamai Technologies. Workplace Diversity program and interview with Marco Irizarry, Manager of Diversity, Inclusion and Social Responsibility.


Information regarding affinity groups, statements of non-discrimination, and other diversity initiatives were researched from the following schools, either through phone conversations, email, or the school’s website. Some documents from these schools appear on the Google-drive, which can be made available upon request.

Assumption College - Worcester, MA (www.assumption.edu)
Boston College - Chestnut Hill, MA (www.bc.edu)
Boston College High School - Boston, MA (www.bchigh.edu)
Central Catholic High School – Lawrence, MA (www.centralcatholic.net)
Cristo Rey High School Boston – Dorchester, MA (www.cristoreyboston.org)
College of the Holy Cross - Worcester, MA (www.holycross.edu)
Holy Name Junior/High School – Worcester, MA (www.holyname.net)
McQuaid Jesuit (6-12) – Rochester, NY (www.mcquaid.org)
Mount Saint Joseph’s High School – Baltimore, MD (www.msjnet.edu)
Our Lady of Good Counsel High School – Olney, MD (www.olgchs.org)
The Rivers School – Weston, MA (www.rivers.org)
Saint John’s Prep - Danvers, MA (www.stjohnsprep.org)
Saint Mark’s School – Southborough, MA (www.stmarksschool.org)
Saint Peter-Marian Junior/Senior High School - Worcester, MA (www.spmguardians.org)

Worcester Academy – Worcester, MA (www.worcesteracademy.org)

Worcester Public Schools – Worcester, MA (www.worcesterschools.org)

Xaverian Brothers High School – Westwood, MA (www.xbhs.com)