

DuxEsto

MAGAZINE



AUTHENTICALLY
FAITHFUL

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PURPOSEFULLY
COMPASSIONATE

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FRONTLINE
ALUMNI

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DISCOVER THE GROSS CATHOLIC DIFFERENCE

OPEN HOUSE | 11.8.20



GROSS CATHOLIC

FAMILY • COMPASSIONATE • DRIVEN



11:00am - 12:30pm • 8th Grader & Parents | 12:30pm - 2:00pm • 7th Grader & Parents

- Explore our school during personalized tours.
- Discover our many top-rated academic and extracurricular programs.
- Learn about the Marianist HOUSE system.

- Watch a demonstration by our world-class robotics team and learn about our innovation programs.
- Receive information about our Individualized Tuition Plans.
- Spin the wheel for a prize!

Attending Open House qualifies you for the \$1000 Campus Visit Grant.

Social distancing and face masks are required.

R.S.V.P. not required. Walk-ins welcome!

For more information contact our Admissions Office at 402.734.2000.

Dux Esto Magazine

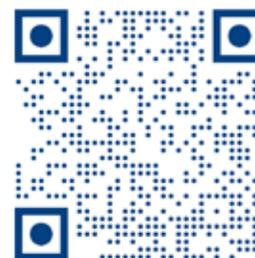
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Check out our blog for year-round stories about the Gross Catholic Community

Front Cover: Brousek and Vogel families and friends gather for homecoming to share their Cougar Spirit. Marlene (Vogel) Deras '74, Dean Vogel '75, Kerry Rezek '75, Tim Brousek '76, Patty (Brousek) Rezek '78, Mark Vogel '80, Ted Nestroyl '80, Bob Brousek '90, Kathleen Brousek '22, Paul Brousek '12, Doug Rezek '08, Laura (Rezek) Hughes '04, Marie Brousek '25, Tommy Brousek '25

The Gross Catholic Advancement Office made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this magazine. Please accept our apology for any errors or omissions.

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."

Ecclesiastes 3:1



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we make our way through this uncertain and unsettling school year, I would first like to say how proud I am of our school community — always — but especially during these challenging times. In the face of many hardships this year, all of us have come together, with courage and commitment, to remain focused on our mission. We are providing our kids an excellent academic program surrounded by faith and family. That's the Gross Catholic way. All of us working together, supporting each other to accomplish our goals. We are community. Built on a great foundation with a bright and promising future ahead. And it is precisely because we are a community and we are so strong, that I feel so confident about the future of this wonderful school.

This year marks my 40th year in Catholic education and my 40th year here at Gross Catholic and it has been wonderful. The opportunities I've been given. The fun I've had. But now, for me, the time has come. And after much prayer and reflection, I have made the decision to step back and to retire at the end of the school year. I do this, again, with the utmost faith and confidence in our future. And with the knowledge that the legacy and future of Gross Catholic is bigger than all of us.

During my time here I have served as teacher, administrator, and now as president. And I have loved each and every moment. This community has given me so much and I've been blessed in so many ways. I am so grateful for the love and support of so many over the years. To my family. The faculty and staff. The parents and alumni. The many other friends of Gross Catholic. And most of all the students. Thank you. Thank you for your gift of light and laughter. And for the joy and purpose you have given me each day.

You will always remain in my heart and in my prayers. Please keep me in yours. God bless you, Cougars, and Dux Esto!!!

Wishing you God's continued blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Dorothy A. Ostrowski". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Dorothy A. Ostrowski
President

We invite you to honor your loved ones by enrolling them in Our Lady of Perpetual Help (OLPH) Memorial Society. This special memorial, created in 1983, serves two important purposes:

- It is a meaningful way to remember loved ones daily in the Masses and prayers of the students and faculty of Gross Catholic High School.
- It affirms your belief in Catholic education by supporting the students of Gross Catholic. Gifts to the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Memorial Society are accepted throughout the year as we support your prayer intentions.

The Cougar Family prays for the enrolled member of the OLPH Memorial Society daily. Please join with us as we prayerfully remember our loved ones, especially those who have preceded us and live in God's presence.

i If you would like to receive OLPH Memorial envelopes to enroll a loved one, please contact the **Advancement Office at 402.734.2000.**

MEMORIALS APRIL 1, 2020 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2020

ANNIVERSARY

Joe and Rachel Randolph

IN MEMORY OF

Ken Alexander
 William "Bill" Harry Bahnke
 James Burns
 Edward Bursick
 Scott J. Buscher
 Courtney "Corky" Campbell
 Joan T. Chonis
 Jerome M. Conway
 Jim Crawford
 Jean Diggins
 Robert Duckworth
 Richard "Dick" Elman
 Frank Sorensen Frank
 Mary "Peg" Gehringer
 Michele "Micky" Gehringer
 Donna Holmes
 Leo Homan
 Dr. HL Hutcheson
 Douglas Incontro
 John Jansen
 Jean E. Jelinek
 Tom Johns
 Michael Keegan
 Paul M. Kilborn
 Winnie Kouba
 Beverly B. Lewis
 Colleen Lynch
 Julia Mullin
 Jesse J. Nunez

Jan Pick
 Jeff Pick
 Amy Popish
 Lucy Ramos
 Elizabeth Ripa
 Gary Ryan
 Ron Saenz
 Downey James "Jim" Sandoz
 Irene Serpico
 Linda Sluyter
 Alice M. Stanek
 Stacia Stavneak
 Rev. Richard Steinhilber
 Rev. Dick Steinhilbur
 Dorothy "Phyllis" Stika
 Kathy Stranglen
 Betty Louise Stutzman
 Teresa Sullivan
 Jean Targy
 Lynnae Thompson
 Terrence Tonkin
 Lynette Turner
 Lorraine Walters
 Richard A. Weak
 Thomas J. Wilwerding
 Mary Rae Wolf
 Joel Wommack
 Frank Zelensky

Please pray for our recently deceased members of the Cougar Family. May the souls of the faithfully departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace.



Tom Wilwerding,
Class of 1978



Jane Skradski
Spires,
Class of 1981



Bernadine
Boylan Ritchie,
Class of 1983



Lynette Lacombe
Turner,
Class of 1986



Joe Becklun,
Class of 1988



Ronald Saenz,
Class of 2004

The Gross Catholic High School Advancement Office made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this report. Please accept our apology if we have misspelled a name or omitted anyone. If you notice such an error, please notify our office so we may correct our records.

Authentically Faithful

For some individuals, the pandemic was a deep blow to their faith. However, for a group of Gross Catholic students, it was an opportunity to deepen their faith. Allison Drozd '22, Kyle Wozniak '20, Kathleen Brousek '22, and Gabriel Alcala '22 used this time to grow closer to God. They created a bible study focused on the book of Exodus and met about once a week.

Allison led the group and set up a general structure for each bible study meeting. It typically started with some prayer or a point to ponder. She started one of their meetings with a prayer focused on turning to God when things are hard.

“Dear God, we turn to you when our world is troubled. When everything is falling apart, we realize how much we depend on you. When things get back to normal, help us take the lessons we learned, during this difficult time, with us. It is easy to make empty promises and go back on our word(s) to you. Please don't let us be swayed by others who fail to remain faithful to you or their word(s). Don't let us push you away, but help us trust in you and your plan. You are always present with us. Remind us of your presence and help keep us faithful to you. Amen.”

Allison sometimes used notes already in her bible to guide them. Other times she chose a theme and composed the prayer herself. They focused on themes from the Book of Exodus including how God has a plan, how God proves himself constantly, and the numbers three and seven. There were weekly themes from the chapters they read and the themes remained fairly consistent throughout Exodus. They also used their English education from school to discuss a lot of symbolism like the meanings of the numbers and animals.

The group sometimes watched short videos that introduced the Bible passage that they would

be discussing. The short videos included Veggie Tale episodes or other short films. During some meetings, Mrs. Brousek, a Theology teacher at Gross Catholic, was able to help answer questions that came up. Brousek's guidance led them into deeper discussions or questions about chapters. The format of the meetings changed a little from week to week, but toward the end they mixed it up with a “Jesus Jam Session” where they would relate songs (Christian or popular) to the stories/concepts they read. The reading was then reinforced with a related Jesus video found on YouTube.



Gabriel Alcala '22, Allison Drozd '22 and Kathleen Brousek '22 discuss themes from the Book of Exodus.

To wrap up their meetings the group discussed what impacted each of them the most, then created a challenge action to be completed that week. After each meeting, Allison would send a summary of the meeting and “assign” the next chapters they would read for the following week. The students were able to watch their faiths grow while in a small community during a time when they could not be together with the rest of their classmates.

Academically Driven

At the beginning of March, most students and faculty were ready for a break from their schoolwork. However, no one imagined that when they left for spring break on March 6th, that there would be no return to “normal.” Nebraska schools closed abruptly on March 16th as a result of Covid-19. Gross Catholic faculty and administration immediately turned to our Marianist characteristics, adaptation and change, and began to forge a new education plan.

The plan required flexibility as they navigated obstacles. “As the principal, I saw several challenges for our students. The biggest being the quick transition we had to make from in-person learning to remote learning,” Ms. Neuhalfen said. “Not all students excel with online learning and really rely on face-to-face, in-person learning as a primary learning style. Those students required more attention and dedication from our staff.”

To keep a level of accountability and normalcy, students had an abbreviated eight period schedule, Monday through Friday, and attendance was taken daily in each class. Students were required to answer an attendance question which varied from a minor event to something they were currently studying in class.

Fortunately, Gross Catholic already had several things in place that made the transition to online learning easier. Every student had a laptop or tablet as a result of the Bring-Your-Own Device Program that was originally introduced in 2001. Additionally, Google Classroom had recently been implemented and was already being used as part of the curriculum in many courses.



NOAH MILLER '21

“The teachers did a great job of keeping us learning as if we were still in school. For some classes we would do a Zoom a couple times a week, and for others we would watch Edpuzzle videos and answer questions. What we did depended on the teacher and class, but overall we didn’t miss much.”

ORTMAN SCHOLARS

The Ortman Scholar Award, named for one of Gross Catholic’s founding donors, Mrs. Louise Ortman Gross, is the highest academic honor awarded to graduating seniors who have earned a cumulative grade point average of 4.0 or higher.

We are proud to share that the Class of 2020 boasted 21 Ortman Scholars – representing nearly one-third of the 2020 graduating class!

Google Classroom became the primary way for faculty to communicate, teach, and assign homework for students. Many teachers filmed lectures so students could reference them as needed. They also utilized Zoom to teach new material to classes and provide one-on-one tutoring for students needing extra help.

Gross Catholic continued to provide services for students including tutoring, counseling, and daily faith formation. The Campus Ministry program, Marianist Integration Team, counselors, and services with Catholic Charities allowed the staff to continue their relationships

with the students, even when everyone could not be together. The holistic education plan along with dedication from the faculty and staff, set Gross Catholic apart from other schools, that were not able to provide the same level of support for their students.

“The pivot to remote learning reiterated the importance of relationships with our students, which is something we really focus on,” said Ms. Neuhalfen. “We strive to not only provide a quality education, but also to make a personal connection with students and their families to create a trusted learning relationship.”



{ TIM POWERS, TEACHER }

“We learned a lot of new ways to teach the students through other avenues such as EdPuzzles, Zoom, Google Classroom, and AP Classroom. Teachers were able to collaborate with each other and share ideas.”



{ JUDY SAULEY, PARENT }

“The teachers kept the students engaged and learning with adjusted schedules, so the kids knew what to expect every day. The faculty communicated what was going on to the students and parents so I knew what to expect as a parent.”

Collin Patrick Almgren
 Madelyn Kathleen Begley
 Jaycee Christine Billings
 Chaz Elliott Bogle
 Karlie Therese Chonis
 Anna Olivia Davis
 Abby Kristine Dostal

Abbie Jo Gaube
 Megan Lee Hardisty
 Rachel Kathleen Jacobson
 Nolan John Lewandowski
 Taylor Ann Mahoney
 Blake Marie McDowall
 Jillian Marie McNamara

Molly Kathryn Mendick
 Dominic David Minardi
 Nhu Nguyen
 Erin Marie Ruane
 Atticus William Stansbury
 Madeline Ann Thompson
 Kyle Thomas Wozniak

Purposefully Compassionate

Madeline Thompson never wanted to go back to school so bad in her life.

The Gross Catholic High School senior and her friends just wanted one more day. One more day of classes, teacher instruction and bustling hallways. One more day of eating lunch in the commons. One more day of hanging out with friends in the senior lounge.

Then came the realization - that one day would never happen. "I didn't know how to cope," Thompson said. Covid-19 shut down school in mid-March, cancelling those last few months of senior year along with the things that could have been - that final victory in a spring sport, that final bow in the spring musical, that final dance with someone special at prom.

Worst of all, seniors couldn't say "good-bye" and "thank you" to friends and teachers, and to hear in return "you've made us proud" and "we'll miss you." The feeling of great loss was seen on the faces of the teens by their parents.

"I think of senior year as a rite of passage," said Madeline's mom, Mary Jo (McKernan) Thompson '88.

Something had to be done. And who better to make it happen than members of the Cougar family? Parents, alumni, teachers, administrators and businesses were eager to create a send-off the graduates would never forget.

It began April 15th with the "Be the Light" drive-by. Nick Sidzyik, the father of Mackenna Sidzyik, suggested joining the nationwide event, honoring seniors with a drive around the lighted baseball and football fields at 8:20 p.m., or 20:20 military time. Through dozens of texts, Instagram and Facebook postings, the parents pulled it off. The result was a string of honking cars, driving bumper-to-bumper down 42nd Street, filled with seniors and their families, waving and shouting to one another.

After a month of quarantine, "it was the first time they would see each other," said Barb (Saum) Brennan '01, mother of Nate Brennan. "Initially,

the kids thought that would be the last time they would see each other."

They were wrong.



Erin Ruane '20 enjoys seeing staff and classmates during the senior parade on May 1st 2020.



Barb (Saum) Brennan '01 supports the class of 2020 during the senior parade.

Next came the yard signs and another parade of cars. Barb Brennan and Kerry Soby, mother of Trystan Soby, ordered personalized signs, for each of the seniors, to post on their lawns to attract recognition in their neighborhoods. Thompson suggested first posting the signs at Gross with another drive-by celebration. This time, teachers, staff and administrators would be standing curbside, waving to seniors and wishing them well. Father Ryan Lewis of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish, who had been Gross chaplain for much of the students' high school career, led a special blessing.

There were dozens of cars and trucks, decorated with posters and balloons, filled with cheering seniors. “Mr. Dempsey had to direct traffic through St. Bernadette’s parking lot,” Brennan said.

“Personally, it brought me to tears,” she said, witnessing all the love being shown to the teens.

“It’s been fun surprising them with what we were doing,” she said.

And the surprises kept coming.

The Adopt-a-Senior project matched seniors with Gross alumni. Parents filled out short interest surveys about their children - sports and clubs, volunteer efforts, academics, goals - and they were matched with alumni with the same interests. The call went out on social media at the end of April. Within two weeks, alumni from the Class of 1978 to 2016 stepped up to be paired with seniors. In fact, there were so many enthusiastic alumni that some shared adoptions and more. An anonymous donor gave \$500 for class t-shirts and Miranda (Smith) Engelkamp ‘02 of Leni+Lou printed them at a discount.



Alumni wrote letters to their seniors and gave them small gifts some of which included gift cards, snacks, and things for their dorm room or future profession.

Madeline Thompson ‘20 visited by alumnae Alison (Tysor) Bernholt ‘01 with a gift basket to prepare her for nursing school.

Nate Fiscus, who was adopted by Dustin ‘96 and Erica (Luellman) ‘95 Franks, Shane ‘00 and Sara Minardi, and Louie Nacarelli ‘18, received an electrician belt and electrician pliers for his chosen future profession.

Besides the gifts, the alumni were also asked to be there for the seniors as they stepped into the real world.

Madeline Thompson, who will be going to nursing school, was paired with Alison Tysor Bernholt ‘01, a nurse who could provide advice about schooling and the profession.

Kyle Wozniak, who will enter the seminary, was paired with Father Jim Keiter, a friend of Brennan’s and former priest at Assumption parish.

“I didn’t want them to feel no one cared,” Brennan said about working behind the scenes on the events. “I feel so blessed to be a part of it.”

Brennan, an Intensive Care Unit nurse, said the senior salutes helped her find “the positive in this Covid-19 stuff. ... This is my joy, my labor of love.”

Months before the Coronavirus pandemic began, the Class of 2020 was already receiving special attention. At the beginning of the school year, Molly (McGill) Nolte ‘99, Gross Catholic’s Director of Alumni and Communications, had recruited alumni willing to include the seniors in their daily prayers. This plea for special intentions attracted 70 alumni - young and old from around the globe - willing to pray for the seniors.

During the senior’s January retreat, students wrote to those alumni, thanking them for their intentions. At the end of the year, the alumni wrote sentimental notes back as part of an “alumni kit” for each student. One prayer sponsor, Mary Ann Borgeson ‘80, wrote a personal note to each one of the 79 graduates.

“I think that meant a lot to the seniors,” Nolte said of the prayer sponsors’ efforts.

“It was crazy how the end of the year turned out,” she said. “The students really needed those prayers.”

Thompson is thankful for all the efforts by alumni to make the end of the year eventful for the seniors. Their willingness to help demonstrates the devotion they still have to Gross, a small, religious school that is a special place for many graduates.

“Whenever you need help, you can reach out to the Cougar family,” Thompson said.

Madeline, one of Gross’s newest alumni, experienced that feeling of family after getting closure for her senior year.

“It was such a big deal for us to see how much they care about us,” she said.

PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE GIVING LEVELS

We hope you'll join us at the following giving levels, however gifts of any amount are appreciated and benefit our students.

PLATINUM
\$10,000 and above

GOLD
\$7,500-\$9,999

SILVER
\$5,000-\$7,499

BRONZE
\$2,500-\$4,999

ORANGE & BLUE
\$1,000-\$2,499

Go to grosscatholic.org to make your contribution to the Dux Esto Annual Fund.

 Please contact the Development Office at **402.734.2000** or grosscatholic.org/annual-fund for more information.



GROSS CATHOLIC

DUX ESTO ANNUAL FUND



Elena Simpson '21

As a Catholic school, Gross Catholic relies on generous support to make up the difference between tuition revenue and the full cost of providing a superior academic program. All Gross Catholic students benefit from a \$1,500 grant. Additionally, more than 75 percent of the school's students receive tuition assistance or academic scholarships.

The Dux Esto Annual Fund is our annual giving program that invites all friends of Gross Catholic to invest in our mission with a financial gift. A gift to the Dux Esto Annual Fund goes to work immediately to strengthen and support Gross Catholic's operating budget, mission and commitment to providing families with an affordable Catholic education.

Last year, donors made gifts ranging from \$5 to \$50,000, raising over \$320,000. This year's goal is \$340,000. Financial gifts at all levels are appreciated and have a transformational impact on Gross Catholic and our students. One of those students is Elana Simpson.

My name is Elena Simpson, and I will soon join the legendary Cougar alumni. As I look back on my years at Gross, a bittersweet sensation comes over me. Though I will miss being with this family every day, I am excited to forge my path with the tools Gross has given me.

I chose to join this community because of the close-knit atmosphere. When I shadowed five years ago, I immediately knew this place and people would be my home for the next four years. I have not regretted my choice since. Gross shaped me into a more well-rounded person through all of the activities in which I was able to participate. Being a member of the soccer and golf teams were some of the best experiences of my high school career. I developed relationships I will cherish for years to come.

In addition to soccer and golf, I was given the opportunity to serve on the student council, as a student ambassador, and as a member of the NHS. These clubs strengthened my leadership and teamwork skills which I plan to carry into my future endeavors. These future endeavors lie at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I am blessed to have been awarded the Regents Scholarship, which I will use to study Elementary Education. Because of my teachers, I earned this scholarship.

They pushed me to be better every day in both my academics and my faith. I am forever grateful to these educators, my classmates, and this community for helping me become the person I am today.

My time at Gross would not have been possible, without financial aid. Scholarships, anonymous donations, and work-study enabled me to be a member of the Cougar family. I would like to extend a thank you to all who helped make my Gross education and experience possible. It is because of you that I can now say, "Dux Esto."

Elena Simpson '21

How can I support the Dux Esto Annual Fund?

- **Make a one-time gift or pledge a monthly, quarterly, or annual gift**
 - **Become a member of The President's Circle which recognizes leadership giving to the Dux Esto Annual Fund at the \$1,000 level or higher. Members of the President's Circle are among Gross Catholic's most faithful donors.**
 - **Consider a Planned Gift**
-

Go to grosscatholic.org, or scan the QR code, to make your contribution to the Dux Esto Annual Fund.



2020-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION

Gross Catholic High School is a faith and family based community committed to developing Christian leaders through educational excellence in the Marianist tradition.

VISION

To be widely recognized as a premier Archdiocesan high school, serving a diverse population within a strong framework of Catholic values while providing excellent, innovative educational opportunities and emphasizing community service and outreach.

MISSION AND CATHOLIC IDENTITY

GOAL 1 **Gross Catholic will strengthen its Catholic identity through the integration of formation throughout all aspects of school life.**

- Review the liturgical calendar to ensure quality access to masses, prayer services, and reconciliation is provided to the student body.
- Provide prayer books and faith formation materials for faculty, staff and students on an annual basis.
- Invite all priests and deacons to visit Gross Catholic on an annual basis.
- Include an annual opportunity for Eucharistic adoration.
- Include a component during all faculty and staff meetings that helps teachers understand ways to integrate Catholicity throughout the curriculum.
- All classes will begin with prayer.

GOAL 2 **Gross Catholic will enculturate its Marianist Charism throughout all aspects of school life.**

- Educate the Gross Catholic community on our Marianist identity in alignment with the MIT (Mission Integration Team) plan.
- Use the Pillars of the Marianist Charism to develop Marianist spirituality by specifically focusing on two pillars each year.
- Two staff/faculty members will attend a Marianist workshop/retreat annually. All staff will have completed at least one workshop by their second year of employment.
- Educate the Gross Catholic community on the difference between the Marianist Charism and the Characteristics of Marianist Education.
- For new faculty and staff orientation, include an element to help them understand their role as Catholic school educators at a Marianist school.
- Allocate space for refurbished artwork by Brother Mel and other Marianist artists.
- Create a comprehensive Marianist formation program for all current and future Board members.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

GOAL 1 **Gross Catholic will advance academic achievement through data tracking, professional development, and strategic resourcing.**

- The operational budget will annually allocate adequate funds to support professional development and instructional needs.
- Succession planning is in place for program continuity.
- Faculty professional growth and evaluation will be aligned with metrics for academic achievement.
- Partnerships with other Archdiocesan schools will be explored to determine how to best leverage economies of scale to support academic excellence.
- Training will be provided in the use of formative and summative assessments to monitor students' academic progress
- and make informed decisions regarding professional development and academic programs.
- Current academic programs will be assessed to determine where to add courses, eliminate courses, or combine courses to ensure both educational and instructional goals are met.
- Faculty compensation will be competitive with other local secondary schools.
- The school will develop a plan to increase diversity among faculty/staff and ensure commitment to mission in new hires.

GOAL 2 **Gross Catholic will adopt and implement a system-wide instructional model that includes continuous evaluation of instructional practices to support student learning and success through engaging and challenging learning experiences for all students.**

- Faculty will continue to demonstrate effective use of Marzano's nine strategies to improve student learning.
- Explore implementation of a digital platform that allows teachers to view assessment data in real time to drive instruction.
- Analyze data to determine the needs of English Language Learner students to position these students for success.
- Analyze data to determine students' individualized learning plans.

GOAL 3 **Gross Catholic will enhance student engagement and success through implementation of a plan to academically differentiate Gross Catholic from nearby public schools**

- Facilitate a process to provide or enhance school-based services for students with moderate special education needs and differentiation of instruction for all students.
- Establish and maintain a variety of co-curricular opportunities as well as specialized academic programs to teach to differences among learners such as English Language Learners, behaviorally challenged, and talented/gifted students.
- Expand summer school offerings to facilitate student academic progress and success.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2012 the financial condition of Gross Catholic has stabilized and development efforts have experienced growth in the areas of major gifts and annual giving. Enrollment has held steady at around 400 students, although the school is positioned for growth. It will be critical to further strengthen the financial position and successfully market Gross Catholic as the school of choice in Sarpy County over the next several years. To this end, the following plan is built around the Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Schools and its leading pillars: 1) Mission and Catholic Identity, 2) Leadership and Governance, 3) Academic Excellence, and 4) Operational Vitality.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

GOAL 1 **The Board of Directors and school leadership will develop a clear vision for the school that outlines the school's identity, goals, etc. and consistently communicate this information to all stakeholders**

- The Executive Committee of the Board and committee chairs will outline a plan to maximize participation and engagement in Board and committee activities.
- School governance information will be incorporated into the overall communications plan and calendar.
- Progress of the strategic plan will be made public to all stakeholders through appropriate communication channels.

GOAL 2 **Board leadership will be expanded representing the diversity of stakeholders according to its approved constitution and bylaws**

- A list will be developed of prospective Board members with the desired acumen and who are reflective of the community served by Gross Catholic.
- The Board of Directors will annually assess its performance and efficacy.

OPERATIONAL VITALITY

GOAL 1 **Gross Catholic will develop a comprehensive five-year financial plan based on a number of alternate scenarios in collaboration with the Finance Committee and the Endowment Foundation.**

- Review affordability of a Gross Catholic education using demographic data for surrounding communities and present information to the Board of Directors.
- Analyze endowment growth scenarios to determine feasibility of a tuition reduction or tuition freeze.
- Create alternate enrollment, tuition, and development scenarios based on tuition affordability findings to inform the five-year financial plan.

GOAL 2 **Gross Catholic will improve student retention and enhance the enrollment process resulting in total school enrollment of 500 students by July 2025.**

- Develop an enrollment management plan in alignment with the communications plan and communication calendar that includes targets for recruitment by diversity, scholarship, need, international students, and local geography.
- Enlist professional marketing and communications support to create a five-year communications plan that supports and includes objectives and action items for all aspects of communications, marketing, and public relations.
- Develop a system of moves management to track prospective students/families from contemplation to enrollment to admissions to graduation.
- Expand the marketing and recruitment budgets to support strategic, targeted outreach to prospective families using a combination of outbound and inbound marketing strategies.
- Consistently apply current brand guidelines to provide appropriate direction and support for all school marketing initiatives.
- Promote school differentiators and tuition assistance opportunities to religious education students and non-feeder school students.
- Implement a Cougar Ambassador program to drive word-of-mouth marketing.
- Create and implement a student retention plan.

GOAL 3 **Gross Catholic will grow its endowment from 65% of its annual operating budget to 75% of its annual operating budget by May 2025 through cultivation of annual and planned gifts.**

- Designate a percentage of annual fund gifts to the endowment.
- Obtain 25 planned gift commitments.
- Elevate awareness of the Holy Family Legacy Society and recognize those who support the endowment.

GOAL 4 **The Dux Esto Annual Fund will represent 10% of the operating budget by July 2025.**

- Design a comprehensive annual fund plan spanning the full school year that implements all three standard methods of annual fund solicitations.
- Enlarge the scope of the annual fund to encompass unrestricted and budget relieving gifts.
- Educate the entire constituency about the annual fund.
- Foster a culture of philanthropy by increasing the number of donors and dollars raised through all development efforts by 5%.
- Develop a portfolio of major gifts and annual fund leadership prospects for the President to cultivate and solicit.
- Enact a moves management system that involves personal contact 4-6 times annually with major gift donors and prospects.
- Grow alumni participation to 10% by 2025.
- Increase volunteerism to support development efforts and engage constituents in the mission of the school.

FRONTLINE ALUMNI

GROSS CATHOLIC ALUMNI ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE COUGAR FAMILY



SARAH SMITH, D.O. '99

Assistant Chief of Obstetrics/OB Hospitalist, Kaiser Permanente in Vacaville & Vallejo, California

The first known case of Covid-19, in the U.S., was in the county in which I work. We had to quickly develop and enact new policies to keep our patients and staff safe. We had to limit support persons in labor, endure PPE and testing shortages, and quickly redesign how we practice with the implementation of more virtual care. At the beginning of the pandemic, we relied on friends and family to quickly sew masks. My daughter used her rainbow loom to make hundreds of “ear savers” to be used in combination with the handmade masks. Other co-workers’ children also used 3D printers to help out. It was amazing to see my community rally behind healthcare workers.

AIMEE (LEISE) MIDDLETON '96

Regional Vice President of Operations at The Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society in Omaha, Nebraska

I started my current role in September of 2019 and was only six months into my new position when the Covid-19 pandemic started. I will always remember in March when cases started to rise in the United States. I thought to myself, ‘things are really going to change - and fast - in this industry that I have been called to serve in senior care.’ I could not have even begun to imagine how much things would change in those very early days.

We’ve had rigorous infection control measures in place before having any positive cases. We are following CDC guidelines for using personal protective equipment, and as needed and where possible, we designate staff to work in one area of our building to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. I am so grateful to our frontline staff who are working tirelessly to keep our residents safe, care for the sick and be a lifeline to loved ones.

Since residents are not able to gather together for large activities, our team has had to get even more creative in how we keep them active and happy. Although bingo looks a little different these days, we’ve adapted by playing call light bingo with each resident playing from their own room – team members run up and down the hallways involving residents in fun. Our team members love to see the residents smile and laugh, even if it means singing and dancing to the Baby Shark song wearing shark costumes.

My role has evolved into supporting facilities through some very tough times and lifting them up for their dedication and love for their residents. I know more



PHOTO: (Left to Right) McKenna Zahn, Aimee Middleton '96, Amie Dennis, Karena Cunningham and Traci Shipps from the Good Samaritan Society in Syracuse, Nebraska celebrate World Smile Day with lip stickers on their masks.

about this virus than I ever wanted to or thought I would know. I meet with Infection Control experts daily to make decisions on how best to prevent an outbreak in facilities across Nebraska, all while helping seniors live their very best lives amidst a pandemic.



JEN MELCHER '13

Registered Respiratory Therapist at CHI Health Immanuel Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska

The amount of extra time and effort it takes to care for Covid-19 patients has increased exponentially. My coworkers and I have worked tirelessly to help these patients out and it does not go without stress on the team. You have to take time to put on the proper personal protective wear to ensure the safety of not only yourself but for the patients you take care of as well. The amount of respiratory support that our patients have needed is unfathomable. It has not only been a physical change in my job, but an emotional change. It is difficult to watch Covid-19 patients fight for their lives without their loved ones by their side.



KATE (SOLOMON) MIZE '98 RN at Inova Healthplex ER in Alexandria, Virginia

At the beginning of the pandemic my job as a nurse in the emergency room was insane. In two weeks, I worked over 108 hours and the PPE requirements were changing daily. It was pretty scary at first, as our emergency department was extremely busy until early May. Then, no one wanted to come to the ER for fear of catching Covid-19. When that happened, I was asked to help out in the ICU where every patient was on a ventilator and fighting for their life.

KATIE (NOVOTNY) PALADINO '97

Operational Improvement- Enhanced Recovery after Surgery Program Coordinator at Nebraska Medicine

In the initial weeks of the pandemic, it was really “all hands on deck” to help support the pandemic response at Nebraska Medicine. Many across the organization went to where the work was. As a surgery program coordinator a lot of my usual responsibilities were put on hold as a result of the cancellation and postponement of elective surgeries which gave me the opportunity to help in other areas.

As a former Six Sigma Black Belt, who’s primary role is assisting others in identifying solutions and processes for complicated workflows, I was tasked with implementing an Ultra Violet Germicidal Irradiation (UVGI) Program at Nebraska Medicine. Our experts had identified a way to innovatively conserve N-95’s through effective surface decontamination. My job was to determine how we would implement the science and then expand it to support all of Nebraska Medicine, Bellevue Medical Center, our clinic locations and our community partners. Within only a few days we developed protocols and operating procedures, transformed an existing unit, created training materials, and coordinated staff to support the new program. Our UVGI protocol has now been adopted across the globe as a means for conserving precious N-95 respirator supplies.

Collaboration across departments, and between teams, has been amazing over the past few months. People have stepped in to take on tasks that are not part of their usual roles and have done so willingly, knowing it is for the benefit of a greater good. Mark Emodi and his team at Nebraska Medicine have been a great example of that- always ready to help and take on what is needed, even the more unusual tasks.



MARK EMODI '88

Director, Integrated Service Center which is a component of the Nebraska Medicines Perioperative Department

The pandemic impacted the surgical caseload of Nebraska Medicine to a drastic degree. Perioperative services, a surgical department which would typically care for 100 to 120

patients daily, was reduced to 35 or less patients. Many elective surgical procedures were cancelled or rescheduled. During this down time, many additional tasks were needed to support the clinical caregivers of Nebraska Medicine, of which I played a part in. The Integrated Service Center specializes in sterilization of surgical instrumentation which allows our dedicated employees to assist with many aspects of patient care. Early in the pandemic, we created a process to “sterilize” N-95 masks which are a critical piece of the personal protective gear the hospital staff utilize to keep themselves safe while caring for Covid-19 patients. I supported and developed the logistical process to pick up and deliver N-95 masks from the majority of clinics across the Omaha area. During the peak of the pandemic, the department processed 700 to 800 masks a day, which allowed the supply chain at Nebraska Medicine to preserve the on hand number of N-95 masks. Preserving these masks was critical due to limited supply for healthcare personnel across the country and internationally. We continue to follow the workflows that allow Nebraska Medicine to save our on hand stock of N-95 masks by continuing to “sterilize” these masks for the foreseeable future.

Another key workflow that was accomplished was the production and sterilization of the nasal swabs that are used for the collection of the Covid-19 specimens. Within my operation oversight, we packaged and sterilized approximately 40,000 swabs. In the absence of this effort, we would not have had enough supply to perform the volume of testing required within the Omaha region.

The supply chain has been a huge issue during this pandemic. Many items needed are made in China, which shut down in early 2020. My team assisted in figuring out solutions on how to produce and distribute many items in short supply. This included producing hand sanitizer and bleach wipes. A very large project was the creation and manufacturing of homemade masks that utilized specialized fabric used to wrap surgical instruments. Our project group needed to develop templates and instruction inserts that were distributed to the public after we organized a network of seamstresses and medical students that assisted in manufacturing, distribution and sterilization of more than 50,000 masks.



JOE PARR '08 RN at CHI Bergan Mercy in Omaha, Nebraska

I work in Phase II of recovery, but at the start of the pandemic all elective surgeries were cancelled for a few weeks. Due to my experience as a traveling Intensive Care Unit nurse, I was asked to

work on the Covid-19 ICU floor at CHI Bergan Mercy. I worked in the Covid-19 ICU until elective surgeries started back up again and they needed me back on my floor, at the hospital.

GROSS CATHOLIC ALUMNI ANNOUNCEMENTS

ACHIEVEMENTS

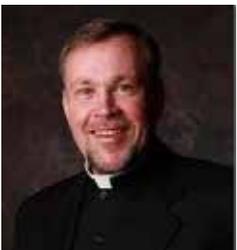


Scotty Collins '19 swore in to the ROTC Cowboy Battalion program on Medicine Bow Peak in Wyoming. The goal of this program "is to produce servant leaders of high character and achievement. Cadets complete a curriculum of leadership training, while also completing an undergraduate or graduate degree. Scotty is studying computer science and will graduate in the spring of 2023.



On September 17, 2020 Governor Pete Ricketts appointed Candice J. Novak '97 to the Separate Juvenile Court of Douglas County. She has practiced in juvenile court for over 15 years and feels very blessed for the

opportunity to take on a different role in an area of law she is very passionate about.



Fr. Michael Eckley '83 is the Executive Director of Catholic Charities in Omaha, Nebraska. Catholic Charities has been dealing with everyday crises for 95 years and has been on the front line of the Covid-19 crisis. Its food pantries have

seen a 400% increase in demand and Father Eckley has been leading the charge of feeding the hungry.

WEDDINGS



Taylor Sidzyik '10 and Dana (Nisi) '09 were married on October 25th, 2019 at St. John's Catholic Church after almost 10 years of dating.



Breanna (Collins) '13 married Brent Sessler on July 18th, 2020 at Saint Bernadette Catholic Church. Her Maid of Honor was Kirstie Bikakis also class of 2013.



Joey Waller '09 married Hannah Mergen on February 8th, 2020 at St. Columbkille Church. Several Gross Catholic Alumni were in the wedding party including Chuck Waller '02, Mary (Waller) Watson '05, Dan Vlcek '96, Jake Placzek '09, Chris Lewis '09, Ryan Crnkovich '09, Brian Duhacek '09, Aaron Lier '11.



Nate Zimmerer '13 and Lexi (Volcek) '13 were married on September 19th at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Omaha, Nebraska.



Sarah (Mimick) '12 married Joel Ratzlaff at Christ the King Church in Omaha, Nebraska on September 26th, 2020. Several Gross Catholic alumni were in the wedding including Sarah's father Jeff Mimick '79, Matron-of-honor Jenny (LaMagna-Reiter) Medara '12, sister Nicole Mimick '15 and Chad Bertagni '13.



Liam Larkin '04 and Christie Ewing were married Saturday, July 18, 2020 in Streator, Illinois. Groomsmen included Matt Fast '04 and Jared Flott '04. Sr. Maris Stella Larkin '06 read the first reading.

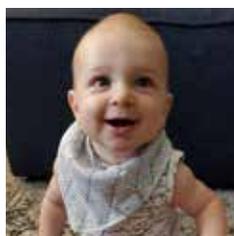
BIRTHS



Vincenzo "Vinny" and Giuseppe "Joey" were born June 15th, 2020 to Steve '98 and Carla (O'Donnell) '00 Rizzo.



CJ '09 and Kim (Wees) '09 Zimmerer, along with big sister Melanie (3), welcomed Samantha on March 23rd, 2020.



Steve '04 and Maggie (Monzingo) '04 Winkelmann welcomed Samuel "Sam" Steven on January 16th, 2020.



Alice James Penelope Plambeck was born on February 22nd, 2020 to Tommy '07 and Emily Plambeck.



Hallie Ann Watson was born on September 11th, 2020 to AJ and Mary (Waller) '05 Watson.



Rob and Maggie (Stolinski) '99 Schlautman along with big sister Josie, welcomed Abigail Elizabeth on September 24th, 2020.



Rory Leander was born July 30th, 2020 to Kevin '07 and Anastasia Peterson.

The Spring Issue of Dux Esto Magazine is now digital only.



Contact us at grosscatholic@gcgmail.org to share your updated email address, to ensure you don't miss it!



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

This year's Distinguished Alumni Award recipient is **Jessica Slattery '98**. Receiving the award on her behalf was her sister, Sarah Slattery '00.

Jessica Slattery is a U.S. Diplomat with the Department of State. She is currently posted in Paris, France where she works in the environment, science, technology and health office covering climate and energy as well as the global pandemic.

Jessica states "my personal and professional mission, both in my work and in my life, is to use the values-based education and opportunities entrusted to me, including my Gross Catholic education, to improve the lives of others and protect the environment we live in."

Visit grosscatholic.org/alumni to see the rest of her story as well as past recipients.

2ND ANNUAL ALUMNI GIVING CHALLENGE

MAY 20TH - 26TH, 2020

Winner!
Class of 2000
with 17.6% Participation

233 Donors

\$99.29
Average Gift Amount

\$30,899

Raised toward
the Dux Esto
Annual Fund



NEW FACULTY AND STAFF

Join us in welcoming these outstanding additions to the Cougar Family!



Joy Clements
School Librarian



Kayla Klug
Co-Varsity
Cheerleading
Coach



Nick Romero
Band Director



Mike Nolte
Boys Varsity
Soccer Coach



Kristin Dohse
Finance Director



Chris "Jake"
Jacobson
Varsity Softball
Coach



Stephen Driscoll
Vice President of
Advancement



Joe Coil
Boys & Girls
Cross County
Head Coach



Allie Kaipust
Co-Varsity
Cheerleading
Coach



Jim Hempel
Varsity Baseball
Coach

FACULTY/STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

Congratulations to these members of our faculty who are celebrating their 20 year anniversaries at Gross Catholic. We would like to extend our gratitude for all of the talents they have shared with the Cougar Family.



Cassandra Johnson
Art Teacher, Art Club
Moderator



Michele Sweetmon '96
Campus Ministry,
Intro to Education
Teacher



Kim Matzen '94
Theology Teacher,
Social Studies
Teacher, LIFE
Moderator Assistant,
Girls Soccer Coach



FACULTY HALL OF FAME AWARD

Dr. Dorothy Ostrowski was awarded the 2020 Faculty Hall of Fame award. She has been a member of the Gross Catholic family since 1981. Dr. Ostrowski began her career as a classroom teacher in the English Department. She then became Assistant Principal in 1996, Principal in 2000, and was named the school's President in 2012. This year marks Dr. Ostrowski's 40th year at Gross Catholic and she will be retiring at the end of this school year.

[LEGACY GRADS]

CLASS OF 2020



Collin Patrick Almgren
Son of Colleen McKeighan Almgren '96
Pat Almgren '96



Nathan James Brennan
Son of Barb Saum Brennan '01
Josh Brennan '01



Christian Duane Buscher-Cardenas
Son of Nicole Buscher '93



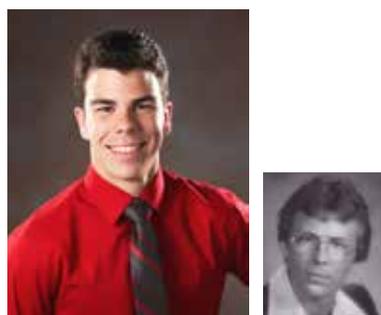
Giovanni Joel Carnazzo
Son of Patrick Carnazzo '80



Katherine Rose Cherek
Daughter of Laurie Udron Cherek '80



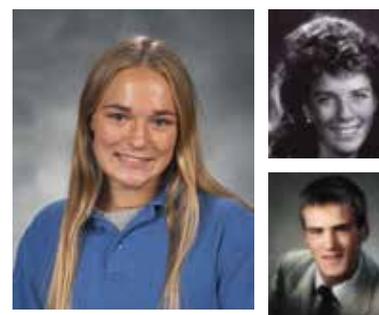
Karlie Therese Chonis
Daughter of Don Chonis '84



Arthur Christian Deseck
Son of Dale Deseck '83



Abby Kristine Dostal
Daughter of Kris Jankowski Dostal '85
John Dostal '84



Sophia Maureen Egermier
Daughter of Maureen McKernan Egermier '87
Rick Egermier '88



Abbie Jo Gaube
Daughter of Joe Gaube '90



Jonah James Hart
Son of Michaela Paladino Hart '85



Mekenzie Jane Horihan
Daughter of Colleen Grady Horihan '87

{ LEGACY GRADS }

CLASS OF 2020



Raegan Marie Hughes
Daughter of Tricia Riha Hughes '92
Mark Hughes '83



Rachel Kathleen Jacobson
Daughter of Michala D'Ercole
Jacobson '90



Maximus Gabriel Janovich
Son of Nick Janovich '94



Blake Marie McDowall
Daughter of Kim Prather McDowall '91
William McDowall '91



Jillian Marie McNamara
Daughter of Julie Reed McNamara '91
Mark McNamara '90



Molly Kathryn Mendick
Daughter of Andrea Strauss Mendick '90
Robert Mendick '90



Julia Marie Miller
Daughter of Tammi Sporcic Miller '90
Andy Miller '90



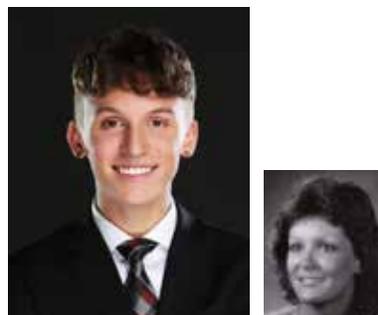
Dominic David Minardi
Son of Chris Minardi '97



Rosa Maria Rivas
Daughter of Mary Condradson '95



Isaac Conor Roos
Son of Bonnie Kouba Roos '94



Atticus William Stansbury
Son of Patti Jankovich Stansbury '87



Madeline Ann Thompson
Daughter of Mary Jo McKernan Thompson '88
George Thompson '88

{ LEGACY GRADS }

CLASS OF 2020



Dawson Robert Waszgis
Son of Ben Waszgis '94



Nathan David Wegner
Son of Jay Wegner '92



Eric Clayton Yanovich
Son of Christine Dineen Yanovich '90
Rick Yanovich '91

HOMECOMING

In an effort to keep our students safe, Gross Catholic Administration and student council hosted a Cougar Corn Hole Tournament on Saturday, September 19th. 64 teams competed in the tournament that was held on the Gross Catholic turf field.



Seniors Luck Rice and Sophia Riera were crowned Homecoming King and Queen.



Juniors Cadence Sweetmon and Gabriel Alcala were pronounced Ms. and Mr. Cougar Spirit.



Congratulations to the 1st and 2nd place teams. From left to right: Angelo Nacarelli 2nd place, Gage Mill 1st place, Conner Capece 1st place, Bryce Geiger 2nd place



Gross Catholic Alumni celebrated homecoming by placing yard signs at their homes across the city! Pictured is Dan '80, Jake '09, Olivia '12, and Eden '16 Placzek.



Jeff Popsichal '86, John Buscher '95, Joe '96 and Jody (Coniglio) '96 Skradski, Jodi (Mill) Groski '97, Scott '91 and Tristen (Flott) '94 Riha, Rob Mendick '90, Dan '89 and Carrie (Lehotak) '94 Zoucha

To see more alumni and their families with Gross Catholic Alumni yard signs visit grosscatholic.org/alumni or follow Gross Catholic High School on Facebook!



CeleBration36

CeleBration36 was virtual this year! Our generous donors helped us raise over \$195,000 including over \$76,000 for our fund-a-need projects which included an update to our west commons and financial assistance for students.

COUGAR CLASSIC GOLF TOURNAMENT

A record number of 192 golfers took to the course on Monday, September 21st at the Gross Catholic Annual Cougar Classic Golf Tournament. More than \$56,000 was raised for the school. The tournament was held at the Eagle Hills Golf Course in Papillion and was chaired by Dorothy and Jim Riha, Scott Riha, Tricia Riha Hughes, Tim Riha, Matt McWilliams, Justin Pogge, Kyle Longenecker and Bart Protzman.

DINNER SPONSOR

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LUNCH SPONSOR

Elkhorn West Construction
Cetera Financial Services

CART SPONSOR

Pogge Real Estate - Justin Pogge

EXECUTIVE SPONSOR

LTI Technology - Randy Haug
John C. Pogge Co,
American National Bank
Matt McWilliams - Edward Jones
Dr. Michael Gross

HOLE SPONSOR

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Core Bank
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Duct Medic
State Farm - Amy Huck
Stephanie Kremla - In Honor of Charlie Kremla
Protzman Family



Golf Tournament Chairs, Back Row: Jim Riha, Dorothy Riha, Tim Riha '96, Tricia Riha Hughes '92, Scott Riha '96; Front Row: Justin Pogge '03, Matt McWilliams '04, Bart Proztman '04, Kyle Longenecker '04



Tournament Winners: Justin Pogge '03, Matt McWilliams '04, Kyle Longenecker '04, Bart Proztman '04



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Gross Catholic High School is a faith and family based community committed to developing Christian leaders through academic excellence in the Marianist tradition.

Gross Catholic President
Dr. Dorothy Ostrowski

Principal
Paulette Neuhalfen

Assistant Principal/Athletics and Activities Director
Mike Dempsey '75

VP of Advancement
Stephen Driscoll '10

Admissions/Recruitment Director
Michala Jacobson '90

Alumni and Communications Director
Molly Nolte '99

Social Media Director
Jim Homan

Special Events Director
Dawn Sledge



Gross Catholic is an Archdiocese of Omaha school and is sponsored by the Marianist Province of the U.S.

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[@grosscatholic](https://instagram.com/grosscatholic)

Individualized Tuition Plan

We work with committed families and students, one-on-one, to arrive at a fair, feasible Individual Tuition Plan. Individual Tuition Plans are confidential, based on your family's revenue and expenses, and respectful of your families needs. To learn more about how Individual Tuition Plans work, visit grosscatholic.org or contact:



Michala Jacobson '90
Admissions Director
402.734.2000 x126