

Indianapolis, Ind.— Ancilla College and Marian University jointly announce a collaboration of mission and operations, officials from the two institutions announced today.

Marian University President Daniel J. Elsener joined Ancilla College President Michele Dvorak, PHJC, Ed.D. in announcing that the boards of trustees at both institutions have approved a memorandum of agreement formalizing the mission collaboration. Under the terms of the agreement, beginning July 1, 2021 the new entity is Ancilla College of Marian University.

“This is a collaboration between two Catholic institutions with a shared mission.” Elsener said. “The opportunity for Marian and Ancilla’s respective boards of trustees, communities, and founding orders, the Sisters of St. Francis of Oldenburg and the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ (PHJC), to partner in strengthening the mission of Catholic higher education is the result of two powerful visions meeting in a most fortuitous time and manner.”

After a two-year search and negotiations, Ancilla’s trustees made the strategic decision that their future as a two-year college would be much more expansive in partnership with another institution, than it would be alone. The Ancilla College community found in Marian University an exceptionally mission-aligned and dynamic university partner for the long-term growth and prosperity of Ancilla College.

Marian University’s Board of Trustees and senior leadership saw the ability of Catholic higher education to serve those from diverse backgrounds, in more places, more effectively, and in a cost-efficient manner. To fulfill this potential, Marian would need to grow through partnerships with other Catholic colleges and universities in Indiana and beyond.

“This strategic approach includes a long-range goal: to secure more opportunities for Ancilla alumni, current students and those in our local surrounding counties who seek further education in the region,” Dr. Dvorak said. “Education rooted in values will be a beacon of light and hope for the future. We believe Marian University commits to not only the mission, but also to fulfilling the mutual goal of advanced academic opportunities.”

According to Marian University’s President Elsener, through this collaboration both institutions will offer a high-quality educational experience with more course offerings and a greater diversity of internships and opportunities in both rural and urban settings for the students on Ancilla’s campus and on Marian University’s main campus.

“Ancilla offers some degree programs and majors that Marian doesn’t, and Marian can bring to the Ancilla campus programs that will greatly benefit K-12 schools, businesses, and healthcare professions,” Elsener said. “Our mission of being a great Catholic university dedicated to providing students with excellent teaching and learning in the Franciscan and liberal arts tradition remains the same, and the collaborative synergies with the Poor Handmaids will benefit the communities we serve.”

Data shows that Marshall County, where Ancilla is located in Donaldson, Indiana, and neighboring Starke County achieved educational attainment levels of 21% and 11% of a

Bachelor's degree or higher. Ancilla's continued presence is greatly needed in this geographical area to offer strategic initiatives that demand collaboration, new thinking, and immersion with regional businesses and industries.

"The sponsor, Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ and Ancilla College Board of Trustees recognize the need for a future providing four- and six-year educational opportunities," John Chandler, Chair of the Board of Trustees at Ancilla College said. "Marian University is committed to continuing the mission of serving Northern Indiana's rural area and we are elated to bring more opportunities and resources to Ancilla students and faculty."

"Ancilla College leadership acknowledged that to accomplish its goal of providing a quality education for the rural student located in Northern Indiana, the leadership needed a bold direction," said Sister Joetta Huelsmann Provincial of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ. "Marian University emerged as most valuable and interested, pursuing their own dream of advancing their mission and outreach to Northern Indiana."

Pending approval of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), Marian University and Ancilla College have developed a transitional timeline over the next ten months, including market research of programs, assessment of facilities, and development of a comprehensive marketing and communication plan. "This collaboration is of the highest priority for us, and we are prepared to proceed diligently and quickly," said Denise Feser, Chair of the Marian University Board of Trustees.

Delivering high quality Catholic education to more people, in more areas of the state and nation, is a strategic pillar of growth for Marian University. Ancilla and Marian are two institutions who set out on a strategy of building a mission-driven network of diverse and highly effective higher education institutions across the country.

"Many years ago Marian University moved from Oldenburg to Indianapolis to serve more students. Expanding our reach and delivering high-quality Catholic education to more areas of the state and nation is a part of our calling, and we are proud to do this hand-in-hand with our partners at Ancilla College," said Sister Christa Franzer, OSF, Congregational Minister, Sisters of St. Francis Oldenburg, Indiana.

"Ancilla College looks forward to this transition providing students, donors, alumni and future students' opportunities that will assist in achieving and advancing their personal goals. Ancilla is proud of its heritage and traditions of education since 1937 and looks forward to a thriving future. The Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ have supported all of our ministries in the past and look forward to assisting in this exciting new venture into the future." said Dr. Dvorak.

Additional details of the collaboration will be announced during this academic year at marian.edu and ancilla.edu.