



Missoula Catholic Schools Board

November 20, 2020

Dear Missoula Catholic Schools Community,

We write today to make the case for the immediate recruitment of a permanent Missoula Catholic Schools president to serve beginning in the 2021–22 school year. We feel it is vital to establish effective and empowered executive leadership to position our schools for growth and success not only through opportunities, but especially through challenges that both can and cannot be anticipated, as is the case with the COVID pandemic.

We recognize that not everyone in the MCS community regards filling the presidential vacancy as a top priority. Some might feel that a president is a luxury MCS cannot afford, and that other, unfulfilled spending needs should take priority. Others may observe that the system has seemingly endured these years of presidential absence reasonably well, but we don't feel this approach is sustainable.

While it is certainly sensible to focus immediate energy and resources on more urgent issues, leaving less urgent issues for a later time, we feel that wise stewardship also entails making decisions on less urgent but still very important issues.

We don't want to assume the status quo represents the best we can do, that the resources we currently have are all we will ever have, and that there is nothing for us to do but decide how to slice the pie. We believe this precludes optimism, hinders growth, and leads to organizational stagnation and decline. We propose seeking out opportunities to instead *grow* the pie. The potential exists for unprecedented growth at MCS, but we need an exceptional leader to help us seize that opportunity.

This prior point would seem to be out of place at the moment, given the global COVID pandemic. If ever there was a moment for hunkering down and operating in survival mode, surely this is that moment? We disagree wholeheartedly. On the contrary, the COVID pandemic has brought home for us both the challenge of operating without an MCS president as well as the promise of operating with one. The need for a president's leadership on behalf of our schools—for raising money, developing dual-school, long-term planning, and leading our community through and beyond these trying times—has never been more critical.

At the most basic level, the MCS Board must hire a president because it is bound to do so by its bylaws. By hiring a president, we can restore the orderly administration of MCS in accordance with our bylaws and bring clarity and certainty to our decision-making process, which will in turn improve the overall well-being of the organization. But this isn't just about following procedure. It's about genuine improvements that will result from solid leadership.

Many of our most critical objectives lie ahead, and an MCS president will bring a unitary vision to the pursuit of our goals. In the absence of a single leader's comprehensive approach to business management, we are forgoing opportunities to plan and budget at the institutional level. We need an empowered executive to continuously assess and improve all aspects of our business operations to make



the most of what we have as we seek to deliver a high-quality, Catholic education to as many families as possible.

A president will foster a culture of consistency, synergy, and cooperation among our schools. A highly integrated and well-organized school system will elevate the MCS brand for long-range security and prosperity, which will benefit the schools individually.

Our school system depends heavily on the support of our local community, and we need a vocal, visible leader who is actively engaged in the community, securing buy-in from businesses, nonprofits, and other local entities that may be looking to support Catholic education, and bolstering enrollment and donor support. A president will also play a critical role in the planning and construction of a new high school, and will be similarly vital to the eventual planning and development of capital improvement projects at St. Joseph.

We want MCS to operate within a shared culture of excellence, fairness, accountability, transparency, and respect. To create and sustain such a culture, we need a leader who can articulate and model these values with consistency, good humor, vision, and courage. While our current leadership team structure has served us well for three years by carrying our strategic plan and moving both of our schools forward, the new president will greatly complement the team's work with the ability to unite our vision, bolster our strengths and grow our resources. With great leadership, we will pursue common goals and live out shared values in every classroom, office, and department at MCS.

We have faith that the right leader will motivate donors, inspire teachers, support principals, instill a sense of pride and common cause in our MCS community, and make Catholic education more attractive, viable, sustainable, and available in the Missoula area.

Thank you for your continued support and ongoing discussion on what we feel is a time-sensitive matter with the entire MCS community in mind.

In Christ's Peace,

The Missoula Catholic Schools Board of Limited Jurisdiction