



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

ABOUT GOVERNANCE AND SPONSORSHIP PRESENTATION HIGH SCHOOL

AUGUST 31, 2020

What changes are being made to the school's Board structure, and why?

The Sisters and the school felt changes were in order to bring its governance structure in line with best practices for order-sponsored schools and Presentation's needs going forward. The Governance Assessment done by *Managing for Mission* concluded that the current structure consisting of a Board of Directors, with fiduciary responsibility, and a Board of Regents which was advisory but more heavily involved in the school, was confusing and cumbersome. The Board of Regents have provided wonderful expertise and welcome support to the school, but they have not had fiduciary responsibility. Having a Board of Regents as an extra layer risks having the Board of Directors too distanced from school operations to carry out its fiduciary responsibilities. *Managing for Mission* recommended that the Board of Regents be dissolved and its effective committee structure, with some modifications, be incorporated directly into the Board of Directors.

Why did the previous Board of Directors resign?

During the time the Governance Structure Subcommittee was evaluating recommendations regarding the school's boards, a law firm specializing in investigating allegations of sexual abuse was preparing a report on past allegations of abuse at Presentation. While abuse is perpetrated by individuals, the lack of sufficient protection for students is a systemic issue. Acknowledging this, the existing Board of Directors felt it would lead to greater healing and allow the new Board a fresh start if all members resigned and an entirely new Board was seated.

How was the new Board chosen?

The Governance Structure Subcommittee was asked to develop criteria for Board member selection, which included the following:

- a. Cultural diversity
- b. Skills and background required by the Board
- c. Continuity of leadership
- d. Demonstrated commitment to Presentation's Mission
- e. Ability to support the school with time, talent and treasure
- f. Alumnae involvement

Given the importance of continuity in leadership, current Regents and Associates were asked to nominate themselves or others for either the Board or committee service. Background information on association, ethnic and religious identification and skills was asked for in the nomination form. Using the criteria and the information provided, a slate of candidates was chosen by the committee to present to the “Corporate Members” (who are also the Sister’s Congregational leadership). The Subcommittee also assigned one-, two- or three year first terms, with the option for an additional full three-year term to assure orderly renewal of the Board’s membership. The Sisters then reviewed and finalized the appointments. Each nominee was met with personally and asked to review an invitation packet and indicate their willingness to commit to the expectations and accept the invitation to join the Board.

What happens next?

The new Board members were seated with the new fiscal year, beginning August 1, 2020. During August they held a virtual Board retreat spread over three days to: pray together; deepen their understanding of the Presentation charism; explore their unique role as the Board of a Presentation school; and discuss their immediate steps and priorities for the year. This retreat was the beginning of an ongoing process of personal and collective formation and development of the Board in its important role.

What is the relationship between Presentation High School and the Sisters of the Presentation?

The Sisters of the Presentation founded Presentation High School in 1962. Though it is separately incorporated, the school is still considered part of the ministry of the San Francisco Congregation of the Sisters of the Presentation. For any organization to be considered Catholic, its Catholic identity must be warranted by a recognized order, a diocese or some other officially established organ of the Church. This connection is often referred to as “sponsorship.” The Sisters provide this connection to the Church both through their care for the school community and by serving as “Corporate Members,” who have the ultimate authority over the school’s mission, by-laws and disposition of assets. In short, the Sisters do not own the school from a civil law standpoint, but they are ultimately responsible for its mission and Catholicity in the eyes of the Church.

How might this relationship change as there are fewer Sisters available to be present to the school and serve as “Corporate Members?”

The median age of members of the Congregations is over 80, so providing physical presence to and oversight of the school will be a challenge within the next few years. The Sisters, therefore, began several years ago discerning how the school will be sponsored, or maintain its canonical connection to the Catholic Church, in the years ahead. Orders which sponsor schools throughout the US are facing similar challenges because of declining numbers in their communities.

To address these questions, in 2019 the school and congregation commissioned a Governance Assessment by a firm, *Managing for Mission*, which specializes in governance and administrative consulting for Catholic schools. The Congregation then impaneled an Ad Hoc Sponsorship Structure Committee, consisting of Presentation Sisters, current and former members of the Boards of Directors and Board of Regents, school staff and others with expertise on the topic to help them review and respond to the recommendations of that study. The Sisters will make the ultimate decision about any changes in how the school is sponsored, but the broader group which they convened has helped them discern among the options.

How are the options being reviewed?

The group discussed a long list of priorities for any future form of sponsorship, which include: living out the Presentation charism; maintaining Catholic identity; remaining all-girls; providing for diversity and inclusion; and engaging students in active service. The group reviewed the experience of other orders and brought in a canon lawyer, among the foremost experts in the US on canonical sponsorship, to help inform this effort.

What is the timeline for this work?

The Sisters will continue to discern the options for canonical sponsorship and seek the advice of Church experts as well as the Presentation community. They plan to maintain the current model of sponsorship for the next three years, and then believe it would be possible for the school to transition through effective sponsorship models with the Church after that. In the meantime, the Sisters will help Pres develop formation and mission assessment tools for the Board of Directors and the school.

How is Sponsorship related to the Board of Directors?

Sponsorship is how the school makes a canonical connection to the Catholic Church. Governance deals with how the Board of Directors will govern the school to assure its institutional vitality and fidelity to Presentation and Catholic values, teaching and spirituality.

What does charism mean?

Charism is a special gift given by the Holy Spirit to a religious order, often through the person of its founder (in Presentation's case, Nano Nagle) for spreading the Gospel and ministering to God's people.

What if I have additional questions?

If you have additional questions, we would like to know what they are. Please contact the school via the [Lisa Sellers](#) in the President's office. Lisa will either find the answer for you or point you in the direction of someone who can.

###