Our Lady of the Elms SCHOOL

Strategic Plan 2025-2028

Advancing the Mission:
Carrying the flame

May 2025

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Prelude

Strategic planning is important to ensure an organization's long-term relevance and success.

The four primary responsibilities and duties of Boards of Trustees are governance, strategic planning, risk management (includes quality of product/service, finance, reputation, etc.) and appointing the Corporation President/CEO.

As such, the Elms School Board of Trustees (Board), with the President/CEO and Senior Management, must develop and maintain a Strategic Plan and monitor the effectiveness of its implementation; at each Board meeting, measuring strategic success is reviewed as part of the Agenda. This careful attention ensures the derivative Operational Goals and Initiatives are fully entwined in the overarching strategic thinking.

The following sets forth the Strategic Plan Initiative, as well as the Strategic Path as developed by principally by the Board's Strategic Planning Committee and the President/CEO.

Mission & Vision

Introduction

As the only K-12, all-girls' school in the greater Akron area, Our Lady of the Elms serves as a leading advocate for the education of girls and young women. Woven into the experience of every Elms girl is *Veritas*, the pursuit of truth and justice built on the four pillars of the Dominican Charism -- study, preaching, community and prayer. For over 100 years, Elms' students have been held to the highest expectations and have been encouraged to speak confidently, lead justly and live purposely. Students come to see themselves as they are – impressive young women ready for the world.

"Be who God meant for you to be, and you will set the world on fire."
– Catherine of Siena, Dominican Saint (1347-1380)

Mission & Vision

future **VISION**	Elms' girls become confident leaders, accomplished professionals and advocates for justice and the common good. Prepared to succeed in life, they possess a spiritual, educational, global and experiential foundation shaped at the Elms.
everyday **MISSION**	Our Lady of the Elms, a private Catholic school rooted in the Dominican tradition, educates girls and young women to live their lives boldly with purpose, confidence, kindness, resilience, justice and faith.

Priority Strategic Goals

DEFINING THE FUTURE

Goal – Determine the future purpose and anticipated effectiveness of Our Lady of the Elms School as to its existence, sponsorship, corporate structure (including the Foundation), Board and Management.

ENGAGING THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST ELMS GIRLS

Goal – Attract and retain top-tier students who actively embrace the School's reputation as a faith-based, academically rigorous education leader.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS TO ENSURE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

Goal — Ensure the Elms' sustainability by building strategic relationships to expand current fundraising strategies and elevate community awareness. Prioritize partnerships with other schools/organizations to enhance academic excellence and broaden School capabilities and offerings. Continue to create a robust donor pipeline at all levels for short- and long-term revenue growth.

Strategic Goal #1

DEFINING THE FUTURE

Determine the future purpose and anticipated effectiveness of Our Lady of the Elms School as to its existence, sponsorship, corporate structure (including the Foundation), Board and Management.

We will know we are successful when:

Our Lady of the Elms School is cohesive and thriving, financially strong and positioned as a leader in all-girls education within an expanded service area. The School will be energetically supported by a strong Board of Trustees, its sponsor, Dominican Veritas Ministries (DVM), alumnae, parents and the community. Thanks to generous funding through the School's Foundation, we will see success within the long-term strategies developed for the School and its campus.

Strategic Goal #1

DEFINING THE FUTURE

Determine the future purpose and anticipated effectiveness of Our Lady of the Elms School as to its existence, sponsorship, corporate structure (including the Foundation), Board and Management.

Strategic Pathway:

- Expand and Strengthen Board of Trustees, with a special concentration on adding expertise in key defined areas such as legal and human resources.
- Define the intersection between the Board and the Elms Foundation.
- Fully activate the Elms Foundation. Develop and launch the strategy to communicate and market the Foundation as appropriate.
- Further activate the DVM partnership, capitalizing on DVM offerings and activities that will directly strengthen and help sustain Our Lady of the Elms School.

Strategic Goal #1

DEFINING THE FUTURE

Determine the future purpose and anticipated effectiveness of Our Lady of the Elms School as to its existence, sponsorship, corporate structure (including the Foundation), Board and Management.

Strategic Pathway (continued):

- Continue to define and grow the role of the Alumnae Board in the success of Our Lady of the Elms, building strong relationships between alumnae and the School to generate volunteer and financial support for the School, as well as an expanded role in recruitment and retention of students.
- Build connections with the Diocese and local churches and other key audiences in a multi-county area to advance awareness of the Elms and grow enrollment.
- Create a plan for ongoing, meaningful and innovative professional development opportunities for faculty and staff with the goal of confirming roles and responsibilities, and retaining top-tier academic talent and strengthening the overall School health.

Strategic Goal #1

DEFINING THE FUTURE

Determine the future purpose and anticipated effectiveness of Our Lady of the Elms School as to its existence, sponsorship, corporate structure (including the Foundation), Board and Management.

Strategic Pathway (continued):

- Realize a significant increase in annual support while continuing to build the major gifts and planned giving program and grow the School's endowment.
- Complete a campus facilities plan and secore needed funding.
- Continue to monitor the status of EdChoice and create a back-up plan to offset anticipated losses if EdChoice is altered or ends. Implement any needed financial policies to maintain appropriate tuition/fee payments as required.
- Perform an annual analysis of tuition and fee structure to guarantee School costs are competitive and are being covered.

Strategic Goal #1

DEFINING THE FUTURE

Determine the future purpose and anticipated effectiveness of Our Lady of the Elms School as to its existence, sponsorship, corporate structure (including the Foundation), Board and Management.

Strategic Pathway (continued):

- Achieve a balanced budget annually, paying special attention to the allocation of sufficient funding for strategic plan goals, particularly in the areas of fundraising and marketing.

Strategic Goal #2

ENGAGING THE BEST AND BRIGHT ELMS GIRLS

Attract and retain top-tier students who actively embrace the School's reputation as a faith-based, academically rigorous education leader.

We will know we are successful when:

Our Lady of the Elms School's recognition will grow generating enrollment growth in every grade, particularly Grades 9-12; annual enrollment for all grades will meet or exceed 350 students. The School will maintain or exceed current academic success metrics including state test scores, college acceptances and college scholarship offerings; graduation and college acceptance rates will remain at 100%. The launch of multi-platform marketing and recruitment efforts aimed at prospective students and parents will play an integral role in the School's enrollment growth and overall success.

Strategic Goal #2

ENGAGING THE BEST AND BRIGHT ELMS GIRLS

Attract and retain top-tier students who actively embrace the School's reputation as a faith-based, academically rigorous education leader.

Strategic Pathway:

- Finalize an exciting and meaningful definition of "an Elms girl."
- Involve parents of alumnae in focus group discussions to more fully understand the impact of an Elms education and how best to market the added value of "an Elms girl."
- Create and launch a marketing plan that capitalizes on what it means to be "an Elms girl" and drives enrollment.
- Create a retention plan for current families and new families that fosters internal and external enthusiasm for the School.
- Deepen opportunities for Elms girls, K-12, to grow academically, socially and emotionally.

Strategic Goal #2

ENGAGING THE BEST AND BRIGHT ELMS GIRLS

Attract and retain top-tier students who actively embrace the School's reputation as a faith-based, academically rigorous education leader.

Strategic Pathway (continued):

- Create an incentive plan for family and staff referrals of new families that enroll and attend.
- Ensure appropriate budget resources are designated to support new and ongoing communications and marketing efforts.

Strategic Goal #3

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS TO ENSURE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

Ensure the Elms' sustainability by building strategic relationships to expand current fundraising strategies and elevate community awareness. Prioritize partnerships with other schools/organizations to enhance academic excellence and broaden School capabilities and offerings. Continue to create a robust donor pipeline at all levels for short- and long-term revenue growth.

We will know we are successful when:

The School will see a continued increase in giving for operational support across all donor categories over three years with the goal of $1M annually in fundraising revenue for operations. Alumnae giving will be a particularly strong area of growth, increasing by 50% over three years. The School President's priorities will continue with an increased focus on external relations, particularly regarding major gifts. There will be consistent and strategic development work at all donor lifecycle stages (cultivation, solicitation and stewardship) based on ongoing analysis of gaps, opportunities and results.

Strategic Goal #3

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS TO ENSURE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

Ensure the Elms' sustainability by building strategic relationships to expand current fundraising strategies, elevate community awareness, partner with other schools/organizations to enhance academic excellence, and create donor pipeline for long-term revenue growth.

Strategic Pathways:

- Analyze the organizational structure and implement required adjustments to make sure all work is aligned and focused with the strategic goals.
- Develop cultivation/stewardship calendar that helps prioritize and budget for travel and events to attract/meet donors, alumnae.
- Develop an engagement strategy for alumnae and past parents; create targeted communication campaigns to increase alumnae participation at events.
- Strengthen the School's digital presence; revamp alumnae and past parent sections of the website to include interactive features and opportunities to donate.

Strategic Goal #3

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS TO ENSURE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

Ensure the Elms' sustainability by building strategic relationships to expand current fundraising strategies, elevate community awareness, partner with other schools/organizations to enhance academic excellence, and create donor pipeline for long-term revenue growth.

Strategic Pathways (continued):

- Leverage social media for relationship building, regularly posting updates and achievements for students and alumnae.
- Establish baseline and measure efficacy and relevant progress of social media efforts and marketing outreach components.
- Explore giving circles and reunion class programs to involve alumnae in fundraising.
- Develop major gifts strategy and clear moves management process including identifying and activation of the top 50 prospects.
- Create or update fundraising collateral – printed and digital – for multiple audiences.

Conclusion

Our Lady of the Elms School has a rich tradition of making a difference in the lives of those girls and young women it has served for the past 100+ years. The next several years hold much promise for continuing this history of matching passion with purpose. This Strategic Plan will guide the School's Leadership to build on capacities developed over the past eight years.

Successful implementation of this Strategic Plan requires shared accountability. In the continually changing environment, the Board, the President/CEO and Senior Management share the responsibility for implementing, monitoring and modifying the Plan as circumstances dictate.

The Plan should be revisited and modified as often as significant external and internal consequences occur. The changing circumstances will continue to be opportunities for growth. This Plan gives the direction and foundation for the School to be, and to be recognized, a leader in preparing girls and young women for current and future leadership roles. By regularly evaluating, modifying and communicating the Plan, it will continue to be relevant, exciting and responsive to the needs of and opportunities to serve the School's girls, young women and the larger Akron community.

Mission, Vision and Core Values (as reaffirmed in 2025)

Mission

Our Lady of the Elms, a private Catholic school rooted in the Dominican tradition, educates girls and young women to live their lives boldly with purpose, confidence, kindness, resilience, justice and faith.

Vision

Elms girls become confident leaders, accomplished professionals and advocates for justice and the common good. Prepared to succeed in life, they possess a spiritual, educational, global, and experiential foundation shaped at the Elms.

Core Values

Our Lady of the Elms School, founded on Catholic principles and enriched by Dominican spirituality, is sponsored by the Dominican Veritas Ministries (DVM). Welcoming and inclusive, the Elms cultivates girls to be tomorrow's standard bearers for sustainability, equity and reconciliation among people by preparing them to live purposeful, spiritual and trailblazing lives demonstrated through:

Integrity Creativity Humility Faith

Respect Compassion Service Joy

Dominican Pillars

Woven into the experience of every Elms girl is ***Veritas*****,** the pursuit of truth and justice. Boldly forming the base for our work are the four pillars of the Dominican Charism: Study, Preaching, Community and Prayer.