

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Fontbonne University Forms Partnership with Marian Middle School to Support Young Women from Fifth Grade, Carving a Path to College Graduation and Career Placement

Breaking the Cycle of Poverty Through Education

November 1, 2022, St. Louis, Mo. – [Fontbonne University](#), a private, Catholic liberal arts university located in Clayton, Mo., in suburban St. Louis County, has established a unique partnership with [Marian Middle School \(Marian\)](#). Marian is the only all-girls, private middle school in the St. Louis community serving urban adolescents in a faith-based environment.

The formal agreement establishing the program was signed on Wednesday, October 26, by Dr. Nancy Blattner, president of Fontbonne University, and Mary Elizabeth Grimes, president of Marian Middle School. The partnership will provide Marian alumnae with scholarships to Fontbonne, as well as one-on-one mentoring to promote academic success, professional and leadership development opportunities, and career support. Up to 90 percent of Marian’s students face challenges associated with poverty. The partnership supports the shared goal of increasing graduation rates for students of color through equitable opportunities that remove barriers to success.

“Reaching students during their formative middle school years can profoundly influence their academic goals and ambitions, which is one of the reasons that Fontbonne is so excited to launch this innovative program,” said Dr. Blattner. “Coinciding with our Centennial year, this new initiative not only underscores Fontbonne’s commitment to inspiring students to become global citizens who think critically and act ethically to create a more just world, but also our resolve to provide opportunities for first generation college students and students of color.”

Marian was founded in 1999 by seven communities of Catholic sisters and several lay women to break the cycle of poverty by providing transformational education for girls with high potential but limited means. The school has an average minority enrollment of approximately 97 percent, including 75 in middle school, 70 in high school, and over 60 in college.

From 5th grade to career success, students are on a 12-plus year journey with Marian. Marian students commit to an intense 10-month, 10-hour daily schedule that includes an innovative STEM curriculum. The school’s graduate support program provides Marian alumnae with academic, social, and financial support in high school and college, as well as connections to careers. For example, Marian provides financial assistance for students attending tuition-based high schools.

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As a small university, Fontbonne embraces a student-centered academic environment, where every student is known by name and one-on-one counseling and advising help every student identify the best areas of study based on their individual interests, passions and career goals.

“Poverty is a serious, deep rooted issue in St. Louis, and Marian Girls are no strangers to its effects,” said Grimes. “In St. Louis, the poverty rate stands at 22.8 percent, compared to 10.5 percent overall in the U.S. But 100 percent of our girls are graduating high school and going to college – rates that vastly exceed the national average. Marian Girls are the future, and now with Fontbonne, we are ensuring their future, and the future of our community, is bright and sustainable for generations to come.”

Fontbonne’s more than 100 areas of study primarily concentrate on healthcare, education, technology, business and humanities, with 44 undergraduate majors and 34 minors, as well as 10 undergraduate certificates. Graduate students may choose from 19 majors and 8 certificate programs.

About Fontbonne University

Fontbonne University is a private, Catholic liberal arts university located in St. Louis, Missouri, committed to a transformative education and inspiring students to become global citizens who think critically and act ethically to create a more just world. The university, which is celebrating its Centennial, was founded in 1923 by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. For more information, visit www.fontbonne.edu.

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