



By this everyone will know...

John 13:35

THE HEART OF CATHOLIC COLLEGES
UNDER THE STEWARDSHIP OF
MARY AIKENHEAD MINISTRIES

TEXT ONLY VERSION 2017

Through our trust in divine providence, our vision is to witness to the Gospel through our commitment to the values of hope, justice and compassion in loving service of God's people, especially the poor and marginalised.

Vision Statement
Trustees of Mary Aikenhead 2008

Animated by the vision of Mary Aikenhead, the witness of the Sisters of Charity, and the evangelising mission of the Catholic Church, our mission is the pursuit of excellence in Catholic education principally of young women and to inspire them to live lives shaped by the Mary Aikenhead Ministries' values of:

- Compassion*
- Justice*
- Hope*
- Love.*

The community of MAEA will prioritise and develop the building of stronger, collaborative and better-aligned relationships within the MAEA community that enliven our unique Catholic identity and contribution to Catholic education.

In pursuing this Strategic Intention we commit to working collaboratively to:

- promote and give witness to the charism of Mary Aikenhead and the mission, vision and values of Mary Aikenhead Ministries*
- assist our staff and communities to form themselves for our mission in education*
- pursue prophetic responses to the Gospel in light of our times.*

Collaborative Strategic Intention 2016 – 2020
Trustees of Mary Aikenhead 2016

Preamble

At the heart of Catholic colleges conducted under the stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries lies a renewed animation of the spirit of Venerable Mary Aikenhead and the tradition of the Sisters of Charity of Australia.

Our inheritance is the gift of the charism and ministry of Venerable Mary Aikenhead passed to us by the Sisters of Charity of Australia for faithful stewardship under Mary Aikenhead Ministries.

As an education ministry we are obliged to read the Gospels in light of the signs of the times through discerning where we are being called to ministry, particularly through a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable; a considered and effective response to the needs of others and our world; and a demonstrated commitment to our Catholic faith by enlivening the Gospel values of justice, hope, compassion and love.

At our heart is a reflection of the deep and profound dedication of Venerable Mary Aikenhead to her Catholic faith and her prophetic response to the Gospel, which found expression in her life and ministries. Gifted to her from the Spirit, her charism inspires us today to continue her education ministry in imaginative and courageous ways. We are charged with evolving a new charism for our times, drawn from and faithful to this original spiritual gift – we are called to be a new people for our times, living and acting anew.

Our ministry in education, drawn from this founding charism, has been interpreted and realised across time in the lives and lived example of the Sisters of Charity of Australia. In partnership with the numerous laywomen and men, who have travelled with them, the Sisters have undertaken their work in the Church bringing to life the mission of Jesus through their ministries. Today this charism finds expression through the life and ministry of the Sisters themselves and the mission, vision and values of Mary Aikenhead Ministries.

We are called to be faithful to the expression of the charism of Venerable Mary Aikenhead and to work with this gift of the Spirit to nurture and sustain our distinctive ministry in education. In doing so we honour its spirit and advance its understanding, renewed expression and application in new and different contexts. In doing so we also ensure fidelity to our origins and tradition while creating anew for our world our particular spirituality, taken forward through continued partnership and collaboration.

The power of the charism, heritage and tradition that we have been given calls us to continue to be at the edge, to think and act in ways that renew and transform, and to explore constantly what it means to live in the spirit of service of Venerable Mary Aikenhead in our times and for all times. We return to these sources always as a means of building understanding of what our spirituality should be and what it is calling us to do and be. We draw from it the wisdom to imagine and realise where we can and should be for our times.

As a result we remain constantly aware that at the basis of all that we do and all that we are is an unwavering commitment to our Catholic faith, which provides for us the foundational identity of our ministry in education, given unique expression through the charism and ministry of Venerable Mary Aikenhead and the tradition of the Sisters of Charity of Australia.

We are challenged then to ensure that we respond in effective and visible ways to the foundational story of our Catholic faith and the particular narrative that we have been gifted through Venerable Mary Aikenhead's prophetic response to the Gospel.

In living up to our commitment to be Catholic colleges under the stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries we give prominence in all discernment and action to our:

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| Enduring Story | Jesus, and his life, ministry and the values of the Gospel |
| Expressive Story | how this story and these values are given expression in the prophetic response of Venerable Mary Aikenhead and the Congregation through their charism, ministry and tradition |
| Evolving Story | how we today work with these legacies in an interpretive manner that carries our faith, spirituality and tradition purposefully forward to meet the challenges revealed in the signs of the times |

In doing so we celebrate who we are and where we have come from, but also look to our future with hope and joy, confident of our fidelity to who we are and assured of our ability to be who we must become. We become a prophetic people of faith, blessed to walk in the companionship of Jesus and devoted to living a renewed charism and spirituality in, and for our, world.

Our Congregation's spirit and our inheritance is the gospel privilege of serving others, especially the poor. Our story is one of innovation, courage and conviction. It is our hope that this will continue. We are confident that through Mary Aikenhead Ministries the spirit of service will flourish in new and progressive ways, always alive to the spirit of the times.

Sr Elizabeth Dodds rsc, Congregational Leader at the time of MAM's establishment

What is the Catholic nature of our Mary Aikenhead schools?

Some Catholic teachers bring to their educational ministry the charism of a particular religious institute, with all that involves in terms of a specific spirituality and approach to pedagogy. This is highly commendable.

But more important than handing on elements of a particular charism to certain members of the laity is safeguarding and protecting schools' Catholic ethos. We cannot forget that a school is first Catholic before it can be moulded according to the specific charism of a religious institute.

The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools p 6

At the centre of colleges under the stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries lies a strong and enduring commitment to our Catholic faith. It is this commitment that gives us our identity expressed in a distinctive way through Venerable Mary Aikenhead's prophetic response to the Gospel, and the inherited tradition of the Sisters of Charity of Australia.

Certain characteristics must be present for a school to be considered authentically Catholic. The elements that necessarily belong to a school's Catholic identity are the principles articulated by the Holy See and are the measurable benchmarks inspiring the mission of every Catholic school.

A Catholic school will be inspired by a vision that recognises the spiritual dimension of each person. The specific purpose of a Catholic education is the formation of young people who will be good citizens of this world, loving God and neighbour, enriching society with the values of the Gospel.

A Catholic school emphasises the inalienable dignity of the human person. Catholic schools are schools for the human person and of the human person founded on Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ is to inspire and guide the Catholic school in every dimension of its life and activity – its philosophy of education, its curriculum, its pedagogy, its community life, even its physical environment. Catholic schools have the task of being the living and provocative memory of Christ.

A Catholic school is a community of persons and a genuine community of faith. Catholic schools are no longer seen to be simply education institutions but more rightly so communities of persons drawn together by a common faith that determines who and how the community will be for the world.

In a Catholic school a Catholic worldview permeates the whole curriculum.

- All instruction must be authentically Catholic in content and pedagogy across the entire program of studies.
- The Catholic school will foster love for wisdom and truth, and integrate faith, culture and life.
- Students in Catholic schools should learn to transform culture in the light of the gospel.
- Catholic schools prepare students to relate the values of the gospel to their particular culture and to live these values in practice.

A Catholic school is sustained by Gospel witness. Catholic schools seek to reflect a distinctive vision of life and a corresponding philosophy of education. This is based on the gospel of Jesus Christ.

These characteristics form the basis for all we do as Catholic colleges in the spirit of Mary Aikenhead and in the tradition of the Sisters of Charity of Australia. Based on our founding story and identity, they call us to courage in responding to the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel. They empower us to seek our own prophetic response to the Gospel imperatives, and to create and sustain educational communities actively imbued with justice, hope, compassion and love.

Adapted from:

Archbishop J. Michael Miller csb, *The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools*
St Paul's Publications Strathfield NSW Australia 2012

Catholic schools under the stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries

The Love of Christ

The love of Christ impels us

2 Corinthians 5:14

This is the beating heart of every Mary Aikenhead Ministries' college. Adopted by Mary Aikenhead as the Congregational motto, it remains through time an inspiration for all ministry undertaken in Mary Aikenhead's name. It draws our colleges into direct connection with Mary Aikenhead and the vision that inspired her life and her works, and it breathes life into our discernment and action.

Aware that today this is a love that calls us to uncomfortableness, that takes us to difficult and unpopular places, our schools joyfully embrace the challenge to be prophetic communities of learning and teaching, creators of new cultures and renewed ways of seeing, being and doing. Impelled by the love of Christ our colleges are places of courage and fearlessness, engaging in provocative and decisive actions that transform the world.

This is our colleges' foundational purpose, they exist to be places where not only is the love of Christ *experienced by each* – where it is witnessed and experienced in all structures, relationships and actions, but they are also places where people are called through this witness to *bring Christ's love to all they meet*. It is therefore both a source of witness and a call to action for those who lead, teach in, work in and with, and attend a Mary Aikenhead Ministries' college.

It requires each college to celebrate the boundless love of Christ for the world, and challenges them to discern, develop and nurture contexts that bring to life the love of Christ; in particular through the application and expression of the core values of Mary Aikenhead Ministries – compassion, justice, hope and love.

A Mary Aikenhead Ministries' college is therefore a community of abiding welcome and inclusion that ensures no-one is denied experience of, and access to, programs of learning, teaching and care that allow them to pursue excellence and the fulfilment of their potential. This can only be achieved when proper and comprehensive attention is given to recognising, respecting and reaffirming the dignity and call of each person in the development of all college structures, programs and processes.

In a Mary Aikenhead Ministries' college the utmost care is to be given to these aspects of college life such that their pursuit promotes the full achievement of their intent and the avoidance of any unintended consequences harmful to the respect that is to be accorded to each member of the community or the attainment of the fullest expression of individual dignity.

A Mary Aikenhead Ministries' college shall be known to all by the way in which the love of Christ for all, especially those most vulnerable, permeates the culture of the college community; by the way those who encounter the community feel welcomed, respected and affirmed; and by the visible and tangible presence of scripture, the Gospel values of compassion, justice, hope and love, and active ministry.

Catholic colleges under the stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries will be known through:

- an obvious and demonstrated commitment across all dimensions of their community to the Gospel values of compassion, justice, hope and love;
- a recognition that all are made in the image of God and therefore deserve respect, dignity and welcome;
- each member of the community experiencing the love of Christ in all structures, processes, programs, relationships and actions; and
- the witness each member of the community gives to bringing the love of Christ to all they meet.

Catholic colleges under the stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries **may** evidence this by:

- the consistent presence of symbolism and iconography which:
 - celebrates our heritage and tradition as Catholic schools inspired by Mary Aikenhead;
 - invites reflection of our Catholic tradition and its contemporary interpretation and application for young women of faith, and
 - reflects a lived and prophetic understanding of the vision, values and mission of Mary Aikenhead Ministries;
- the provision of formal, relevant and authentically sacramental faith experiences for all members of the College community expressed through invitation to prayer, reflection and liturgical celebration;
- across a range of media in external and internal contexts, the use of documentation that communicates the centrality of the Catholic faith and tradition of the college and the evolving charism of Mary Aikenhead Ministries;
- the development, implementation and review of structures, policies, processes and programs that are founded on, and promote, the Gospel values of compassion, justice, hope and love;
- relationships within and across the community that recognise, respect and affirm the dignity of all as a reflection of the presence of the Divine in each person.
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Preferential option for the poor

When Mary Aikenhead founded the Sisters of Charity in 1815 she included a fourth vow – that of service of the poor. This vow, which was to distinguish her Sisters and their work in the world, also provides a distinctive focus for a Mary Aikenhead Ministries' college. Understanding that the love of Christ impels us to be of service to the poor through recognising and responding to the human vulnerability of all whom we meet is at the core of our work in education.

Today our colleges understand this imperative as a call to awareness of, and a practical and active responsiveness to, the vulnerability in all of humanity and the world. It places us in relationship with those who lack, or are barred from access to what is fundamental to the development of full human potential and the recognition of individual dignity. In honouring service of the disadvantaged our colleges seek at all times to exercise a preferential option for the poor; we walk with and befriend those who find themselves denied and vulnerable, offering practical and tangible relief and support.

Our colleges are communities:

- driven by a sense of moral purpose exemplified by a strong commitment to the preferential option for the poor and a deep respect for all creation;
- steadfast in their advocacy for justice on behalf of the vulnerable, the marginalised and the voiceless; and,
- searching always for opportunities for hope directed towards justice, equity and the common good for all.

A Mary Aikenhead Ministries' college reads the signs of the times in the design, delivery and review of programs of learning and teaching to ensure that they identify the vulnerable; explore the reasons for, and the factors contributing to, poverty in all its forms; and encourage in students and staff the willingness and ability to address proactively the existence of poverty in all manifestations, in all settings in all times.

In the spirit of Venerable Mary Aikenhead, and in line with the values of Mary Aikenhead Ministries, our commitment to preferential option for the poor summons all in our colleges to right action to address disadvantage, including vigorous and rigorous advocacy – to provide a voice for those who have been silenced and oppressed; to seek solutions which embed justice and mercy in social structures and relationships; and to pursue change which creates opportunity and encourages engagement.

Effective advocacy requires the ability to listen carefully and with an open heart to what is needed rather than deciding what is wanted. Through this advocacy Mary Aikenhead Ministries' colleges call for social action that addresses not just the expression of disadvantage and the existence of vulnerability, but their fundamental causes.

In the development of learning, teaching and extracurricular programs, in the structures they operate, in the processes they implement, and in the relationships they form and the actions they take, Mary Aikenhead Ministries' colleges are constant in their consideration of the following questions:

- Who are the disadvantaged and vulnerable in our time?

- Where are the disadvantaged and vulnerable in our time?
- What has led to this disadvantage?
- What is needed for this disadvantage to be alleviated?
- What am I being called to do to bring this about?

This process of social awareness, critique and transformation provides the framework for the way in which Mary Aikenhead Ministries' colleges live service of the disadvantaged, though a preferential option for the vulnerable in every aspect of the college's learning and teaching program and across all aspects of its community.

In giving attention to the often small and almost silent voices of the vulnerable, all in a Mary Aikenhead Ministries' college are impelled through the love of Christ to seek those places of exclusion and deprivation of opportunity. We are called to have gratitude for what we have and the humility to act justly, resolutely and bravely to challenge the existence of disadvantage and vulnerability and to act purposefully and courageously for personal and social transformation.

Catholic colleges under the stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries will be known through:

- a strong and sustained commitment to the vulnerable through the deliberate and consistent application of a preferential option for the disadvantaged in all that they do;
- processes of discourse and discernment that constantly seek to identify those in need wherever they might be and however they may present;
- their pursuit of justice in recognising and alleviating the sources and causes of disadvantage in their community and their world;
- a visible and tangible commitment to the principles of relationship and reciprocity in all that they do in service of the disadvantaged and vulnerable; and
- strong and rigorous advocacy in addressing ideas, structures, processes and actions which marginalise the vulnerable and those in need.

Catholic colleges under the stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries may evidence this by:

- active and comprehensive involvement of key leaders and teams in processes of discernment and dialogue focussed on enacting a preferential option for the poor to address disadvantage within and beyond the college community;
- programs of learning and social action that have at their centre a commitment to the recognition and alleviation of the causes of inequality, disadvantage and injustice;

- policies and processes that identify and address disadvantage expressed through a school culture of sensitivity and confidentiality that respects the dignity of the individual and actively promotes access and opportunity;
- the visible and tangible presence of an understanding and application of the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity as expressed in Catholic social teaching;
- decision-making processes that seek alignment between the college mission and values and outcomes that promote a preferential option for the poor and a commitment to addressing disadvantage;
- programs that have as their focus the empowerment of students and staff as advocates for social change and renewal leading to the creation of opportunities for engagement in rigorous social advocacy on behalf of the disadvantaged;
- across the community positive social action for justice that focuses on the promotion of a preferential option for the poor and the alleviation of disadvantage.
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Going to the margins

The story of Venerable Mary Aikenhead and the Sisters of Charity of Australia is one of courageous and audacious action in seeking to bring the love of Christ to those most in need. From their very beginning their ministry has called them to those places and people often ignored by society, to those shunned, those existing in the shadows and at the periphery. In moving physically to the margins these women were inspired by a commitment to be women of their time – in new and different ways.

Ours is the privilege of belonging to this tradition that responds to need with spontaneity and joy, that knows no boundaries or limitations, which brings presence where it is needed, and action where it is called for. In honouring this tradition we are called to be the voice for the unaccepted, to act in small and significant ways to heal, to be attuned to need wherever, whenever, and however it is manifested.

It is expected then, that a Mary Aikenhead Ministries' college will give due prominence to the discernment of need in the college, local community and the world, conscious that this calls for the courage to be at the forefront of social discourse and action.

Underlying our tradition is the Jesus story as lived by women who recognised the need for new and innovative thinking, the possibility that there can be more, who realised that transformation of the world firstly requires personal transformation. We belong to their tradition of restlessness and movement, a heritage of personal and social critique, an active and disturbing presence in their world and times. It entails an expansiveness that imagines what should and could be and demands that we challenge social inertia through joyful service to a vision of justice for all.

Their inheritance for us, and their challenge to us, is to take risks in the pursuit of our ministry in education. We are called to courage and creativity in developing processes and programs in our colleges that are alive with the quest for new knowledge through new pedagogy, leading to outcomes that encourage and support the development of young women of curiosity, capable of living successfully in contexts of complexity and fluidity.

Our challenge is to look beyond the obvious, travelling to established boundaries and transcending them, to imagine and work to bring into being new paradigms, new ways of seeing, hearing, doing and being. A Mary Aikenhead Ministries' college lives gazing to the edge, not glancing at the centre.

We are called to ensure that our schools pay appropriate and focussed attention to the signs of our times, to recognise emerging opportunities for growth and renewal and to move purposefully and willingly towards them.

Mary Aikenhead Ministries' colleges are communities of excitement and exploration in learning and teaching, where collaborative investigation and consideration are encouraged, where the achievement of excellence is celebrated and the attainment of wisdom is a constant pursuit.

At the same time, they are communities that understand the particular fragility of those whose human needs and rights are least acknowledged by society, that recognise emerging injustice and inequity, and that move purposefully and willingly to redress exclusion and bring us to belonging. In doing so they recognise that those at the margins are to be found both at the edges of our society and within our own communities.

Our colleges are called to be communities at the margins, in both their respect for and support of the vulnerable, and their constant attention to the exploration of ideas and the creation of new knowledge and meaning.

Catholic colleges under the stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries will be known through:

- vigilant and consistent attention to the signs of the times, creating cultures of restlessness that foster new and different ways of living our mission;
- the creation of cultures of constant pursuit of justice and inclusion for those at the margins of our society, and commitment to solidarity with them;
- the creativity and imagination they bring to the discernment of need and the identification and application of response;
- sustained cultures of innovation and exploration that foster creativity and curiosity in learning and teaching; and
- programs and processes that encourage achievement and excellence.

Catholic colleges under the stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries may evidence this by:

- Promotion of the vision, mission and values of the college and Mary Aikenhead Ministries that recognise and reflect an understanding and application of the Gospel responding to the signs of the times;
- Processes of review and reflection that evidence innovation and risk-taking in approaches to the design and delivery of learning, teaching and wellbeing;
- Programs and policies informed by contemporary understandings and perspectives of global social, political and economic variables as they impact upon young women;
- The pursuit of individual achievement and excellence in the consideration, development and implementation of all programs and policies;
- Initiatives that identify those at the margins and encourage appropriate and respectful responses that alleviate injustice and advance inclusion.
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Trust in Divine Providence

The work of God cannot fail

Venerable Mary Aikenhead

Trust in Divine Providence finds expression in Mary Aikenhead Ministries' colleges through bringing to realisation the profound relationship between deep personal faith and a spirituality of action.

This spiritual attribute has abundant evidence in the many and varied works of Mary Aikenhead Ministries, be they enterprises of great scale or small simple acts of personal redemption. It lies behind the readiness of those who live in fidelity to the spirit of Venerable Mary Aikenhead and in the tradition of the Sisters of Charity of Australia to embark on ministry with confidence and surety. Further, it calls us to recognise the presence of the Divine in each and every person, and in the ministry we undertake; such recognition remains a defining characteristic of all works conducted under the governance of Mary Aikenhead Ministries. This attribute is lived and experienced daily as a *spirituality of possibility*.

Trust in Divine Providence recognises that we conduct our education ministry through a deep and active relationship with our faith, inspired by the example of Jesus. Adherence to this spiritual attribute, one that was a distinctive expression of Venerable Mary Aikenhead's spirituality, requires our colleges to be communities that understand and enact the immanence of God in the lives and work of all.

Trust in Divine Providence implies that Mary Aikenhead Ministries' colleges experience and express their faith and spirituality not in a reliant context but a relational one, where we are called through our faith to be hope-filled partners in ministry rather than passive hopefuls. We are communities of abundant hope, confident that our God lies at the heart of who we are, and what we can become.

Those who belong to our college communities experience the joy of the Gospel through this spirituality that promotes engagement with, and expression of, our faith in all endeavours, and affirms the presence of the Divine in each and all. Confident that we strive through our ministry to co-create the world through our faith, we exist as communities of opportunity and renewal.

Programs of faith formation and religious education promote faith and spirituality that bring each member of the community to an understanding and expression of a personal relationship with God, and an abiding and profound belief in this relationship in both their lives and in the work of the ministries.

Bringing to life trust in Divine Providence also requires that each college community endorses and advances recognition of the presence of the Divine in each and creates an environment that affirms and celebrates our unique humanity. It requires our college communities to develop and sustain relationships based on reverence for the individual and to foster an understanding that we are never alone or abandoned.

Living in fidelity to this spirituality demands that we accord due recognition and respect to the intrinsic dignity and unique personhood of everyone, and ensure that our college communities are known by their acceptance of individuality, their welcome of diversity, and their celebration of our shared and common humanity as people of God.

Mary Aikenhead Ministries' colleges are characterised by a tangible culture of enthusiasm, hope and joyful expectation.

Catholic colleges under the stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries will be known through:

- a spirituality that recognises and proclaims the immanence of God in our mission;
- a regular and visible commitment to scripture, personal and communal and prayer, liturgy and action for social justice as an expression of, and encouragement to witness to, faith;
- the flourishing of a faithful and faith-filled community of hope and trust in what can and should be; and
- a culture that understands and welcomes diversity and recognises the presence of the Divine in every person.

Catholic colleges under the stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries **may** evidence this by:

- consistent and inclusive liturgical and faith development opportunities that recognise and support a Church which is in active relationship with the world and her people;
- programs that encourage positivity, hope and resilience in students and staff and provide opportunities for personal growth;
- the development of planning that is focussed on possibilities for renewal of resources, personnel and programs;
- providing a school environment that promotes trust between individuals and the encouragement to act in ways that promote individual dignity and respect;
- courageous decision-making, after discernment, that recognises that God’s providence is a ‘rich bank’;
- policies that are based on the principles of redemption and mercy in their design and application.

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Extensively useful

The poverty of so many of the Irish people made Daniel Murray (1768 – 1852), coadjutor (or assistant) bishop to the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, John Troy (1739 – 1823), decide to found a group of religious women who could go wherever they were needed instead of being enclosed in a convent. Murray wanted them to be ‘extensively useful’.

‘A Cause of Trouble’? Irish Nuns and English Clerics M.M.K. O’Sullivan 1995 p3

It is expected that all Catholic schools are good schools – promoting through the design and implementation of programs of learning and teaching, and the application of human resources and physical facilities, educational outcomes that deliver high achievements and the attainment of the full potential of each student.

Mary Aikenhead Ministries’ colleges are established and operate to pursue the provision of an education focussed on excellence within a faith tradition that demands a commitment to fostering the development of young women who understand and enact their responsibility to contribute to the common good.

In honouring and living out the tradition and spirituality we inherit, and the values we uphold, Mary Aikenhead Ministries’ colleges are communities that exhibit deep and purposeful learning, supporting a culture of excellence for college leaders, staff and students. While it is expected that programs of learning emphasise what is learnt and how it is learnt, equal prominence is accorded to why learning takes place, ensuring that in a Mary Aikenhead Ministries’ college purposeful learning is conceptualised not just as focussed learning but as learning with a definite focus.

Our colleges are distinctive in their understanding that the purpose of achievement is not simply about personal gain but rather how such achievement contributes to the formation of a personhood committed to service and social and cultural innovation in the quest for justice.

Mary Aikenhead Ministries’ colleges are required to ensure that a Catholic worldview permeates all aspects of their programs of learning and teaching, and that a constant and comprehensive consideration of personal and social responsibility is promoted through appropriate inclusion of moral and ethical standards and understandings.

This implies an awareness of, and alertness to, prevailing social conditions and emerging opportunities and challenges. Mary Aikenhead Ministries’ colleges engage in continuous processes of educational review and improvement that emphasise attention to the signs of the times and the flexibility and commitment to engage in dynamic responses to what these reveal in the promotion of social justice, equity and the common good.

As Christ-centred communities of learning Mary Aikenhead Ministries’ colleges are inspired to strive for outcomes that advance the ability of the individual to contribute to positive social, economic and cultural improvements. In doing so they recognise the power of the word, the transformative nature of right and courageous action and the responsibility of engagement, and adopt deliberate strategies and processes to ensure that each member of their community enacts these both within and beyond the college.

In a Mary Aikenhead Ministries' college it is an expectation that leaders, staff and students understand, and proactively work within, the complexity of personal, local, national and global contexts of justice and service.

Catholic colleges under the stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries will be known through:

- the pursuit of learning that promotes personal excellence, the attainment of high achievement and the application of wisdom in the service of others and society;
- the design and delivery of programs that reflect the transformative nature of learning and encourage the creation of collaborative partnerships and relationships that promote the development of social responsibility;
- opportunities provided to all to develop and apply knowledge, skills and abilities across a broad range of contexts; and
- programs of learning and teaching that promote a Catholic worldview and moral and ethical development.

Catholic colleges under the stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries **may** evidence this by:

- consistent and comprehensive emphasis on the pursuit of personal excellence across the whole learning and teaching program;
- the provision of broad opportunities for students and staff to demonstrate high achievement within and beyond formal learning contexts;
- demonstrated connections between learning and teaching outcomes and social responsibility focussed on the service of others;
- programs that encourage and support effective partnerships between individuals, groups and organisations;
- comprehensive application of a Catholic worldview across all learning and teaching programs;
- a diverse curriculum supported by appropriate pedagogy suited to the range of needs, abilities and aspirations of all students;
- promotion of teaching and learning programs that prioritise outcomes that contribute to social wellbeing and cohesion.
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Contemplatives in action

Contemplation is not the sole provenance of cloistered monks and nuns, it requires a particular asceticism, at the core of which is setting aside time and giving oneself over to what really matters. In the Christian tradition, the contemplative is ‘all eyes’ – paying attention, being alert, keeping vigil, learning again and again how to read human life and events as they disclose God’s presence. The one who is truly contemplative has learned to be contemplative not only in prayer, but likewise in action.

Michael Downey in *Called and Chosen* Edited by Zeni Fox and Regina Bechtle R.C. 2005 p. 27

On 24 May 1812 Mary Aikenhead and Alicia Walsh left Ireland for the Bar Convent York to undertake formation in religious life from Mary Ward’s Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On their return to Dublin on 22 August 1815, Daniel Murray; then Coadjutor Bishop to Archbishop Troy, assisted by the Jesuit Fr Robert St Leger developed the constitutions for the new religious order. From their foundation the Congregation of Sisters of Charity had a strong connection to Ignatian spirituality.

In a Mary Aikenhead Ministries’ college that spirituality finds expression in the relationship between the individual, God and the world. Ignatian spirituality tells us that God is an active God, and that we are called by Christ to be active with God in and for our world.

Mary Aikenhead Ministries’ colleges are communities which respond to the call to share Christ's life, to think like him, to do what he does. We grow close to God as we do God's work in the world, as we become ‘contemplatives in action’. In doing so all are encouraged to cultivate the habit of regular reflection in order to detect the presence of God in their lives, and to employ the tools of Ignatian discernment to make sound decisions.

The fruit of our contemplative effort is action, action which brings to reality the presence of God in our world and the love of Christ for all.

Through the deliberate application of effective processes of contemplation and discernment Mary Aikenhead Ministries’ colleges cultivate in all members of their community the disposition and ability to contribute to the realisation of God’s work in our world.

In a Mary Aikenhead Ministries’ college learning and teaching animate approaches to discovery, thinking and problem solving that empower students to become skilled in discernment and critique. Each leader, student and staff member of a Mary Aikenhead Ministries’ college works to sustain a culture of learning and teaching that places Christ at the centre, promoting sound judgement in initiating reflective social action. Within such a culture the nexus between contemplation, judgement and deed is to be found in the example of the life of Christ, brought to life in each individual.

Mary Aikenhead Ministries’ colleges engage in this process of active contemplation through a commitment to ensuring that programs and processes of learning and teaching provide all with the skills and opportunities to:

- Develop insight and understanding of their current context and their relationship to this context;
- Make judgements about the extent to which this context contributes to the realisation of God’s work in the world;

- Engage in personal and social action to establish preferred options and a renewed future; and
- Undertake contemplation and discernment to identify transformative achievements and further possibilities.

Catholic colleges under the stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries will be known through:

- a culture that actively promotes the relationship between the individual, God and the world;
- Ignatian spirituality that seeks to initiate right action in the world drawn from a considered understanding of context and experience through reflection and evaluation; and,
- a commitment to the creation of knowledge through processes of discernment and exploration leading to the imperative to act in the world in ways consistent with our Catholic faith.

Catholic colleges under the stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries **may** evidence this by:

- opportunities for all members of the community to understand, experience and apply Ignatian spirituality in their lives;
- programs that include and develop an emphasis upon personal and group reflection as a means of discernment and decision making;
- promotion of approaches to learning that recognise the utility of knowledge applied within Catholic perspectives;
- structures that support the development of deep thinking, reflective practice and considered action;
- the application of appreciative inquiry processes to learning and research.
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