

## **The Hallmarks: A Blueprint for a Notre Dame de Namur Learning Community An Interview with Sister Jean Stoner**

We had a delightful time sitting down with Sr. Jean Stoner and discussing the development and implementation of the Hallmarks, as well as what they mean to a Notre Dame de Namur learning community. Here are some of her remarks.

### **How did the Hallmarks come about and what purpose(s) do they serve?**

The Hallmarks were developed about 15 years ago by a team of Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur from Northern California with representation from their elementary schools (Belmont and Watsonville), high schools (Belmont and San Jose), and university. The team's task was to express what it means to be a Notre Dame school and to come up with a blueprint for what a Notre Dame de Namur learning community stands for. Since then, the Hallmarks have been translated into multiple languages, including Spanish, Japanese, French, and Portuguese, and are used in 16 different countries.

One way to look at the Hallmarks is that they express the values and operating philosophy of an individual or institution. They are very much tied to spirituality, and explore the question: how do I want to be as a person? The Hallmarks are truly a spiritual underpinning for how one lives and are applicable to individuals and organizations alike.

Teachers implement the Hallmarks in their own unique way within the learning communities, allowing for a deeper understanding of spirituality. It's remarkable. Our students love the Hallmarks, and even at a young age they are able to articulate what they mean and how to live them out.

### **How are the values of social justice and diversity reflected in the work of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur? From your perspective as NDNU Board Chair, how are they reflected at the university?**

The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur were founded on the belief that one must stand on the side of the oppressed, and this continues to be our mission today. We take social justice very seriously. We have a worldwide office - Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation - dedicated to these efforts. At NDNU, social justice is ingrained and integrated into the curriculum. We're not just educating students, but we are pushing students to think about how to make the world a better place. A few years ago poet Carlos Robson was the commencement speaker and he quoted Martin Luther King, Jr., "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice," and then continued with, "and we are the ones called upon to bend it." I think that sums it up quite nicely. Here at NDNU, we have incorporated community service in as many ways as possible in order to keep bending the arc towards justice.

Our Hallmark on diversity, "We embrace the gift of diversity," is straight out of Catholic social teachings. It reminds us to honor the dignity and sacredness of each person. Diversity has many, many layers; layers that go beyond race, gender, and beliefs. We make it a conscious point to bring as many perspectives into the conversation as possible. We are constantly asking ourselves: who's at the table and who's missing? I think what truly matters is that without exception, everyone should be not only included, but celebrated, and that's what we try to do each day. All are welcome here.