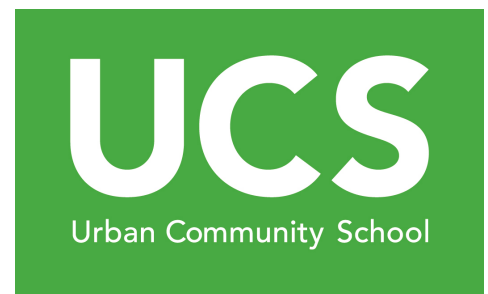


December 17, 2018



Dear Friends of Urban Community School:

At Urban Community School, our whole child approach includes a focus on physical health for our children, their families, and the community. Health impacts attendance, academic success, and ultimately, the wellbeing of our community. That is why, in collaboration with the MetroHealth System, we are building a community clinic on our campus at West 48th Street and Lorain Avenue.

As you may have read from articles in the Plain Dealer and Cleveland.com, in addition to offering primary care, the clinic also will include behavioral health services, an Hispanic translation clinic, a Cleveland Food Bank pharmacy, a Legal Aid Society of Cleveland office, United Way 211 services, a WIC office, and urgent care services. When completed, this facility will truly become an anchor for the entire community and a real-world demonstration of our commitment to serving the whole child.

However, as our board considered approval of this project earlier this fall, we were made aware by the Diocese of Cleveland that board approval of the lease agreement with MetroHealth would jeopardize our affiliation with the Catholic Church; our affiliations with the parishes of St. Malachi, St. Patrick, and St. Wendelin; our Catholic Schools accreditation; and our Ursuline Sisters' sponsorship. Specifically, as a public hospital system, MetroHealth cannot adhere to the Ethical and Religious Directives of the Catholic Church. Since contraceptive referrals – a healthcare service that is contrary to those Catholic Directives – will be available at the new clinic, Urban Community School cannot partner with MetroHealth and remain canonically Catholic.

In October, 2018, our board, comprised of many longtime members and supporters as well as lifelong Catholics, carefully weighed the consequences of this likely outcome against our commitments to our mission, our children and our community. Weighing the need for the clinic and its positive impact on our children, families and community against the likely consequences of moving forward, our board voted overwhelmingly to approve the clinic.

Following the board's vote, a meeting was held at the Bishop's office to discuss the consequences of our decision to move forward with the clinic. Our hope was to pursue the clinic while retaining our existing relationship with the Diocese and our Ursuline sponsorship. Unfortunately, we were informed that, given Catholic teaching, such an outcome was impossible.

Consequently, UCS will no longer be considered a Catholic institution and may no longer be accredited as a Catholic school by the Ohio Catholic School Accrediting Association.

In addition, the Ursuline Sisters will be discontinuing their formal sponsorship and governance roles at Urban Community School by the time of the Spring 2019 UCS board meeting. At the same time, however, the Ursulines remain in support of the clinic as part of our mission as an independent school. UCS will continue to operate out of the Ursuline charism and individual Ursuline Sisters will be welcome to continue their service at the school and on the UCS board.

Informed by our Ursuline tradition, we intend to remain an ecumenical school welcoming children of all faiths and nurturing each of them in their respective religions and spiritual lives.

Because of your support for our mission and our students, we want to assure you that religious education will remain a core value at UCS. Every child will continue to receive religious education and our curriculum will be consistent with what we have provided in the past.

As we make this transition, we also intend to pursue accreditation via the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS) to replace our current accreditation from the Ohio Catholic Schools Association. ISACS is a very strong educational body that also accredits other area independent schools including Gilmour Academy, Laurel School, University School, Hawken, Hathaway Brown, and Western Reserve Academy. We believe that pursuing and maintain ISACS accreditation will strengthen our work as a school and the quality of our educational program.

When our school started 50 years ago, it was driven by one overriding principle: know and love every child and do what is best for each one of them. We have overcome countless challenges since our founding but have never wavered in upholding this principle. It is on this very principle that our decision to partner with MetroHealth was based and it is this very principle that will guide our next 50 years. We are strong. We are growing. And we will always focus on doing all we can to better serve our children, our families, and our community.

We plan to break ground in March 2019 and open the clinic in the spring of 2020. We will keep you updated as we move forward and hope you will join us in celebrating this much-needed addition to our campus and community.

As always, thank you for your ongoing support of Urban Community School as together, we begin another promising chapter in our history.

Very truly yours,



Joseph K. Juster
President, Board of Trustees



Tom Gill
President of UCS

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE METROHEALTH CLINIC AT UCS

Will UCS still provide religious education?

Yes. We will continue to provide ecumenical religious education, host all-school prayer services, provide opportunities for Catholic children and families to attend Mass, and continue to strengthen and grow the spirituality of our children and families. Catholic religious education and sacramental preparation, however, will not be provided at UCS and will instead take place at one's parish.

Will the Ursuline Sisters continue to work at UCS?

Yes. We want the Ursuline Sisters to continue to serve at UCS and remain an integral part of our community. In addition, we intend to invite the Ursulines to serve on our board of trustees.

Will there be any changes to faculty or staff as a result of the MetroHealth partnership?

No changes are planned. There may be some changes to our retirement benefits program, but we are still working on those changes and will advise our faculty and staff when we know more.

Will we continue to play CYO?

We are not certain. We will stay in touch on this topic. If not invited to return, we will look to alternative options for our children to participate in athletics.

Is this decision final?

Yes. The Bishop will make an announcement formally acknowledging that Urban Community School is no longer a Catholic institution as a result of the fact that the UCS - MetroHealth community clinic will be offering contraceptive referrals that are not in compliance with the Ethical and Religious Directives of the Catholic Church. We believe the announcement will be made public sometime in the spring of 2019.

Will we still be eligible for the Cleveland Scholarship Program and the other public funding we receive?

Yes. UCS will still be eligible for all of the same revenue sources available to it prior to this decision. The financial aid and admissions programs will not be altered in any significant ways and affordability for all will still be a core commitment of the school.

Did UCS consider becoming a charter school?

We will not pursue becoming a charter school because of the value we place on religious education and the spiritual formation of our children.

What is the issue with accreditation and could it affect UCS students' academic standing or ability to get into a high school?

Accreditation is a kind of quality assurance process by an independent body. Accreditation means that the accredited school meets a specific set of standards. We are confident that UCS will receive accreditation from the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS).

In the meantime, we will not be changing our rigorous academic standards. The quality of our students' education will not decline. Our intent is to make it better and our aim is to continue to give all of our children the kind of education that will give them the best chance to get into their chosen high school.

Where should I direct my other questions?

Please direct any questions to Tom Gill, (216) 939-8441, tgill@urbancommunityschool.org; Sr. Susan Durkin, OSU, (440) 449-1200, sdurkin@ursulinesisters.org; or Joe Juster, Board Chair (216) 622-8433, jjuster@calfee.com.