

U.S. Department of Education
2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[] Public or [X] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [] Title I [] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Mrs. Sheri Gillio
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name St. Scholastica Academy
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 122 S. Massachusetts Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Covington State LA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 70433-3400

County St. Tammany

Telephone (985) 892-2540 Fax (985) 893-5256

Web site/URL https://www.ssacad.org E-mail jgrimley@ssacad.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. RaeNell Houston E-mail superintendent@arch-no.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Archdiocese of New Orleans Tel. (504) 866-7916

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mrs. Raquel Murphy
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave .blank*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The electronic signature on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2021 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools.)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 0 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 0 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	110	110
9	0	77	77
10	0	120	120
11	0	108	108
12 or higher	0	81	81
Total Students	0	496	496

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2.8 % Asian
 - 0.2 % Black or African American
 - 3.2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 93.2 % White
 - 0.6 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2019 - 2020 school year: 1%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	1
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	6
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	496
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 5 %

Total number students who qualify: 23

8. Students receiving special education services: 0 %
0 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>0</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher, CTE teacher.	38
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	1
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	0
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 14:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2020.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	76
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	100%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 1997

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school’s mission or vision statement.

Perpetuating the Benedictine tradition of prayer, work, study, and community, St. Scholastica Academy forms adolescent girls into Christian young women grounded in the Gospel values.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

Prior to the 2020-2021 school year, St. Scholastica Academy (SSA) leadership established a committee comprised of a cross section of faculty and staff to create a school reopening plan. In consultation with local, state, and federal agencies, the reopening committee developed two instructional plans that allowed students to continue their learning either in an all virtual or in an all in-person environment. SSA opened its doors to in-person learning on August 6 while also providing synchronous instruction for virtual students.

The committee’s overarching goal as school reopened was to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for all faculty and students. To accomplish this, all safety protocols recommended by the CDC and Louisiana Department of Health were implemented with the intention to begin classes as scheduled and to remain open the entire school year for in-person instruction.

The faculty, staff, and student body complete a daily screening to assess their health. Each morning when students arrive on campus, first period teachers take their temperatures. Classrooms are arranged so that all student desks face forward and are distanced to the maximum extent. Plexiglass partitions are installed in art and science classrooms where quad seating is necessary. Desks are numbered to create accurate and easy-to-follow seating charts to facilitate contact tracing if necessary. Each building has a designated entrance and exit so that transitions between classes occur in one direction, minimizing clustering between classes. Faculty and

students sanitize their hands at the beginning and end of each class period. During non-instructional time, students may socialize outside at designated tables with limited seating to ensure social distancing.

To ease transitions between in-person to virtual learning when needed, the school's eight-period rotating schedule was modified to occur over two, four-period "blue and white" days. On blue days, classes A through D meet for 80 minutes with a 10-minute break between classes for classroom sanitization. On white days, classes E through H meet with the same sanitization schedule. [1] [SEP]

Maintaining the traditions and ceremonies that make the SSA community unique remain a priority. SSA takes pride in having developed creative solutions for safely maintaining student activities such as student council events, athletic competitions, theater performances and class retreats. For example, SSA hosted small, student-only ceremonies for Honor Society and eighth grade inductions. School events and athletic competitions are also regularly live-streamed for those not allowed on campus due to COVID-19 restrictions. [1] [SEP]

For students in virtual instruction, SSA utilizes Google's G-suite (e.g., Google Meet, Google Classroom, and Google docs, slides, and forms). The virtual platform is offered only to students isolating or quarantining due to COVID-19. During the first week of classes, student competencies in G-suite were assessed and learning gaps closed. Consequently, students at all grade levels have moved seamlessly and confidently in and out of virtual instruction as needed.

This model has served SSA in effectively overcoming the unprecedented challenges to both student learning and to community building, as well as keeping the number of students affected by COVID-19 to a minimum.

17. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

PART III - SUMMARY

Founded by the Benedictine Sisters in 1903 as a co-educational boarding school, St. Scholastica Academy has evolved into a thriving secondary school educating young women from more than twenty elementary schools in sixteen surrounding communities. Located in the heart of the small residential community of Covington, Louisiana, SSA remains the only all-girls Catholic high school on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain, north of New Orleans. Though the school's ownership was transferred from the Benedictine Order to the Archdiocese of New Orleans in 1979, SSA remains steadfast in its commitment to the Benedictine pillars of prayer, work, study, and community. The student and alumnae body consist of young women from a variety of faiths and family backgrounds. Many alumna are community and regional leaders in the medical, business, civic, and educational fields, serving as excellent role models to current students.

Dedicated to the holistic formation of each student, SSA strives for balance of the four pillars. To support the whole person, SSA prioritizes three strategies that together form each student into a well-rounded woman of God.

SSA fosters positive, supportive relationships among its constituents to nurture trust and provide students with an emotionally and physically safe learning environment. Small classes ensure personalized learning wherein every teacher knows each student by name and is able to recognize her unique needs. Teachers engage students to create a social contract establishing classroom norms. Students adhere to an academic honor code and are required to write this code on all summative assessments. To ensure the student's success both academically and emotionally, each student is paired with a guidance counselor who remains with her throughout her high school career.

SSA implements research-based practices that actively engage students in their learning. Teachers participate in job-embedded professional development wherein they investigate a research-based practice; incorporate it into their instruction; share their strategies with colleagues; and analyze its overall effectiveness. Through action research, best practices have been adopted, including the following: modeling in science; annotating in English; implementing writing standards across the curriculum; prioritizing project-based learning; developing and using authentic assessments; supporting college and career readiness; and conducting a weekly social-emotional check-in during theology.

SSA develops habits, skills, and mindsets that build student confidence academically, socially, and emotionally. Embracing Carol Dweck's growth mindset, instructors embed this philosophy into their daily regimes. Students learn that their abilities and intelligence are not fixed, but have capacity to grow and develop through effort, perseverance, and grit. As a result, SSA students are known as "gritty girls." Classroom posters illustrate the characteristics of an SSA "gritty girl": participating in challenging tasks; understanding that struggle is an important part of learning; working productively in the learning process; and practicing resilience and perseverance.

The awarding of the National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence in 1997 affirmed SSA's deep commitment to prioritizing the unique learning needs of girls. What sets SSA apart is its dedication to learning about the most advanced research and pedagogical practices for how girls learn best and fostering their connection and embeddedness within the curriculum. To address this, core subjects are meticulously aligned. For example, students read and analyze the literary works of a particular period in English class while simultaneously learning the historical context of that period in history class. Math and science curricula are aligned for an integrated approach to learning the STEM disciplines. To further support the way girls best learn in science, SSA adopted the Physics First sequential model, in which freshmen take a full year of physics before taking chemistry or biology. Re-sequencing provides students with a seamless storyline that begins with concrete principles of the physical world and then gradually progresses into the more abstract worlds of chemistry and biology. Exposing girls upfront to the scientific phenomena that govern their physical world provides them with a solid foundation in the core theories necessary for deeper understanding in future science coursework. SSA's science faculty incorporates the pedagogical practice of modeling. Modeling benefits girls by giving them the opportunity to generate both a conceptual and a mathematical representation of phenomena that is difficult to directly observe.

SSA gears its educational program around collaboration. As social beings, girls learn best when they work together via productive learning struggles. Areas for collaborative work are strategically scattered across campus. Writable walls encourage brainstorming and formulation of thought processes and ideas. Into every lesson, teachers incorporate collaborative group work that includes positive interdependence, individual accountability, equal participation, and simultaneous interaction to solve real-world problems. SSA has also collaborated with Louisiana State University (LSU) to incorporate its College Readiness Program in Mathematics, which provides SSA students with a seamless curriculum from Algebra I through Differential and Integral Calculus. Math classes have evolved into small groups of students instructing their peers while using collaborative workspaces. Students learn that through collaboration, effort, remediation, and perseverance, math can be mastered. Since the implementation of the Physics First sequential model and the College Readiness Program in Mathematics, SSA's math and science ACT scores have improved exponentially, while students' attitudes toward and interest in these subjects has positively changed.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

SSA leadership wholeheartedly embraces the philosophy of forward thinking by taking proactive measures to plan for potential obstacles to its educational program. School leadership intentionally plans and prepares for these obstacles so that the integrity of its educational program could be maintained if the need arose. By fostering a forward thinking culture, SSA has formed a responsive community of experts ready to take on any challenge.

While other local schools halted their instruction at the onset of the pandemic, SSA made it a top priority to provide its students with continuous instruction. SSA did not want its students to experience a gap in their academic growth. Anticipating pandemic-related school closures in spring 2020, SSA began proactively preparing for virtual instruction. Prior training in Google classroom and faculty and students using these tools effectively, provided common ground for virtual instruction. Three days before schools were closed, faculty were trained in Zoom and internal experts identified for support. Two on-campus, “virtual days” immediately prior to the closures allowed teachers and students to test virtual learning protocols and platforms. On March 17, 2020, this proactive preparation enabled SSA to re-open virtually with minimal loss to instructional time and to implement an effective online program.

All elements of school life adapted to virtual platforms. Teachers took real-time attendance for each class and counselors monitored virtual attendance throughout the school day. Periodic surveys provided the data to make quick adjustments to the daily schedule, workload, and assess the mental health of the students and faculty. To successfully engage students, teachers utilized virtual Q&A and chat breakout sessions for small group instruction and for collaborative student work groups. Students completed assignments using Google Suite and submitted work through Google classroom. To uphold academic honesty, faculty created and administered assessments through Google Forms with timing restrictions and randomized questions. Online assessments also included a variety of formats consistent with in-person learning. The virtual learning schedule created in the spring was continued in the fall of 2020 to accommodate for another seamless transition to virtual learning if necessary.

In the four core disciplines and in SSA’s writing across the curriculum focus, course content is aligned with the ACT’s college readiness standards as well as with state and common core standards. SSA’s science curriculum centers on the Next Generation Science Standards that promote interactive science instruction and maximize the skills necessary for college-ready ACT scores. These skills include evaluation, analysis and interpretation of data, critical thinking, reasoning, problem solving, and forming connections across science disciplines. The Physics First sequential model equips students with the foundational knowledge necessary for a deeper investigation into future science coursework. The LSU College Readiness Program in Mathematics provides students with a seamless curriculum in math. Beginning the program in eighth grade, students develop strong habits of learning and adjust to the online format, building confidence and a solid foundation setting them up for great success in each subsequent mathematics course. In their junior year, SSA students enroll in LSU to complete College Algebra and College Trigonometry while simultaneously earning high school credit. Seniors choose between Business Calculus, Differential and Integral Calculus, or AP Calculus. When an SSA student graduates, she has had the opportunity to earn up to 12 college credits in math, with the overwhelming majority of our students earning at least six credits.

Teachers work collaboratively to frame learning units around a central critical question, designing units with the end in mind. Teachers employ pre-assessment strategies to determine students’ prior knowledge and vary instructional strategies during the class period. Information is presented to students in targeted, digestible segments accompanied by processing activities that engage students in applying the material. To serve the diverse ways students receive information, process ideas, and express their learning, teachers identify critical points at which student understanding of the lesson may vary, and differentiate instruction accordingly. Authentic, performance or project-based assessments are also differentiated to allow creativity and innovation for diverse learners. Experiential learning and collaborative group work actively engage students in the learning process. After each lesson, student understanding is informally assessed with exit tickets. This data informs future instruction to reinforce or re-direct learning and/or to address

misconceptions. Summative assessments are created directly from the formative assessments that students complete throughout a unit. Even within the constraints of COVID-19 safety protocols, SSA's faculty continue to meaningfully engage students in collaborative group work, modified think-pair share activities, literary circles, Socratic seminars, laboratory experiments, classroom debate teams, and STEM building projects.

Both formative and summative data are disaggregated and analyzed on a departmental as well as a school-wide basis. Departments develop an annual goal to address needs revealed by either classroom or standardized testing data. Throughout the year, departments review classroom test data to identify gaps in student learning. Ongoing, formative analysis of classroom test data enables teachers to reinforce learning where needed before moving forward. Summative, school-wide, standardized testing data is used by the whole faculty and then within departments to measure any gaps in the scope and sequence of the curricular program. The curriculum is then realigned as needed.

1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):

SSA's comprehensive program offers students opportunities to develop leadership skills; engages their civic responsibilities; and exposes students to emerging careers. A girl occupies every leadership role at SSA teaching students that women are impactful leaders in the community and the world.

SSA's 43 athletic teams and extracurricular clubs offer multiple leadership positions. Clubs partner with non-profit organizations to complete service-learning activities. SSA promotes civic responsibility by requiring seniors to register to vote, observe a court hearing, and attend a city council meeting. SSA boasts one of the few all-female Color Guard units that participates in civic events such as the annual Veteran's Day assembly, the laying of a wreath at Arlington Cemetery, and other school and community events. The entire student body participates in a career day program sponsored by the alumnae association.

SSA partners with four colleges and universities to offer 24 dual enrollment and advanced placement courses. This partnership offers students a college-level experience in both the college-prep and honors/AP programs. The curricular program incorporates college readiness and pre-AP skills to prepare all students for standardized testing and college admissions.

To expose students to STEM careers in which women are often underrepresented, SSA offers eighth grade students an Introduction to STEM course and a DE engineering elective in grades 11 and 12. SSA's award-winning chapter of Health Occupations Students of America promotes healthcare career opportunities and collaborates with other chapters to ensure quality health care for all. In the arts, students are exposed to commercial grade software, such as Adobe Creative Suite, InDesign, and Final Cut Express as well as utilization of the latest technology in TV Production and Journalism.

In response to survey data from students, SSA partnered with a local, woman-owned franchise, PJ's Coffee, to open a coffee shop in the heart of campus. Students develop their entrepreneurial skills as they manage every aspect of the franchise from working behind the counter to managing a work team, ordering inventory, and balancing the budget. Upperclassmen who had to previously disengage from school activities to find work outside of the school day, can now re-engage and provide a service to their school community.

1b. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

SSA recognizes that along with the core disciplines, additional curricular areas are fundamental and vital to a student's education, personal development, and quality of life. The arts curriculum includes ceramics, digital art, and studio classes ranging from Studio Art I through AP Studio Art. SSA students exhibit their artwork in local and regional art shows and competitions. SSA also offers a wide range of performing arts courses and opportunities to students interested in music and theater with additional dual enrollment

opportunities in Art Appreciation and Music Appreciation. Partnering with St. Paul's School, our brother school, students have co-educational opportunities in theater and band.

Students complete CPR and first-aid certification in their Health and Physical Education coursework. Our certified athletic trainer from Tulane Institute of Sports Medicine provides brown bag lunch conversations with medical experts in nutrition, performance, reducing stress and anxiety, etc. On a monthly basis, guidance counselors teach life skills to physical education students in grades 8 through 10. In these sessions, students learn how to navigate difficult situations, advocate for themselves, and healthfully relieve stress and anxiety.

The foreign language department offers both Latin and Spanish studies. Students scheduled for one or more honors courses are required to take Latin I and have the option to pursue Latin II and III, or take Spanish I, II and III. Foreign language classes center on the "Five Cs": communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. These standards stress the value of learning second languages beyond the instructional setting. Foreign language students develop competences for post-secondary coursework in foreign language or for future careers and experiences.

SSA is committed to providing the most advanced technology to best prepare students for the 21st century learning environment. To prepare students to succeed in the information-based economy, SSA implements a 1:1 computing program that teaches students to become responsible and ethical users of technology. All students receive a school email address and access to the Google applications suite (Google docs, sheets, slides, forms, etc.). With these tools, students can more deeply explore information, collaborate with their peers, and produce a wide array of products. SSA's library includes an IT help desk, student printing services, and digital databases that students utilize for research and writing. In 2019, SSA debuted a state-of-the-art TV production studio that includes both a filming and editing room. Students in the DE mass communications course produce a weekly live-broadcast news show that highlights school and community events. These broadcasts allow our community to stay connected whether on campus or virtually.

In the humanities, students have an array of elective choices that allow them to further investigate literature, creative and rhetorical writing, philosophy, geography, sociology, psychology, and law studies. Those interested in STEM fields can choose unique courses in Biological Research and Independent Studies, Engineering DE, Anatomy and Physiology, Medical Math, and Personal Finance. Environmental Science students maintain a sustainable, organic garden and annually donate more than five hundred pounds of its produce to the local food bank.

3. Academic Supports:

SSA's counseling department provides a comprehensive student support program. As a nationally Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP), the department's mission is to positively contribute to the overall success of every student. Each year, the department assesses the social-emotional needs of the student body. This data is then used to tailor a classroom curriculum that actively engages students in developing specific social skills and maintaining overall mental health and wellness, as well as for determining college readiness, exploring college and careers, and scheduling coursework. At the close of each year, the counseling department surveys the students, reflects on its services, and evaluates the program offerings to identify areas for growth and improvement.

Counselors meet individually with every student to set annual goals, monitor progress towards these goals, and address specific academic and social-emotional needs. Currently, 17 percent of SSA's student body qualifies for instructional accommodations due to documented learning disabilities and/or mental health disorders. For students with documented needs or for students struggling academically, counselors create student support teams that consist of the student, counselor, parents, and teachers. Team members work in collaboration to create an action plan for success and assist the student in overcoming achievement barriers. Teams periodically meet to

discuss student progress and adjust action plans as needed to move students towards independence. In an effort to maximize every student's potential, SSA partners with standardized testing entities to carry accommodations into the high-stakes college admissions testing environment. As additional needs are identified, targeted small groups are created to provide responsive services to those in need of further support.

A full-time college and career advisor works with SSA's counseling department. In their eighth grade year, students collaborate with the advisor to create Naviance accounts and begin formatting their college resumes. Students continue to work with the advisor to build their resumes throughout their high school careers. Junior and senior students and their parents work closely with the advisor to investigate scholarship opportunities, discuss potential career paths, and navigate the college admissions process. The advisor is also a certified ACT educator and offers SSA students ACT prep workshops six weeks prior to every national testing date.

Because of the counseling department's student support program, SSA graduates understand themselves as learners, know how to advocate for themselves as strong, confident, young women, and are prepared to transition successfully into the next chapter of their lives.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

SSA understands the importance of extracurricular programs in developing a well-rounded person. SSA students are strongly encouraged to participate in all aspects of their school community: in campus ministry events and programs, in study groups and discipline-specific teams, in community service events, in the arts, and on athletic teams. Currently, 90 percent of SSA's student body is actively involved in one or more extracurricular activities.

The school day is designed to accommodate students in their academics as well as their extracurricular activities. In response to the students' request for greater access to the faculty during the school day, school leaders supervise lunch duty giving students access to the faculty and counselors every day. Club meetings occur during the second half of lunch to accommodate students who participate in both clubs and athletic practices after school.

The constraints of safety protocols have presented a unique challenge to student morale and engagement; however, SSA's student leaders have innovated ways of continuing extracurricular programs. Clubs scheduled creative non-uniform dress days to lift student morale as well as to raise money for their chosen community partners. Where pre-COVID-19 SSA students were visible and actively engaged in the community, in lieu of not participating at all, they chose activities with little contact, yet high impact. Students donated teddy bears to the local police station; collected thousands of canned green beans for a local Thanksgiving meal basket program; and made a cash donation to the local humane society.

The SSA student council plays a significant role in the culture of the school. The student council executive board members take responsibility for a vibrant student life and have a wide berth for presenting, planning, and carrying out activities for student engagement throughout the school year. Even with COVID restrictions, they have found creative ways to engage and connect with their peers.

As safety protocols changed, the student council began planning pep rallies, spirit days, and "pink week" with all activities live-streamed to the classrooms as well as to virtual students. When the safety protocols prevented the entire student body from gathering for honor society and eighth grade inductions, Veterans Day assembly, and all-school masses, SSA adapted. For example, a recent pep rally included a few representatives of each grade level gathered in the gym while the event was live-streamed to everyone else in classrooms.

When a student must quarantine, she is able to remain connected through the school's virtual learning platform. In addition to being able to attend classes virtually, she is also able to participate in campus events via live stream.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

SSA deeply values engaging students' families due to the strong correlation between a student's success in school and her family's level of engagement. To this end, SSA maintains an open-door policy for students and parents to foster trusting relationships and to create a partnership for each student's success. Families have multiple opportunities to participate in the school community through the Parent Club, Athletic Booster Club, and Alumnae Association events and celebrations.

Parents and community members are encouraged to participate in the strategic planning process, conversations on diversity, and serve on various boards. Situated in a tight-knit community, SSA has regular communication with its neighbors to maintain collegial relationships built on trust. Additionally, SSA shares its facilities with the local elementary schools as schedules allow. SSA's partnership with St. Paul's school connects the school to its community and expands its co-curricular offerings for students.

Keeping families and the community engaged during the pandemic presents significant challenges. SSA

implements tools such as social media communications, video meetings, and opportunities for distanced in-person meetings with parents. Weekly e-newsletters and video messages provide families with information and resources. The counseling department provides ongoing conversations on mental health topics for parents to support their daughters and each other. The first conversation had over 100 participants.

Live-streaming all school-sponsored and athletic events allow parents and the greater community to participate. When Phase I restrictions prohibited any in-person gatherings, school ceremonies were held via Zoom. For example, the Junior pinning and senior award ceremonies took place as scheduled, with the pins being delivered to the Juniors via mail so parents could “pin” each girl at home and top senior awards being presented to students at their homes. As COVID-19 restrictions changed, SSA adapted for small groups of parents and other community members to attend athletic competitions, choir concerts, and theater performances.

SSA developed invaluable relationships with several entities to better meet the needs of its student population and their families during the pandemic. SSA partnered with the Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Catholic Schools, Children’s Hospital of New Orleans, and Tulane Medical Center to develop its reopening plan and safety protocols.

To further assist families impacted by the pandemic, SSA participated in the Give NOLA fundraising event to assist struggling families with tuition expenses. Free breakfast and lunch are provided to all students throughout the year as a result of SSA’s partnership with the Archdiocese of New Orleans Food Service Program.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

SSA embraces the belief that effective teacher learning and development is vital to building teacher capacity and thereby positively impacts student performance. In providing ongoing, job embedded professional development, SSA fosters a community of learners focused on the common goal of providing the best educational program for all students. Data collected at the end of each school year is used to inform professional development needs for the upcoming school year. Pedagogical practices chosen to address these needs are presented to the faculty during professional development days prior to the start of each school year. The calendar provides monthly school improvement sessions where teachers share best practices and evaluate student work.

Each year, faculty members set individual goals and meet with the head of school to create professional growth plans. Individual growth plans directly address student feedback surveys. Departmental goals are set using classroom and standardized testing data. Departments meet on a monthly basis to reflect on their progress towards these goals and to share best practices.

New teachers participate in a program designed to inculcate within them SSA’s mission, vision, and teaching philosophy. Teachers learn about school traditions, how to employ backwards design to build effective units of study, analyze classroom data, and utilize classroom management strategies. Each teacher is assigned a mentor who provides him or her with ongoing support throughout the first year. New teachers are required to observe two master teachers during their first year and are formally evaluated mid-year. As needed, instructional coaching and modeling are provided.

Veteran faculty members are informally observed twice per year and provided with constructive feedback to improve their craft. Formal evaluations occur on a three-year basis by discipline.

To facilitate professional networking, all members of SSA’s learning community serve as active participants in various local and national organizations. Members are also offered multiple opportunities throughout the school year to participate in in-person or virtual workshops and conferences to continue their education.

This year’s professional development focuses on COVID-19 safety protocols, managing synchronous in-person and virtual instruction, and addressing the social-emotional needs of all learners. To accomplish this, SSA partners with Tulane University Sports Medicine to provide training on COVID-19 safety protocols, a
NBRS 2021 21LA101PV Page 15 of 20

technology expert to provide training on engaging students in virtual instruction, and a psychologist to present strategies for processing pandemic challenges, developing coping strategies, and prioritizing relationships. In these sessions, teachers also work in small groups to identify the unique challenges of teaching during a pandemic and work collaboratively to create solutions. In addition to professional development, teachers are further supported this year through increased incentives, increased professional development days, and mental health support.

4. School Leadership:

SSA operates under the head of school leadership model. The head of school is responsible for adherence to the school mission, financial stability, strategic planning, and day-to-day operations of the school. This position reports directly to the Archdiocese of New Orleans. The head of school works collaboratively with both an administrative team and a leadership team.

The administrative team is composed of the dean of academics and the dean of students. The dean of academics is responsible for the academic program, including curriculum development, the supervision of faculty, academic progress of students, preparation of student schedules, and the mentoring of new teachers. The dean of students is responsible for assuring that the students adhere to the school's policies and procedures as outlined in the student handbook, enforcing disciplinary measures as necessary, and moderating all student activities including clubs, assemblies, and community outreach.

The head of school meets with the leadership team on a bi-monthly basis. The advancement director is responsible for communications, marketing, fundraising, enrollment, and alumnae relations. The finance director oversees financial planning, budgeting, payroll, and human resources. The facilities director oversees the physical plant. The campus minister ensures the school stays true to its Benedictine tradition; the office manager oversees the office staff; and the athletic director manages the sports teams and athletic facilities.

Months before 2020-21 school year, the administrative team collaborated with the Archdiocese of New Orleans, Children's Hospital of New Orleans, Tulane University Medical Center, neighboring school administrators, faculty, and staff to create a three-prong reopening plan. The plan prepared for three different learning platforms: fully in-person, fully virtual, and hybrid. The team carefully researched best practices for health, safety, cleaning, and teaching. The in-person learning plan was fully implemented at the start of school. SSA has carefully followed the plan, adapting as CDC guidance changed, and has remained open for in-person learning. An isolation room was created to immediately isolate any faculty, staff, or students who present COVID-19 symptoms during the school day. In collaboration with Tulane University, SSA created a self-assessment screening that is collected electronically each day. With federal funding SSA purchased thermometers for daily temperature checks as students arrive on campus.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

As a Catholic school, SSA fully values and honors the dignity of every person as persons made in the image and likeness of God. SSA teaches students to become responsible members of the community through the development of positive attitudes and values, including a sense of self-discipline and respect for both themselves and others. SSA's primary aim is to enable students to grow from adolescents to mature, Christian young women.

School leaders continually strive to identify ways to provide curricular and extracurricular programs that are inclusive of all persons and that remain respectful of individual differences. Diversity and inclusion are built into each discipline's curriculum. Theology students study social justice and diversity daily as they explore the diversity of Catholic saints, investigate and address the needs of the underprivileged, and create action plans for authentic social responsibility. For example, when theology students investigated the production of their school uniforms and discovered that they were produced unethically in sweatshops, they presented the information and

suggested changes to school leaders. As a result, changes were made to acquire uniforms from environmentally responsible, socially ethical vendors. The English and social disciplines incorporate opportunities to develop empathy, respect, and appreciation for differences in historical and social backgrounds, and cultures into their lessons. The foreign language curriculum includes the study of Spanish cultures and traditions and the Latin curriculum investigates ancient Roman and Greek civilizations and their impacts on modern day society. The foreign language club organizes several activities throughout the school year to expose the student body to culturally significant dates, celebrations, and festivities.

Grounded in and building upon Catholic teachings, SSA remains open to the challenges of an evolving society in which diversity and inclusion have become focal points. Recent events have prompted SSA to reexamine the school's diversity statement to ensure an environment where all students feel welcome. To foster dialogue in this area, SSA established a Diversity and Inclusion Outreach Committee in the fall of 2020. The committee, comprised of faculty, staff, parents, and alumnae, is charged with several major tasks: identifying ways in which diversity can be embodied and celebrated in the spiritual life of the Academy; identifying ways in which the school can respond to the Christian call to justice for all; and identifying ways to expand recruitment and retention of diverse students, faculty, and staff. In addition to establishing this committee, school administrators and faculty members participated in several training modules addressing diversity and inclusion.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The one practice that set SSA apart from all others at the onset of school closures was its dogged determination to provide continuous, uninterrupted, authentic learning. The lesson learned from Hurricane Katrina was to keep a sense of normalcy for the students when the world around them was anything but normal and to keep the community together. Consequently, when planning for the flip to virtual instruction, there were three non-negotiables: (1) provide quality instruction to avoid academic backslide; (2) quickly identify and address the mental and emotional needs of students and faculty; (3) and keep the community connected through timely communication, activities, and ceremonies.

In the days leading up to school closures, SSA proactively prepared to continue meaningful instruction. At 3:00 pm on Friday, March 13, 2020, schools were closed indefinitely. SSA immediately initiated its plan for school to continue virtually. On Monday after the closure, administrators, faculty, and staff met to review recent training in virtual platforms, problem solve anticipated challenges, identify internal experts to lean on for support, and plan for continued, meaningful instruction and community interaction. Students practiced a virtual attendance routine. On Tuesday—only three days after the closure—SSA’s virtual school opened.

SSA had the infrastructure and support mechanisms in place and all constituents had the skills necessary to seamlessly transition to virtual instruction. After school closures, school leaders held weekly Zoom meetings to communicate information, assess teacher concerns, learn from each other, and facilitate shared decision-making. SSA teachers honed their technological skills and worked diligently to adapt their instruction to the online platform. As teachers tried new strategies, students were flexible and resilient allowing them to quickly master virtual learning.

Teachers and counselors communicated regularly to ensure students were emotionally and physically safe. Surveys were conducted every three weeks and adjustments were made including less screen time, more student activities, and more opportunities to join together as a faith community. When parents indicated they felt lost in helping their daughters, the counselors held a series of parent conversations. The plan was fluid and the responses timely while staying true to SSA’s core values.

SSA moved seamlessly between in-person to online learning and prevented students from losing precious academic ground. Students and parents expressed their gratitude for SSA’s ability to adapt swiftly to virtual instruction. As one senior said, “Virtual school taught me a lot of self discipline, balance, and organization. It allowed me to figure out things on my own and helped my technology skills flourish.” A grateful parent remarked, “I have been extremely impressed with SSA’s expedience in implementing online learning and a platform to maintain both structure and flexibility. These girls are blessed.”

PART VII - NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION

1. Non-public school association(s): Catholic

Identify the religious or independent associations, if any, to which the school belongs. Select the primary association first.

2. Does the school have nonprofit, tax-exempt (501(c)(3)) status? Yes X No

3. What is the educational cost per student? \$10960
(School budget divided by enrollment)

4. What is the average financial aid per student? \$1650

5. What percentage of the annual budget is devoted to scholarship assistance and/or tuition reduction? 3%

6. What percentage of the student body receives scholarship assistance, including tuition reduction? 22%

PART VIII – NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL ASSESSMENT RESULTS

FOR NORM-REFERENCED TESTS

Non-public schools must report norm-referenced test (NRT) results in reading and mathematics for students tested in grades 3 and higher in the most recent administration of the test within the most recently completed school year (2019-2020)¹. Each school must obtain grade level summary reports from the test publisher for students tested in reading and mathematics for each of these grades.

These reports must include:

1. the number of students tested;
2. the average student scale score or the national percentile equivalent of the average scale score in reading and mathematics **for all students in each tested grade; and**
3. the average student scale score or the national percentile equivalent of the average scale score in reading and mathematics **for each sufficiently large subgroup² in each tested grade.**

Please make notations on these reports to explain results that represent fewer than 95 percent of the students enrolled at the time of testing (e.g., the number of students who took alternative assessments³).

A copy of these reports (in a PDF file) must be uploaded through the National Blue Ribbons Schools Portal.

Also, one hard copy of these reports must be submitted by mail to CAPE with two hard copies of this application.

¹ Because of school closings due to COVID-19, schools may use test results obtained in the fall or spring of 2019 or the fall of 2020.

² Possible subgroups are those identified in Items 4, 6, 7, and 8 in Part II of this application (racial/ethnic groups, ELL students, students eligible for free or reduced meals, and students receiving special education services). A sufficiently large subgroup is one that represents at least 10 percent of the school enrollment as reported in these items.

³ Alternate assessments are used to evaluate the performance of students who are unable to participate in a school's norm-referenced test (NRT) even with accommodations. These assessments are based on the grade-level content covered by the NRT, but at reduced depth, breadth, and complexity. (adapted from National Center on Educational Outcomes)