ST. AGNES ACADEMY
Houston, Texas

HEAD OF SCHOOL
Start Date: July 2022
st-agnes.org
OVERVIEW

St. Agnes Academy (SAA) is one of the most outstanding all-girls’ Catholic schools in the country and recognized as one of the top two all-girls’ schools in the state of Texas. SAA was founded by the Dominican Sisters of Houston in 1906. The school currently serves 935 young women in grades 9-12 and is located in the southwest corner of Houston, about 13 miles from downtown. St. Agnes takes pride in the fact that its students commute from many areas of Houston, as well as from outlying communities. As such, St. Agnes Academy is committed to serving a diverse student body that represents a variety of socioeconomic, cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds that reflect the diversity of the city.

Academy women are leaders and are making a difference in the world today. For more than a century, St. Agnes has empowered young women to develop intellectual curiosity, to work for social justice, and to act with integrity and compassion. With an intentionally developed academic curriculum that has spirituality at its core, the Academy graduates students who possess an undeniable self-awareness, hard-earned inner strength, vivid intellect, fierce compassion, and a desire to seek her own truth. Furthermore, by operating at the nexus of rigorous academics, rich co-curricular offerings, and robust service learning, St. Agnes challenges each student to become her authentic self and fulfill her God-given purpose, while also challenging her to remain ever aware of her responsibilities as a sister to all. Consequently, each student inspires, and is inspired by, her peers to live in bold sisterhood as an equally bold individual.

St. Agnes Academy seeks a new Head of School to begin in July 2022 after the retirement of Sr. Jane Meyer, O.P., an alumna and beloved, visionary leader who has served as the Head of School for almost three decades after serving as Principal since 1981. The Academy has flourished under her leadership, and the next Head of School will partner with a strong leadership team and a dynamic Board of Directors.
to lead this extraordinary school into its next chapter of excellence. Strong candidates will carry a deep appreciation for the Academy’s Dominican heritage and traditions and charism of the Dominican Sisters of Houston and implicitly understand how to incorporate the tenets of that spirituality into daily life. Additionally, they will practice compassion while thinking critically about the world around them. Candidates should have a personal and professional background that embraces diversity and champions the marginalized in society. The new Head will bring a joyful, optimistic energy to St. Agnes and ensure the Academy continues to be a place that teaches and emboldens young women to be catalysts for positive change in their communities, both locally and globally.

SCHOOL HISTORY

St. Agnes Academy was founded in 1905 by Mother Pauline Gannon, O.P., Prioress of the Dominican Sisters of Houston, Texas. The Academy opened on February 12, 1906, at its former location at 3901 Fannin. It was in operation at that site until September 1963 when the present-day campus opened at 9000 Bellaire Boulevard in Sharpstown. The current school campus consists of 15.6 acres and an athletic complex of 18.7 acres located one mile east of the main campus on Bellaire Boulevard.

In 1917 St. Agnes was accredited by the Texas Conference of Catholic Bishops Education Department. From its founding until 1939, the Academy offered 12 years of instruction and boarding facilities for its students. In 1939, the boarding facilities were discontinued, and, in 1954, the Academy began to function as a day school for students in grades 9-12. St. Agnes Academy is committed to serving a diverse student body representing a variety of socioeconomic, cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. Today, St. Agnes has approximately 935 young women enrolled and numbers more than 12,000 graduates, many of whom have daughters, granddaughters, and even great-granddaughters who are Academy students or alumnae. The school continues to thrive with a strong enrollment and a robust waiting list.
A very important word around St. Agnes is VERITAS, the Dominican motto meaning truth, which permeates the educational endeavors at the school. It is at the root of all the decisions and strategies implemented at the school. St. Agnes is a leader in promoting social justice, anti-racism, and service to others. St. Agnes Academy is well supported both by graduates and by student families as is evidenced annually in event participation, resource development, and financial support. The graduates of St. Agnes Academy have offered, and continue to offer, significant leadership and service both to the church and to civic communities.

Click here for a virtual tour of the campus.

THE SCHOOL

Grounded in the enduring Dominican values of prayer, study, community, and preaching, St. Agnes Academy is Houston’s living embodiment of St. Dominic’s teachings. The Academy leads already tenacious and mindful young women through a life-defining, transformational high school experience toward personal metanoia as they advance in their lifetime endeavors of self-formation. St. Agnes Academy’s radically hospitable community unites impassioned and supportive teachers, coaches, staff, and leadership; driven, inspiring students; and trusting, confident parents in honoring the essential worth of each other and the gift of diversity. This environment fosters a culture under which St. Agnes women can recognize differences among themselves as opportunities for deeper understanding of their own uniqueness and the interdependence of all humankind.

With thought-provoking, masterful teachers as equal partners in their education, Academy women undertake intensive study, actively pursue Truth in the contemporary world, continuously push themselves beyond preconceived notions and ideologies, and stretch toward an integration of
intellectual knowledge, values, and life experiences. Rising to their teachers’ high standards, St. Agnes students learn to think independently, to advocate for themselves and their understanding, and to celebrate hard-earned successes as they openly confront their struggles. With honed insight, Academy women embrace their successes and challenges by tapping their newly-discovered reservoirs of strength. Fueled by a school-wide belief in basic human dignity and a common commitment to solidarity and sisterhood, students forge a resolute and lifelong dedication to changing the world and eradicating social injustice. Of course, Campus Ministry is an essential part of this work. Campus Ministry supports and carries out the Academy’s mission by nurturing the Dominican Pillars of Prayer, Study, Community, and Preaching. Through retreats, prayer experiences, service projects, and other celebrations of Dominican Heritage, Campus Ministry seeks to build a strong community of faith within SAA, igniting a passion for love of God and neighbor that sustains those in the halls of St. Agnes, in the greater Houston community, and in the world. Close to 300 students actively participate in Campus Ministry.

St. Agnes Academy is accredited by the Texas Catholic Conference of Catholic Bishops Education Department (TCCB ED), under the aegis of Texas Education Agency.
and Cognia (formerly AdvancEd/the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools). Memberships include National Catholic Education Association, College Board, The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the Dominican Association of Secondary Schools, Texas Association for College Admission Counseling, National Association for College Admission Counseling, National Coalition of Girls' Schools, and Independent School Management (ISM). St. Agnes Academy complies with the NACAC Code of Ethics and Professional Practices.

ACADEMICS

The curriculum of St. Agnes Academy revolves around core subject areas of theology, English, mathematics, science, history/social science, and world languages. The elective program offers students the opportunity to pursue areas of special interest or go into greater depth in the core subjects. All courses are constantly evaluated and changed (as appropriate) to meet the needs of the students within today’s society. They are designed with the development of capable, well-rounded students in mind.

St. Agnes Academy offers 12 Honors and 18 Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Enrollment in these classes is competitive and limited. Students qualify on the basis of academic performance and faculty recommendations. Students may enroll in a maximum of four Honors/AP courses each year and all students enrolled in an AP course are required to take the AP exam. There is cross-enrollment in classes with Strake Jesuit College Preparatory, an all-male school of similar size that is adjacent to St. Agnes.

The college counseling and wellness counseling departments of St. Agnes Academy provide services aimed at meeting the needs of students in the following areas: academic, learning, college, wellness, and career. The departments provide students with a personalized and student-centered approach through individual and group guidance. There is also an Academic Support Center which provides assistance for students with learning differences and for students who need organizational support.
THE ARTS

The arts program at St. Agnes Academy is designed to offer students a chance to explore different forms of expression and nurture interpersonal relationships. In the visual art studios, students are guided through a variety of levels of different forms of visual artwork and afforded the opportunity to pursue drawing, painting, graphic design, photography, and video. Music is a significant component of the SAA arts curriculum. Mixed Chorus is composed of both St. Agnes and Strake Jesuit students from grades 9-12. St. Agnes also has two varsity ensembles—the Triple Trios and Performance Workshop. The Double Triple Trios is the select vocal ensemble at St. Agnes. Performance Workshop (14-18 students) is a premier show choir that presents a broad spectrum of musical styles.

There is a strong theatre program at St. Agnes. This program includes a fall show and a spring musical. Strake Jesuit students participate in the theatre program. St. Agnes also has an award-winning speech and debate program. The program prepares students for collegiate level performance and professional performance venues. The SAA dance program is a core offering. The Tiger Girls (TG) are St. Agnes Academy’s award-winning dance team. The TG Elite dancers are St. Agnes Academy’s elite dance company that performs at special school events and competes at NDA Nationals in Orlando, Florida every spring. The Dance Officer Line is a leadership program that is designed to train returning members to lead by service in promotion of the dance team as a loving, supportive community.

ATHLETICS

St. Agnes Academy has earned 105 State titles in athletics and annually competes against some of the best private and public schools in the state. The school offers 13 different competitive sports programs during three seasons and has more than 500 students involved in at least one of its 36 teams. Students...
have the opportunity to participate at different levels (e.g., freshman, J.V., Varsity), depending on the sport and season. Sports offered include basketball, cross country, diving, field hockey, golf, lacrosse, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, track and field, volleyball, and water polo.

The Academy values the physical, mental, and communal benefits of athletics, and the coaches, administration, and medical staff work diligently to support the over 50% of students who participate in athletics. Participating in athletics provides the student-athletes the opportunity to develop characteristics that will help them become more active, higher-achieving, and productive members of society. Since there are so many options available, students find a place where they can apply their personal skills and talents while contributing to the institution’s rich tradition of success. There are numerous graduates who are recruited by highly competitive college programs every year.

SCHOOL LIFE

School life at St. Agnes Academy seeks to cultivate in students an awareness of self, an understanding of others, and a deeper relationship with God. Every day, the Academy calls on students to love and honor the dignity of each person and emphasizes that this journey begins with the student’s self. Academy women all learn that love of self, rather than narcissism or self-absorption, is self-awareness. The Academy leverages this work toward self-awareness purposefully and thoughtfully to ensure that human dignity can and does remain at the center of every relationship on campus; as such, all SAA learning and activities function within a “culture of dignity.” For example, the Academy takes a compassionate and inclusive approach to sex education with the goal of creating a safe and loving environment for the entire school community, including LGBTQ persons.
St. Agnes Academy also prioritizes educating its students in the value of social justice, as it is fundamental to the school community and to the whole of Catholicism. Thus, compassion for the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized, and action on behalf of justice are integral to student life at the Academy. Beginning second semester of junior year, Academy students complete 100 hours of community service with a single organization to fully realize the value of social justice and foster a deep connection to a cause that speaks to their own heart. Notably, St. Agnes coordinates immersion trips to offer students the chance to contribute to change outside of the Houston community. The school has long-standing partnerships in the Dominican Republic, Kenya, Guatemala, Peru, and Cambodia. By facilitating and encouraging this work, St. Agnes prepares young women to preach with their lives.

Finally, SAA life is further enriched with an abundance of student clubs and organizations. The focus and work of these student-run groups shifts year to year, based on interests and bandwidth. Accordingly, the club offerings collectively provide a snapshot of what matters each year to the young women at St. Agnes. Current club topics include Debate Club, Robotics Club, Mental Health Club, Calligraphy Club, Asian Student Union, and Voices for Black Youth Club.

HOUSTON, TEXAS

Located in southeast Texas, Houston is the most populous city in the state and the fourth most populous city in the United States. Houston is also one of the most diverse cities in the U.S.: in its people, its economy, and its culture. With a resilient job market, affordable cost of living, and vibrant cultural scene, the Houston area has been named by Forbes, the New York Times, and others as an ideal place for career professionals and families to plant roots. Today, Houston is second only to NYC in the number of Fortune 500 companies with headquarters in the city. The Port of Houston ranks first in the United
States in international waterborne tonnage and second in total cargo tonnage. In addition to being historically a thriving force in the natural energy sector, Houston has become a professional center for aeronautics, biomedical research, and healthcare. The Texas Medical Center, a medical district and neighborhood with over 60 medical institutions, constitutes the largest medical complex in the world including the world-renowned MD Anderson Cancer Center.

Houston’s downtown is noteworthy for more than its skyline. Boasting the second-largest concentration of theaters in a downtown area in the U.S., Houston’s theater district occupies 17 blocks. Its six performance halls and nine performing arts organizations host the Houston Grand Opera, Houston Ballet, Houston Symphony Orchestra, Alley Theatre, and Theatre Under the Stars, among others.

Also worth mentioning is the Museum District, which draws more than seven million visitors per year to its mile-and-a-half section near downtown. Attractions include the Museum of Fine Arts, the Houston Museum of Natural Science, the Contemporary Art Museum, the Menil Collection and Rothko Chapel, and the Holocaust Museum Houston. Space Center Houston (NASA’s official visitor center), the Houston Zoo, the Downtown Aquarium, and Sam Houston Race Park offer additional venues to explore, while the city’s expansive green spaces and commuter bike paths provide ample opportunity to take in the warm weather year-round.

Houston is a major U.S. city that boasts five major league sports teams—the Houston Texans of the NFL, the NBA’s Houston Rockets, MLB’s Houston Astros, the MLS’s Dynamos, and NWSL’s Dash—all situated downtown or only a few miles away. And, most recently, the city has been awarded a professional rugby team. In addition, the annual Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is the largest in the world.
The combination of a thriving economy and ever-increasing multiculturism has led to the emergence of an exceptional culinary scene in Houston. From the predictable barbeque and Tex Mex to spectacular seafood and ethnic eats, Houston’s reputation amongst foodies is growing. In sum, the city of Houston is unique not only to Texas but to the country as a whole and offers many benefits to the over six million people who now call it home.

**OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

As a top-notch Catholic girls’ school in the nation, it is truly difficult to capture all the strengths of the Academy. Dynamic leadership and vision have led the school to pinnacles of excellence in all areas of school operations: financial sustainability, enrollment management, fundraising success, and best practices in teaching and learning. With that said, the next Head of School will not only be expected to build upon this trajectory of outstanding accomplishment but to also implement the goals outlined in the newly-adopted comprehensive strategic plan. In particular, the following opportunities and challenges will be important for the next Head of School to address:

- Executing the newly-developed strategic plan.
- With the Board, creating a financial plan that will grow the endowment, provide financial aid support, monitor faculty and staff salaries/benefits, and monitor tuition revenues.
- Recruiting and retaining a quality faculty and staff.
- Remaining faithful to the Houston Dominican charism of the school.
- Implementing strategies that perpetuate strong enrollment management processes and encourage college placement of graduates into the finest colleges and universities.
- Continuing to remain a leader in technology integration.
- Increasing diversity in all areas of the school: faculty, staff, Board, and students.
- Maintaining a strong relationship and co-curriculum relationship with Strake Jesuit.
- Leading and navigating the social justice issues at SAA and in the world.
DESIRED QUALITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEXT HEAD OF SCHOOL

St. Agnes Academy seeks an experienced leader with vision and skills in the fundamental responsibilities of leadership, communication, and collaborative decision-making to advance the mission of the school. Every applicant should be a practicing Catholic whose life models the St. Agnes Academy mission and who is willing to embrace the Dominican charism. The Head of School is an inspirational leader who motivates and inspires the vision and implementation of the mission, goals, and philosophy of St. Agnes Academy. The Head of School has final responsibility for religious and educational programs, fiscal responsibility and institutional advancement through general oversight and strategic planning in order to fulfill the Academy’s mission. The Head of School should have the ability and willingness to embrace a diverse ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic population. In carrying out this role, the Head of School works in collaboration with a dynamic Leadership Team and a strong Board of Directors to provide direction and coordination to ensure executive administration of the Academy. The Head of School is directly responsible to the St. Agnes Academy Board of Directors (“School Board”) and the Dominican Sisters of Houston Board of Trustees.

The Head of School is the “institution-builder,” fundraiser, vision-setter, and advocate of the school’s unique mission in the greater community. The day-to-day operations fall under the auspices of the outstanding administrative team, allowing the Head of School to focus on strategies that will raise the profile and value proposition of the school and to provide the resources to recruit and retain an excellent faculty and staff. While knowledge of education and school operations is preferred, other qualities and experiences will be considered including candidates who come from other mission-driven institutions and arenas. Further, the next Head of School will need to be, and want to be, a strong presence in all facets of the school community, knowing all students and professional staff, while embracing
the Dominican pillars of the school and a strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. An advanced degree is required. Specific qualities and characteristics also include:

- Proven Catholic leader who can inculcate and drive an environment that values social justice, compassion, and acceptance.
- Highly relationship-oriented and approachable servant leader.
- A collaborative, humble, and visionary leader who can inspire excellence and build community.

TO APPLY

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultants in confidence. Candidates will ultimately need to submit the following materials as separate PDF documents:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position.
- A current résumé.
- A one-page statement of educational philosophy and practice.
- A list of five professional references with name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate’s permission) to:

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