

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# St. Ambrose University and Mount Mercy University Announce Plans to Consider Strategic Combination; New Agreement Signed to Expand Course Options for Students at Both Catholic Universities

DAVENPORT & CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa, May 6, 2024 – The presidents of St. Ambrose University and Mount Mercy University are pleased to announce the signing of a new joint agreement as they consider the potential for a path-breaking and innovative strategic combination. The immediate agreement allows students to take a range of courses from either university, whether in-person, or in a hybrid or online format beginning in fall 2024.

This arrangement, which was approved by each university's board of trustees, will lead to more pathways for students at both institutions. The two universities are also in the process of finalizing a second agreement that will facilitate the seamless transition of qualified students from undergraduate into graduate degree programs. Collectively this includes pathways into eighteen separate graduate programs as well as a variety of certificate and degree completion programs for adult learners.

“In the current higher education environment, this type of work represents a bold and proactive approach to capitalize on the current academic and financial strength of both Mount Mercy and St. Ambrose,” says Dr. Amy Novak, president of St. Ambrose University. Currently, both universities boast a number of strong financial indicators. This joint work promises to strengthen our collective ability to innovate and grow as vibrant, values-based leaders in our marketplace.”

“This deepened collaboration lays the foundation for a new model of Catholic higher education. The expanded pathways that this collaboration provides for our students and our communities will be groundbreaking,” says Todd Olson, president of Mount Mercy University.

For more than a year, the two institutions have been discussing opportunities to collaborate in an effort to increase affordability and access to quality education for traditional students and adult learners alike. Anticipated student benefits include:

- The potential to reduce time to degree completion.
- Expanded opportunities to move seamlessly from undergraduate programs into graduate programs in healthcare, engineering, marriage and family therapy, social work, public health, education, and business.
- A strengthened core curriculum focused on holistic formation, and the development of ethical decision-making frameworks grounded in the Catholic tradition of both universities.
- New opportunities for adult learners to complete degrees, obtain certificates, and upskill themselves to be more competitive in the labor market.
- New benefits and possibilities for the Quad Cities and Cedar Rapids communities.

The two not-for-profit universities remain focused on long-term sustainability and corresponding efforts to control the cost of higher education and to increase student access. Through exploration of a strategic combination, the presidents say there could be opportunities to leverage shared administrative functions and economies of scale to achieve cost savings and more efficient operations.

“We have seen great collaboration between our two universities in the recent years,” says Olson. “We both strongly value our students, our communities, and our missions, and have seen the results that can come from expanding opportunities with other like-minded institutions. We must remain innovative in the current higher education landscape and be proactive in our learner-centered approaches, rather than waiting to see what happens.”

Father Dennis Holtschneider and Dr. Donna M. Carroll, co-presidents for the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, agree, noting that this is precisely the type of proactive activity they have been encouraging colleges to explore. “We know these are challenging times for our colleges and universities,” says Carroll. “We fully support the work St. Ambrose and Mount Mercy are doing to lead the way in creating a leading-edge, responsive and sustainable future for Catholic higher education.”

The two universities plan to expand conversations toward a potential strategic combination in the coming months, ensuring that all actions are conducted with appropriate due diligence and subject to all applicable regulatory and accrediting agency requirements.

For more information and frequently asked questions, please visit [www.sau.edu](http://www.sau.edu) or [www.mtmercy.edu](http://www.mtmercy.edu).

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### **About St. Ambrose University**

Founded in 1882 by the Diocese of Davenport, St. Ambrose University’s commitment to academic excellence, the liberal arts, social justice and service is rooted in its Catholic intellectual tradition. The leading, private university is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and offers 65 undergraduate majors, 10 master’s degrees and three doctoral programs. 140 years since its inception, St. Ambrose education remains centered on intentional, holistic and experiential learning, with a vision to be a vibrant, sustainable, and learner-focused model for Catholic higher education, preparing individuals from all walks of life to lead lives characterized by our core values of courage, wisdom, justice, and service. To learn more about St. Ambrose University, visit [www.sau.edu](http://www.sau.edu).

### **About Mount Mercy University**

Located in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Mount Mercy University is the regional Catholic, Mercy University that promises students of diverse backgrounds, ages and faiths a challenging, practical education that inspires them to discover knowledge, build community and live their values. Mount Mercy provides a forward-thinking, future-focused education, offering baccalaureate and graduate education to 1,500+ enrolled students and uniquely blending a quality liberal arts education with career-focused professional preparation.

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