

Advancement Meeting Minutes

January 26, 2026

Development Report

Ryan reported that the **Holy Family Fund** currently stands at approximately **\$205,000**, up from **\$140,000** at the same time last year. The fund is divided into three components:

- Annual Neumann Fund
- SCS Guardian Angel Scholarship Fund
- SCS Family Tuition Cap

Of the total, approximately **\$13,000** is designated for the Guardian Angel Scholarship Fund and **\$1,000** for the Family Tuition Cap at this time from donors.

The **SCS GALA** is rapidly approaching. This year's theme is **Boots, Bowties & Bling**, marking the first western or cowboy-themed GALA. Planned attractions include a mechanical bull and roping dummies. Sponsorships and donations are beginning to come in, and attendees are encouraged to invite friends and family for a night celebrating Saunders Catholic Schools.

Fifty percent of the funds raised, including the Fund-A-Need, will benefit Bishop Neumann High School, as Neumann staff coordinates the event. The remaining fifty percent is split evenly between the two grade schools, twenty-five percent each, for special projects. In recent years, each grade school has received approximately **\$50,000** from this single event.

SCS Strategic Plan Update

Academic Excellence

Primary goals focus on fostering academic excellence beyond the curriculum.

- One key objective is restoring longer access periods. These were shortened this year to accommodate school hours, which reduced students' access to faculty support. Feedback from parents and students is it's just not enough time. Discussions with the administration will continue regarding reinstatement.
- Improve parent engagement and communication across all schools.
- Evaluate high school course pathways for students pursuing four-year and two-year college programs, noting a continued significant market shift toward two-year programs and careers.
- Strengthen support systems for both students and staff.

Community and Culture

Goals include enhancing hospitality and engagement across the SCS community.

- Establish welcome committees and mentor families for new SCS families to foster involvement and connection.
- Explore ways to cultivate servant leadership amid increasing volunteer challenges.
- Expand evangelization and outreach to the broader community.
- Support parishes and families through retreats, community nights, and similar gatherings.

Growth Pillar

Key objectives for the next three years include:

- Align enrollment timelines across all three schools to January (currently in March) of the calendar year, consistent with standard practice and competitor schools.
- Transition enrollment processes fully online for all schools and explore automatic re-enrollment for returning families, similar to employee benefit renewals, placing the burden on families choosing to leave rather than those remaining committed and having to fill out multiple pages every year to enroll.
- Improve advertising efforts through Facebook ads, print ads, and redesigned websites that function as promotional landing pages rather than purely informational resources.
- Tuition information has been removed from websites, requiring interested families to submit contact information to receive details, allowing for better outreach to market to beyond current families.
- Refocus social media and website content on students as the primary heroes, minimizing emphasis on facilities and staff.
- Shift marketing messaging from “what, how, why” to “why, how, what” we do.
- Implement annual external surveys tied to the Community and Culture and Academic Excellence pillars to measure progress and guide improvement. If we are not measuring ourselves future goals are subjective.

Unapologetically Catholic

Six project ideas were introduced and divided among committee members:

- Ensuring continuity and long-term planning for campus ministry, especially during staff transitions.
- Chapel improvements or the construction of a new chapel at Bishop Neumann.
- Creation of a Speaker Series and fund, potentially in collaboration with other schools to reduce costs.
- Faith recognition opportunities in addition to service hour requirements.
- Increasing student retreat participation to 100 percent at Bishop Neumann, up from the current 70 percent, recognizing the strong long-term impact of these experiences.
- Exploring a “Wall of Faith,” similar to arts and athletics recognition walls, still in early conceptual stages.

Administration Reports

St. Wenceslaus

- St. Wenceslaus missed an assessment payment.
- New hires may be brought on with a 70/30 health insurance split rather than the current 80/20. Health insurance costs increased by 15 percent this past year (for all schools), exceeding growth in tuition, tithing, and donations.
- GALA funds will be used to replace all door locks to match the new addition and improve building security.

St. John's

- St. John's continues to run an annual deficit and expects similar outcomes this year.
- Projected deficits of approximately **\$80,000** this year and **\$90,000** next year.
- Savings have been used to cover shortfalls.

Bishop Neumann

- Financial performance is currently in line with projections.
- Bishop Neumann is projected to be down approximately **\$300,000**.
- Savings and endowment funds have covered shortfalls over the past two years.
- A Finance Committee is being formed to evaluate long-term sustainability and difficult decisions.

Other Topics

Tuition and Enrollment

- Tuition increases are necessary due to a 3 percent salary increase and a 15 percent increase in benefits.
- Significant concern was expressed by middle-income families about continued increases.
- Recommended increases include **\$150** for Bishop Neumann and **\$200** for grade schools.
- Discussion included standardizing enrollment processes and requiring the use of FACTS for billing and tracking. We currently use FACTS as an option.
- An enrollment fee was proposed, consistent with standard practices.
 - Fees paid before a deadline would be applied to tuition.
 - Fees paid after the deadline would function as a true fee.
 - New and transferring families would be exempt from the late fee.

Strategic Planning Open Forum

- The Strategic Planning Open Forum is scheduled for **March**, to be held in the Bishop Neumann gym.
- Strategic pillars will be present using a short PowerPoint, with 5 to 10 minutes per pillar. Please begin preparing for this presentation pick 1 – 2 people to present.
- Tuition increases and the financial status of the schools will also be shared with the community.
- Committee members should coordinate with **Ryan Mascarello** regarding presentation slides or material.

Additional Discussion

- The PLUME currently reaches approximately **1,900 constituents**.
- A suggestion was made to request more basic school supplies, not only large project items, particularly for teacher wish lists.
- Fr. Gross proposed forming a pastor committee to meet with the Bishop and the diocesan education office to explore new financial models for Lincoln Diocese Catholic schools. Ideas included a diocesan schools collection, large diocesan grants, and a diocesan-level capital campaign.
- Fr. Hunt emphasized highlighting the role Catholic schools play in fostering vocations, noting parish closures and clustering in the Archdiocese of Omaha as a cautionary example of not keeping schools affordable or promoting them.

Next Meeting

March 9, 2026

Meeting at **6:00 PM**

Open Forum in the Bishop Neumann Gym at **7:00 PM**