

USM History

USM traces its history back to a small academy for young women founded by the Sisters of Charity in the frontier town of Leavenworth.

The Sisters settled in Leavenworth in 1858 longing for a location to serve the “wild frontier.” Within days of their arrival in the oldest city in Kansas, they were teaching boys and girls in the area – a tradition that continues today.

Just a year later, the Sisters opened the first boarding school for girls in downtown Leavenworth. Filled to capacity with women from Kansas, Missouri, and the territories later admitted to the United States as Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming and Utah, the Sisters opened a new boarding school at the university’s current location in 1870 called St. Mary’s Academy.

In 1923 Saint Mary College, a junior college for women opened. In 1932 the college grew into a four-year institution. While admitting men to most of its programs, the academy did not become residentially co-ed until 1988.

In 1974, Saint Mary became the first four-year institution to offer degree completion in Kansas City, Kan. Formerly offering classes at Donnelly College, Saint Mary recently moved its Wyandotte County hub to Providence Medical Center in western Wyandotte County.

As part of an expansion plan to better serve the Kansas City Metropolitan area, Saint Mary opened the Overland Park Campus in the year 2000. Located at 114th and Pflumm, the Overland Park Campus is centrally located for easy access and is frequently used for meetings and training sessions by high-caliber companies such as Sprint Corporation and John Deere.

In July 2003, the college expanded to meet the growing demands of the 21st century student becoming the University of Saint Mary. With over 80 years of experience in adult education, the University of Saint Mary has gained a reputation for developing value-centered graduates who are strong decision-makers, problem-solvers and business and community leaders. The university’s concept of applied liberal arts embraces the rich history and meaning of the liberal arts tradition, while intentionally connecting learning to the real world in concrete and practical ways. The future is all yours!

USM Traditions

Matriculation

Matriculation is held at the beginning of each new academic year, usually in late August in Annunciation Chapel.

Among the things that make Saint Mary unique is USM's stately matriculation ceremony. USM is one of only a few American universities with a formal matriculation event. The current iteration dates back to the late 80s, and serves as a kind of official welcome to USM's new students. The incoming students also receive a blessing at the event.

"Its purpose is to really celebrate new students," said Sister Susan Rieke, who helped spearhead the effort to establish the ceremony.

Fall Convocation

USM's Fall Convocation is held shortly after the beginning of the fall semester and is traditionally held in McGilley Field House.

Fall Convocation is a "calling together" of the university community and features a mass of the Holy Spirit. Student class photos are taken on the steps of Xavier and Saint Mary halls following the event.

Convocation & Hooding

USM's Convocation and Hooding Ceremony is held in annunciation chapel, usually in late April or early May in the build up to USM Commencement.

The University of Saint Mary is one of the few universities in the country that continues the time-honored tradition of hooding its undergraduates. The hoods are worn over the graduation robes and denote a student's specific academic discipline. During the ceremony, USM also recognizes the efforts and achievements of the graduating undergraduate class with the university's major award ceremony. The Sullivan Award for Teaching Excellence—the top faculty award—is also presented at convocation.

Commencement

USM Commencement is usually held on a Saturday in early to mid-May.

Saint Mary commencement is a half-day of activities, opening with a Baccalaureate Mass in the morning, followed by a brunch for graduates and their families. The commencement ceremony itself begins in the early afternoon and is held in McGilley Field House. Students process from Saint Mary Hall to McGilley at the start of the ceremony. Degrees and various awards are bestowed during commencement, and each year, several student speakers offer reflections on their academic journeys.

On the Friday evening preceding commencement, the USM nursing department recognizes its graduates during a traditional nurses' pinning ceremony in Annunciation Chapel.

University Assembly

Held quarterly in Mabee Auditorium

University Assembly provides Saint Mary administration the chance to update faculty and staff on the state of the university. Topics covered typically include updates on university admissions and financials.

University Day

Held once each semester, usually in O'Shea Conference Room in the Mother House.

University Day is a chance for faculty and staff to get together as a whole for mission building, skill building, and community building activities.

Other University Gatherings

SpireFest

SpireFest is USM's annual fundraising gala, and the single fundraising event for student scholarships each year. SpireFest has been held in a variety of locations, including on campus in McGilley Field House

and at Kansas City's Hyatt Regency Crown Center. For 2012, the gala will be held at the Ritz Charles in Overland Park. The event has also been held in a variety of formats, including a charity auction and a talent competition. Employees get discounted admission to the event—as much as half off a regular price \$100 ticket. SpireFest is usually held in April.

Lincoln Lecture/Event

On or near Presidents' Day each February, the University of Saint Mary hosts a high profile speaker or guest for the annual Lincoln Event. The Lincoln Event was created to promote the university's well-regarded Lincoln Collection in De Paul Library. Past events have featured speakers like Buck O'Neill, Kathleen Sebelius, Lt. Gen. William Caldwell, and actors who have portrayed the 16th President and his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln.

Golf Classic

The USM Golf Classic is a fundraiser for Spires athletics, and features foursomes lunch and competing for prizes. The Golf Classic is held in early to mid-August. USM employees get discounted admission.

Alumni Reunion Weekend

The first weekend of June brings USM's loyal alumni back to campus for a few days of reminiscing and celebration. The alums stay in Saint Mary residence halls during Reunion Weekend.