

THE blarney stone

A PUBLICATION FOR THE COMMUNITY
OF NOTRE DAME PREPARATORY SCHOOL
AND MARIST ACADEMY

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Continuous improvement

NDPMA is in the middle of its ISACS accreditation. Read about what's involved as the entire school staff does a deep dive into the very intense self-study portion of this process.

IB, ISACS, ISM, NCA-CASI, PYP, MYP and DP! It's a regular alphabet soup of accreditation, authorization and academic certification. It's confusing to be sure to some in the school community, but nonetheless vital to Notre Dame's continuing growth as a beacon of excellence in primary and secondary education.

Among the many certifications achieved by Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy, perhaps one of the most vital is its ISACS accreditation. The Independent Schools Association of the Central States is a membership organization of more than 230 independent schools from 13 states in the U.S. Midwest region. NDPMA has been ISACS-accredited since the school began in 1994-95 and shares such accreditation with Cranbrook, Country Day, Grosse Pointe Academy and The Roeper School.

According to the ISACS mission statement, its purpose is "to promote the development of strong learning communities characterized by high achievements, social responsibility, and independence of governance, programs and policies. This goal is achieved through a rigorous

accreditation process, targeted professional development programs, and focused support services."

Lofty words indeed. But words that mean a lot to schools that go through this time-consuming and very rigorous accreditation process.

Currently undergoing the self-study portion of its ISACS accreditation process that began in the spring of 2011, NDPMA has committed a great deal of time, money and personal sacrifice to make sure it keeps its designation as an ISACS school.



Sharon Derico, Notre Dame's International Baccalaureate DP coordinator and an English teacher in the upper division, is a member of the school's ISACS steering committee. Derico and fellow committee members and teachers John Smith and Nick Kator from the upper division, counselor Kim Smith from the middle division and teacher Tina McLaughlin from the lower, are in the middle of the self-study process that will culminate in a 150-page report and an evaluation visit by an external ISACS team.

Derico says the self-study process is a year-long journey, which allows each member of the school community to stop, think and reflect on his or her individual value to the overall school community.

"In the spring of 2011, our steering committee began designing the overall plan for the year-long process," she said. "It included plans for meeting, discussing, drafting and revising individual self-study reports. When ISACS sends its team in November they want to verify that we are doing what we say we are doing."

The ISACS evaluation process is a seven-year cycle and the last time Notre Dame went through it was in 2005. NDPMA is one of just 30 schools in Michigan that have earned ISACS accredita-

tion. The total cost of the accreditation, including the accreditation visit, is around \$25,000, according to head of school, Fr. Leon Olszamowski, s.m., and includes fees, travel, personnel costs, etc.

"It's worth every penny," says Olszamowski. "And I know it's a tremendous burden to the teachers and administration as they also have to go about their day educating our kids. But in the end, it's another tool to help make sure we as a community do the very best we can to

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Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy provides its diverse student body a Catholic and internationally recognized college-preparatory experience of lasting value.

NDP GRAD COMBINING SERVICE TO HIS COUNTRY
AND RUNNING WITH AN INTEREST IN ARCHITECTURE
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Sailor architect

Two-thousand-ten grad combining service to his country and running with an interest in architecture

Chris Burns graduated from Notre Dame Prep in 2010 and started a major new journey in Maryland. Now in his third year at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Burns is able to fit a tough and busy schedule of military training with an academic track in the Academy's engineering programs. He looks at it as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

"It really was impossible to resist," he says. "In addition to nationally ranked academic programs, the Naval Academy offers unbelievable opportunities that range from going underwater on a fast-attack submarine to firing a grenade launcher with the U.S. Marine Corps. No other school offered the combination of competing in Division I athletics, prestigious academics, a unique campus in a great college town—and most importantly, service to country—to the extent that the Naval Academy did."

Burns' major is actually naval architecture, which is a relatively small, specialized field that according to Burns combines the science and math of engineering with a creative twist. "I enjoy the specialized major classes, particularly hydrodynamics and ship structures."

Academically, the Naval Academy differs from civilian schools in that each student is required to take military and physical education courses in addition to courses required for major completion. Several course requirements include navigation and seamanship, cyber warfare, leadership, naval warfare, military ethics, boxing, swimming, wrestling and martial arts. Burns also is heavily involved with extracurriculars that include a spot on the varsity cross-country and indoor/outdoor track teams (Burns was a state champion in cross country at NDP) and membership in the Marine Technology Society and the German Club, and he is a volunteer with the Special Olympics.

He's also taken on a number of leadership roles on and off campus, but Burns says the best way to learn how to be a leader is to "learn how to follow."

"Plebe year, or freshman year, is a whole year dedicated to



At the U.S. Naval Academy, in Annapolis, Md., Chris Burns '10 (NDP) stands inside the Bancroft Hall Rotunda, the second-largest dormitory in the world.

learning how to follow, so there were limited leadership opportunities," he said. "Last year I held the positions of adjutant corporal and training corporal, in addition to being a member of ALLIES, which is the Alliance in Linking Leaders in Education and the Services. As a training corporal, I planned and monitored activities that contributed to the professional development of my underclassmen. As an adjutant corporal, I created watch bills and supervised duty sections. All midshipmen at the Naval Academy stand duty and I helped to expedite that process within my company."

This past summer also was a very busy time for Burns—seemingly busier than the rest of the year for him. The Naval Academy requires its Midshipmen to complete military and professional training evolutions. After completing his Plebe year—

the first year at the Academy—Burns started his summer on the amphibious assault ship USS Iwo Jima, which was fully loaded with Marines.

"For several weeks, I shadowed an enlisted corpsman and assisted in activities such as taking vitals, cleaning and even scrubbing in for a minor surgery," he said. "I also participated in the SOARING program, the U.S. Naval Academy's Summer Training Program that introduces interested midshipmen at the school to flying."

By the conclusion of the program, he successfully took off, operated and landed a Cessna aircraft. This summer, he is looking forward to visiting Germany through a language study-abroad program and also spending some time with an aviation squadron.

Believe it or not, Burns also found time this past summer to attend the Marine Corps Base Camp in Lejeune, N.C., for a training program called PROTRAMID, a four-week-long



An Annapolis visit from several other NDP graduates (from left Daniel Terzano, Burns, John Bommarito, Brad Lorant.)

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move this institution forward.”

Committee members have noted that the self-study part of ISACS accreditation is such a benefit to the school that finally earning the hard-fought certification from ISACS is almost anticlimactic.

“The self-study is an ideal procedure for any worthwhile venture,” said Derico. “All stakeholders individually reflect on the presentation of their particular school component—from social studies to athletics, food services to building maintenance—each takes time to think and review everything from lesson plans to



Sharon Derico, Notre Dame's International Baccalaureate DP coordinator and English teacher, is on the school's ISACS steering committee.

cost-effectiveness, distinct strengths as well as challenges, which then must be submitted along with recommended plans for future growth.

This system lends a critical voice to the school's overall strategic plan and enhances its ability to move

this successful school to continued excellence.”

This fits perfectly with the ISACS organization's own philosophy and practice, which focuses the accreditation program on the development and nurturing of excellence rather than the

certification itself. According to ISACS, “the principal objectives of its process are to provide a stimulus for excellence, help each school assess its strengths and weaknesses, and help the school confirm the validity of its priorities and planning for improvement.”

Achieving and maintaining this excellence, school officials all agree, is worth doing and requires a high degree of effort and dedication to see it through. “Every member of every ISACS committee at Notre Dame added this responsibility to an already demanding schedule,” Derico said. “It is a daunting commitment to this school. Time is precious at NDPMA, but the administration, recognizing the need for such intense preparation, scheduled time during the last school year for all committees to meet approximately six times.”

She said the process this time around was streamlined and more efficient than the 2005 evaluation due to a newer digitally designed submission system. Over 32 committees met throughout the year and the steering committee had the benefit of managing most of the material online.

Notre Dame's self-study was delivered to the ISACS visiting team in the beginning of November. According to standard practice, each member of the ISACS visiting team will review the document prior to visiting and hopefully will confirm the study's findings after its own visit to the school in mid-November. 🌈

CYCLE OF ISACS ACCREDITATION (7 YEARS OF EVALUATION AND REPORTS)

YEAR 1 Prepare for an intensive self-study: Revise, review, approve statements of mission and philosophy. Update curriculum guides or maps. Conduct constituent survey, preferably using ISACS document. Update strategic plan. Develop profile of graduates.

YEAR 2 Conduct comprehensive self-examination using ISACS Self-Study Guide. Conduct a certified, full-opinion, financial audit.

YEAR 3 Host an ISACS accreditation visiting team chaired by an ISACS head of school trained in the ISACS accreditation process.

YEAR 4 Prepare and submit a Reaction Report and Plan for School Improvement to the ISACS Evaluation Review Committee.

YEAR 5 Complete a certified, full-opinion, financial audit.

YEAR 6 Prepare and submit a 3-Year Progress Report to the ISACS Evaluation Review Committee. (In certain emergency or other extenuating circumstances, schools may petition to extend accreditation for three more years.)

YEAR 7 Unless specified by ISACS, no additional reports required in this year.

Source: *The Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS)*

SELF-EVALUATION

The self-study portion of the ISACS accreditation process, includes self evaluation of NDPMA in the following areas:

SCHOOL COMMUNITY

1. Admissions / student body
2. Advancement / alumni
3. Parent community
4. Local community
5. School climate
6. Equity and justice
7. Honor and discipline

CURRICULUM AND PROGRAM OVERVIEW (LOWER, MIDDLE, UPPER DIVISIONS)

1. Curriculum report
2. International Baccalaureate
3. School programs
 - Computer science
 - Language A / English
 - Mathematics
 - Language B
 - Performing arts
 - Religion
 - Physical education and health
 - Science
 - Social studies
 - Visual arts
 - Athletics
 - Leadership

STUDENT SERVICES

1. Personal / academic counseling
2. Career / college counseling
3. Healthcare and records
4. Library and media services
5. Technology

SCHOOL LIFE

1. Extracurricular activities and organizations
2. Campus ministry

SPECIALTY AREAS

1. Extended day care
2. Transportation
3. Food services

GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

1. Governance
2. Administration
3. Business management and financial affairs
4. School plant and facilities

From Argentina to Michigan

Spanish instructor finds his calling as a teacher, says Notre Dame students are very respectful

Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy has been a “world school” since first getting its authorization by the International Baccalaureate Organization in 2007. Its IB designation makes the school a natural for attracting students and their parents who want to go beyond more conventional

he said. “But in the end, I just couldn’t stand my pharmacy studies anymore so I changed my career without telling anyone for awhile. I started to study literature and it was the best decision I’ve ever made!”

With still a year left in his university education, he’d heard from a good friend about a program offered by the Amity Institute, an organization dedicated to promoting cross-cultural understanding and friendship that also arranges for teachers to serve as temporary paid faculty at the primary and secondary levels in the U.S. Pereyra, 27, applied for an assignment with Amity as well as with another organization and could have gone to either the Czech Republic or the United States. “I actually succeeded in both regards but decided to come to America. And I knew I would be going somewhere in the Midwest and ultimately ended up here in Pontiac at Notre Dame.”

Pereyra grew up a long way from Pontiac in the city of Córdoba, Argentina, and attended both high school and college in the city. He went to high school at Alejandro Carbó School, which focused on language studies. “I spent a lot of hours studying English, French and Italian in high school,”

he said.

His first teaching job as a student-teacher was at an English academy in Argentina. “Eventually I switched to other English teaching institutes and before I came to the U.S., I started teaching English at a kindergarten.”

But now in Pontiac, his focus is on American students and helping to teach them Spanish. And he’s loving it. “I wish I could put my feelings into words more accurately, but in short, I love teaching because I feel I have the opportunity to help others to make good decisions in their lives. Teaching is such a great responsibility,” Pereyra said.

“Whenever I teach, I always try to keep in mind that every student is special, that each of them is a son and daughter of God

and that they have a big potential,” he said. “I try to always remember this because it helps me to be patient when students struggle with different challenges.”

He says sometimes it is also hard to focus on every particular need of every student during the class and to have time for each of them.

“But I do my best so that they know that I sincerely care about them as individuals and that I am more than willing to help them grow academically,” he said. “I think that we all walk together as we learn, and if some stay behind, we all find a way to lift them up and help them walk along with the rest of us. That is what our Savior does for us daily as we learn here on Earth.”

Back in Argentina, Pereyra’s family includes his mother and a sister, who is married with a four-year-old daughter. He’s also close to a niece back home. “My niece and I spend a lot of time together and I love teaching her English. My mom, my sister and I, even though we don’t live together, do spend a lot of time on family activities and family trips.”

Pereyra’s dad passed away two years ago, “but we always remember him and keep him in our thoughts and prayers,” he says. “He was a great example of work; he taught me that when you really work for something, eventually you will reach your goal.”

Asked about his current temporary NDPMA family, Pereyra says Notre Dame is amazing. “It definitely exceeded expectations,” he said. “I was completely surprised to see how much respect the kids have toward their classmates and the teachers, how much order there is in each class and the good use of every minute in class to learn something new.”

Pereyra will go back to Argentina after this semester to finish up university and teach literature in his home country. And he’s never regretted his decision to be a teacher.

“I tell you if I wasn’t a teacher, I don’t know what I would do. I can’t imagine my life without being a teacher because in all honesty, I think this is what I’ve always wanted to do. It just took me a little time to make the decision.” 🇳🇵



curricula in primary and secondary education. But what its IB programs also do is make the institution a beacon for teachers and prospective teachers who also want a more international reach in their professional experience.

So it became a perfect match for an Argentine future teacher who was looking to expand his cultural and educational experience.

Matteo Pereyra was studying chemical sciences at a university in Argentina, hoping to one day become a pharmacist. He said he spent a few years trying to convince himself that he liked it. “But in the back of my mind I also always knew I wanted to study something related to literature, but wasn’t too sure of a teaching career,”

NDP RECEIVES SPECIAL RECOGNITION FROM CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL HONOR ROLL

Notre Dame Preparatory School has received special recognition from The Cardinal Newman Society, which administers the



Catholic High School Honor Roll. NDP earned the recognition for

“Excellence in Academics and Civic Education” and shared the award with only one other school in the United States.

Since 2004, the Honor Roll has recognized excellence in Catholic identity, academics and civic education at Catholic high schools across the United States. The Catholic High School Honor Roll was created by The Acton Institute in 2004. Notre Dame Prep was named to the Catholic High School Honor Roll in 2005, 2007, 2008 and 2009.

NEWLY REFURBISHED SCIENCE LABS BLESSED BY HEAD OF SCHOOL



In a ceremony held at Notre Dame’s Pontiac campus, the newly refurbished science labs were blessed by head of school Fr. Leon Olszawski, s.m., in front of board members, faculty and staff.

The work on the labs, financed primarily with donations, was wrapped up in late August.

The complete renovation of the science and chemistry labs included the conversion of the biology lab in room C-3 to a chemistry lab. As a result of this new work, the school’s two chemistry labs are adjacent to one another and the biology labs are now together in the B-wing.

ND Prep hosts college fair

On October 16, Notre Dame Prep hosted its 14th annual College Fair on the school’s Pontiac campus. Over 90 institutions of higher learning participated in the event, including the U.S. Naval and Air Force academies, Valparaiso University, the University of Notre Dame and the University of Michigan.

Students were provided materials and advice on applications, required courses, campus and dorm life, letter writing, college selection and financial aid.

According to NDP counselor Justine Sciriha, who organized the fair, nearly 900 students and many parents visited with representatives of the colleges and universities, who were set up in the Notre Dame gymnasium. In addition to NDP students, juniors and seniors from Detroit Loyola High School, Pontiac Academy for Excellence and Pontiac High School were invited to meet with the college representatives.



NDPMA celebrates Super Raffle grand prize winner



The Holloways, from left, Doug Holloway, Kelly Holloway and NDP sophomore Paige Holloway along with Br. Louis Plourde, s.m., of NDPMA pose with a check representing the \$50,000 grand prize from the school’s 2012 NDPMA Super Raffle.

The Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy’s 2012 Super Raffle culminated at Oktoberfest Irish-style October 6 in the drawing of four prize winners: \$50,000, \$10,000, \$5,000 and \$1,000. On October 12, grand-prize winner Kelly Holloway and her family picked up their winnings at the school’s Pontiac campus.

The following winning-ticket numbers were called at the NDPMA Oktoberfest:

- 1st place - \$50,000 (ticket no. 015660)
- 2nd place - \$10,000 (ticket no. 001677)
- 3rd place - \$5,000 (ticket no. 002473)
- 4th place - \$1,000 (ticket no. 021530)

School sees enrollment increase

Enrollment continued to grow at Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy for the third year in a row. The school’s freshman class began the year with 195 young men and women, the largest class in six years. In fact the school has had to establish a “waiting pool” for incoming students. As a result, Notre Dame has hired 16 new teachers.

NDPMA started the school year with 1,087 students across the three divisions, which is up 62 students from last year’s total.

The school currently has 736 in the upper division, 223 in the middle division and 128 in the lower division.

Gregory Simon, Notre Dame’s dean of admissions and diversity, says it has been a commitment to mission by the faculty and staff along with the extraordinary success of our students that has made a difference. “Notre Dame’s students shine in university classrooms, as well as in their neighborhoods, churches and the local community. We are proud to say our students at Notre Dame are taught using one of the world’s most innovative and rigorous curriculum by a caring, professional and Christian faculty, but the kids really are the ones taking the wheel and steering us toward our success. Based on success of these wonderful young people, prospective parents and students are realizing that there is no other school in this area—or statewide—offering such a ‘world of education,’” added Simon.



Burns, from page 2

training program designed to assist midshipmen with their eventual service selection. Each week is dedicated to one of the four major naval warfare communities: aviation, submarine, surface warfare and Marine Corps.

“I got involved with activities such as ground fighting, physical fitness tests, weapons handling, the Marine Corps obstacle course and military operations on urban terrain,” he said. “Other highlights of PROTRAMID included operating a T-34 aircraft, driving



Burns, second from right, competes as a member of the Navy cross-country team.

a fast attack submarine, witnessing an underway replenishment, landing on an aircraft carrier in a MH-53E, witnessing night-time flight operations aboard an aircraft carrier and flying in an MV-22 Osprey.”

After graduation from the Academy, Burns will be commissioned as an officer in either the United States Navy or Marine Corps. From that point forward, he is required to serve a minimum of five years of active duty. “Currently, I have no idea how long I want to serve active duty, he said. “I don’t know what the future will bring. After my time with the military is over, I would like to explore further the field of naval architecture and marine engineering. Ultimately, I want to open my own company with fellow 2010 NDP alumnus Brad Lorant, who also is studying naval architec-


ture at the University of Michigan.”

Talking about his high school, Burns said Notre Dame Prep had a big influence on his current path. “Frau Archer (NDP teacher Melissa Archer) really developed my interest in the German culture and language in general. That has greatly impacted my course selection at USNA. My sister Sarah (2007 NDP alum) also played a huge role in my eventual college decision. Listening to all the experiences she had as just a sophomore in the Naval Academy convinced me to really consider attending a service academy. After my final recruiting visits and conversations with potential coaches, it was clear that the Naval Academy was the right place for me.”

Burns says some of his favorite memories from Notre Dame took place with the cross country and track teams. “Whether it was hanging out in the athletic department before practice, the bus trip back from cross country states with a stop at the Prehistoric Forest or everyday runs with Brad Lorant and Coach Adam Frezza, something interesting always seemed to happen.

“I had so many amazing teachers. Mr. Osiecki, Mrs. Derico and Frau Archer, just to name a few, and I miss first period study hall, driving to and from school, the great faculty and staff and being able to see some of my best friends every day.”



Summarizing nicely what his high school meant to him, Burns said, “Notre Dame Prep provided me with the invaluable foundations of lifelong friendships and a desire to succeed while improving the community around me.”



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NDPMA also is on Facebook! Find link on the NDPMA web site: ndpma.org.

A world of education

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Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy is an International Baccalaureate World School



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