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Nativity Prep Academy
San Diego, California
President
www.nativityprep.org

Position Summary

The President is the strategic and operational leader of Nativity Prep, responsible for advancing its mission and vision. The President will lead the school's educational, administrative, and fundraising efforts while fostering a culture of excellence, equal access, and collaboration. Reporting directly to the Board of Trustees, the President will oversee all aspects of school operations, including financial management and stakeholder relationships.

The Position

Nativity Prep Academy (NPA), a co-ed, independent, private, tuition-free Catholic middle school and college access program rooted in the Jesuit tradition, seeks a President to lead this exceptional institution starting July 2026. Accredited by WASC and a high-profile member of the NativityMiguel Coalition, NPA educates 72 middle school students annually and extends its support services to all graduates throughout their high school and college years. More than 290 students are included in the NPA service network at any given time.

The school is supported generously by a robust network of enthusiastic donors passionate about the school's mission of providing access to quality education for first-generation students from historically under-resourced communities and low-income families. The school is poised for further growth and prominence in the greater San Diego community. With more than 25 years of successful experience behind it and stellar results, the school is now ready to elevate its profile and scale its operations to impact more children and their families.

This is a rare opportunity for a servant and visionary leader with a passion for equal access to educational opportunities and inclusion and a desire to take a worthy, mission-critical institution to the next level, changing lives for generations!

School History

In 1999, David Rivera formed an advisory group in partnership with the University of San Diego to explore creating a Nativity-model school in San Diego to serve the city's most impoverished neighborhood. In 2001, under David's leadership, the school opened its doors to 19 students, and over the next three years, enrollment and funding more than tripled. The school now serves 290 young men and women, most of whom are second-language learners and all hail from low-income families. The school's roots date back to the 1950s and the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) efforts in New York City. The Jesuits' inner-city youth outreach programs at the time included the Nativity Mission Center in the Bowery section of the Lower East Side. The first Nativity school opened there in 1971. Since then, more than 60 Nativity-model schools have opened in the United States and Canada. Nativity Prep Academy is one of the three in the State of California and the only one in the Southern California area.

Today, Nativity Prep San Diego is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization under the aegis of an independent, lay Board of Trustees. It is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). Nativity Prep is an independent Catholic organization that does not have a sponsoring order, we have created our Catholic Identity through the combination of Catholic teachings and charisms. In 2019, we joined the Catholic Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange's Educational Network. We also look to the Catholic Social Teachings for guidance on dealing with our current society with a Catholic lens.

The NativityMiguel Coalition

Today, the NativityMiguel Coalition (NMC) is an alliance of over fifty nonpublic schools serving students from pre-k through twelfth grade in the U.S. and Canada that work together to bring equity to all students through education. Investing in the fundamental belief that every student deserves the opportunity to become their best authentic self, the NMC provides its members with the support and structure needed to deliver a holistic education that values empathy, equality, and connection. Nativity schools provide highly focused educational opportunities with excellent student-to-faculty ratios, extended-hour school days, an extended-year schedule, daily tutoring, enrichment, and graduate support programs.

Our Purpose (Why)

Our Purpose is to break the cycle of generational poverty by developing our students and their family's ability to live a life of opportunity, choice, and service. Our students will be productive, faith-filled, and fulfilled members of society who understand the importance of giving back.

Our Mission and Vision (How)

Our Mission is to provide a Catholic, college-prep, middle school education to students from low-income families who will be the first or among the first, in their family to graduate from college. In partnership with our families, we are committed to each student's total development- academic, social, physical, spiritual, and emotional- by emphasizing serious study and personal and social responsibility, leading to a life of significance, independence, and meaning.

Middle School

In its 25th year, Nativity Prep remains the only all-scholarship independent, private Catholic school in San Diego County. The school serves 72 students in grades six, seven, and eight on its campus. All Nativity Prep students are on full scholarships, coming from families that qualify for their public school's free or reduced lunch program. By design, the school maintains a small student enrollment to ensure a healthy teacher-student ratio. The majority of students enter the school achieving below-grade-level academic progress in reading, language, and math in their previous schools. However, by the time they enroll in high school, they are academically well-prepared to enter prestigious high schools. This solid preparation results from hiring exceptional teachers who provide maximum academic and character support programs matching each student's needs.

The school asks prospective students to complete a written application and personal statement along with their application and personal information, visit the school, and submit two teacher recommendations from current teachers. Prospective parents and students are interviewed together and separately. Above all, the school seeks students and families motivated by the

college-prep mission, built on the Jesuit idea of *cura personalis*; care for the whole person, and is focused on preparing students and families for high school and college. Students must show genuine desire and motivation for college and a professional career regardless of academic record. Above all else, the family must commit to supporting their child in the 11-year journey to their college graduation.

Students must attend a nine-hour school day throughout the regular academic year and a summer program in July & August. Students in all three grades are required to complete coursework in their core academic classes including language arts, mathematics, science, religion, and social studies, as well as in physical education and art. Students attend classes in these subjects daily, and the school emphasizes writing skills in all subjects. Academically

eligible students can also participate in interscholastic team sports. Nativity Prep also offers non-graded elective courses (clubs) throughout the school year.

The core curricula are based on the content standards in California. Teachers utilize core-curriculum adoptions to offer challenging opportunities for students to work in collaborative student groups, solve real-world problems, use critical-thinking skills, apply critical thinking skills, and apply their learning to their own lives and interests.

Because the majority of students who enter Nativity Prep are English-language learners who, on average, are one to two years behind their peers in grade level, the school focuses in all content areas on strengthening students' basic academic skills in reading and writing. Additionally, while enrolled at Nativity Prep, the A.M.I.G.O.S. (Adult Mentors Inspiring Growth in Our Students) Mentoring Program focuses on students' social and emotional well-being. Adults from the local professional community meet with students for at least one hour each week, developing a relationship of support outside the classroom.

Recent developments to the academic programs include the renovation of a 6,000-square-foot state-of-the-art STEM education space. The area provides classroom space, as well as a robotics room and media room for the students in grades 6 -12, which has enhanced the middle school curriculum. The learning experience in these spaces allow students to discover and develop their God-given talents. Nativity aims to better prepare students for demanding college preparatory programs and rapidly evolving STEM-focused careers.

Graduate Support Program

In the US, we are facing a college completion crisis. While 62% of students from the highest income quartile earn a degree within six years, only 13% of students from the lowest income quartile do the same. Nativity Prep helps break the cycle of poverty through education, recognizing a college degree as one of the most powerful tools for economic and social mobility.

The Graduate Support Program (GSP) is at the heart of Nativity Prep's mission. It provides long-term academic, financial, and emotional support to our students from 6th grade through college graduation which is an 11-year partnership that begins in middle school and extends well beyond.

The program and curriculum begin in the sixth grade and continue through middle and high school. In middle school, the curriculum focuses on high school research and college and career preparedness. It continues with support for high school admissions and placement. In high

school, students meet weekly by grade level and during the summer to experience a grade-appropriate curriculum in academic support, study skills, planning for summer academic enrichment, SAT/ACT prep, college visits, career and college research, and overall support of the student and their family in the college admission process. The school maintains ongoing contact with each graduate throughout the entirety of high school, college, and career, including visiting graduates at their high schools and colleges, supporting annual FAFSA completion needs, sending weekly emails with scholarships and other opportunities, and providing career connection workshops.

Because of GSP's structured, relationship-based model, Nativity Prep alumni graduate from college at a rate five times higher than their demographic peers, and 100% of our high school students continue on to college.

Through the support of the GSP program, in the past seven years alone:

- 100% of Nativity students have graduated high school on time, representing a 67% increase over the past decade
- 100% of graduates have earned college acceptances
- 83% of Nativity college students have graduated or are on track to graduate, reflecting a 42% increase over ten years
- 13 alumni have earned or are pursuing Master's or Doctoral degrees

Scholarship Endowment

What makes Nativity Prep unique is that it continues to support its graduates through high school and college. This includes providing tuition subsidies (earned scholarships) that enable students to attend private high schools. Supporting our students with high school scholarships to attend local private Catholic high schools makes it 6 times as likely that they will attend a 4-year University program, greatly increasing the probability they will earn a college degree.

Beyond the benefits of experiencing a high school rooted in faith, our students and their families benefit from private high school environments. These institutions offer supportive settings that encourage the development of academic prowess and essential social capital, an invaluable skillset that will empower them to forge lives filled with opportunity.

With our current budget, over \$300,000 is spent per year covering the gap between financial aid provided by Catholic high schools and what families can afford in terms of tuition. Historically, 50% of Nativity Prep middle school students were earning scholarships to attend Catholic high schools. However, in the past few years close to 75% of students are earning this opportunity. Thus, with more students qualifying for a scholarship (provided by Nativity Prep), and with a growing demand in terms of number of students, it is expected that the budget for high school scholarships could double to \$600,000 in the next 3-5 years.

We aim to raise \$10M in funds for our endowment that would generate \$500,000 annually for high school scholarships going forward. This dollar amount will allow for increased participation in the scholarship program as well as cover the cost of high school scholarships. Most significantly, it will allow Nativity Prep to expand its number of students in the middle school program.

By bolstering our endowment, we create permanently funded scholarships for Nativity students. This is vital to our goal of increasing the number of families we serve and our confidence that we can deliver on the 11-year promise for each of our students.

Alumni

Nativity Prep has made a concerted effort to engage and integrate its families and alumni into leadership roles in the community. The Alumni Advisory Council was established in 2024 and has naturally allowed our graduates opportunities to become re-immersed in the community, serve in leadership roles and re-engage fellow graduates.

Additionally, the Magi Mentoring program is a career mentorship program that connects professionals in the field with alumni who are interested in learning from an expert in their field of interest.

These programs have not only deepened alumni involvement but have also provided critical professional guidance to our young graduates. As our alumni population continues to grow, our goal is to continue these efforts with vision, persistence, and a deep personal commitment, providing future sustainability for our school and its programs.

Revenue

As an independent Catholic school and member of the NativityMiguel Coalition, Nativity Prep does not receive funding from the State of California or the Diocese of San Diego. 90% of the operating budget is funded through philanthropic contributions.

Because Nativity Prep's goal is to meet the financial needs of all students every year, fundraising is essential to the mission. Our last strategic plan (2022 - 2025) made economic sustainability a key priority, not only to fund current students and offer high school scholarships to graduates but also to grow the program to serve more students.

In addition to philanthropy, Nativity also has earned revenue, created by renting our commercial grade kitchen as well as our school chapel. As part of a vision for our future, Nativity Prep is exploring ways to increase earned revenue that will provide support to our operating budget in addition to the generous philanthropists in our community.

Opportunities and Challenges

Nativity Prep is fulfilling its purpose and mission consistently and convincingly and is poised for significant growth. The donor network is strong and passionately committed to the school's mission. Still, it will need further expansion to achieve the board's desire to scale operations and grow enrollments in the coming years. In addition, candidates should be mindful of the following opportunities and challenges:

- Nativity Prep is poised to grow its impact in San Diego. The school is currently serving the most students it has ever served, with 71 students enrolled in the onsite middle school, 90 students in high school, and 135 in college, including graduate school. The purchase of the school's first-owned campus allows the community to imagine ways to grow the impact of the program. Discernment includes enrolling more middle school students, adding younger grades of students, renovating the campus, and/or creating open access to STEM education programs on campus.
- Any growth initiative is tied to the community's ability and desire to support a larger annual budget fiscally. Donor retention is strong. The opportunity lies in raising the profile of the school in Southern California and recruiting new financial support partners.
- Nativity Prep benefits from a dedicated and dynamic faculty and staff. School leaders are dynamic, however, the cost of living in San Diego, paired with the realities of

inflation, can make it challenging to maintain competitive salaries and benefits for employees. While teacher retention is strong, this reality is a growing challenge.

- The middle school sponsorship program celebrates a 96% donor retention rate. Once people support and get involved in the Nativity Prep community, it becomes a priority in their lives. Recruiting new donors and foundation support will allow the program to grow sustainably.
- The school owns the facility outright. The facility includes a commercial-grade kitchen as well as a chapel. Both spaces are rented to tenants whose rent is used as annual revenue for the school. Future opportunities include exploration of how these spaces including the STEM center can be used to meet Nativity Prep's purpose, grow the impact of the program and provide earned income.
- The first class of Nativity Prep graduates celebrated their high school graduation in 2009. They are now in their 30s and young professionals in the world. As they grow in their own professional journeys, the opportunity for their guidance and participation in school governance is ample and should be encouraged. The participation and growth of Nativity Prep alumni in the life of the school is a primary opportunity.

Key Responsibilities of the President:

Strategic Leadership:

- Collaborate with the Board and Executive Leadership Team to develop and execute a long-term strategic plan aligned with the school's mission
- Maintain and enhance the school's reputation for academic excellence, graduate support, and mutual long-term relationships
- Foster a culture of inclusivity, accountability, and continuous improvement
- Serve as the primary point of contact with the Board of Trustees

Fundraising and Financial Stewardship:

- Collaborate with the Director of Advancement to bolster fundraising efforts including cultivating relationships with donors, foundations, community partners, and corporate sponsors
- Foster relationships with current, potential and former donors
- Develop and manage the school's budget to ensure financial sustainability

Community Engagement and Advocacy:

- Serve as the primary ambassador for the school, building strong relationships with parents, alumni, and community stakeholders
- Advocate for issues affecting underserved first-generation students and promote the school's mission at local, regional, and national levels
- Foster partnerships with organizations and individuals that align with the school's mission

Educational Leadership:

- Collaborate with the Principal to ensure a rigorous and culturally relevant curriculum
- Set high expectations for student achievement and character development
- Participate in student disciplinary process as needed
- Collaborate with the Director of Admissions to raise awareness of the school and attract target families/students
- Participate in educational events and programs as the visible head of NPA

Graduate Support:

- Collaborate with the Director of Graduate Support
- Develop relationships with target High School administrators
- Assist in securing resources necessary to ensure graduates success in High School through the scholarship endowment
- Support an active Alumni network
- Participate in Graduate Support programs and events as the visible head of NPA

Operational and Administrative Oversight:

- Oversee the Executive Leadership Team to ensure efficient and effective day-to-day operations, including compliance with all regulatory requirements
- Establish and monitor key performance indicators to measure success and inform decision-making
- Oversee all Building Operations
- Monitor and coordinate matters regarding employment, retention, and dismissal of personnel, salaries and contracts, job assignments, performance evaluation, orientation, and training

Desired Qualities and Qualifications of the President

This is an extraordinary and rare leadership opportunity. The next president should be a visionary leader and institution builder who can inspire enthusiasm for bold new aspirations while remaining faithful to the core values and traditions of the school.

The school operates in the President/Principal leadership model in which the president functions as the chief executive officer, reporting to the Board of Trustees and overseeing the Executive Leadership Team. In this robust leadership structure, the President is the primary institution builder and servant leader who sets the vision for the school, crafts and executes the organizational strategy, and secures all resources necessary to sustain the mission and accomplish key institutional objectives.

Specifically, the board seeks high-performing candidates with the following qualities and qualifications:

- A faith-filled, mission-inspired leader who will embrace and promote Jesuit and Catholic values.
- Candidates must also have passion for the school's mission and be capable of demonstrating such passion in prior career and/or volunteer activities. An appropriate sense of urgency and ability to rally forces around common objectives will be highly preferred qualities.
- Given the community's demographic being served, bilingual capabilities in English and Spanish are preferred.
- Experience working with diverse immigrant communities and first-generation (first-gen) college students and the challenges and opportunities they face.
- A leader with business acumen is preferred.
- A leader with fundraising experience to ensure the school meets the operational budget while also promoting a culture of philanthropy to serve growth initiatives.
- A high-profile, relational leader will also be preferred, someone with understanding poise, presence, and communication skills who will serve as the face of the school to the larger community. The ability to raise the profile and value proposition of the school will be critical in meeting board and donor expectations.
- The role of the President requires investment in cultivating and building long-lasting relationships with supporters, aligning internal systems with external outreach, and creating a unified approach to growth, visibility, and impact.

- A Master's degree in Education or related field with a minimum of 3-5 of professional experience.

In the President/Principal Model, deep domain knowledge of educational practices is less important in the President's Function than the ability to lead, aspire, raise funds, build community, and create demand for the Nativity experience. For this reason, the board welcomes candidates from varied career backgrounds who are mission-driven, faith-filled, and capable of delivering exceptional results. This may include servant leaders from the Catholic or independent and public schools, higher education, as well as non-profit foundations, associations, nonprofits, and the like. The board is also welcoming of "rising stars" with exceptional leadership qualities as well as proven leaders with well-established performance portfolios.

Application Requirements & Search Process

Interested and qualified candidates should submit electronically in one email and separate documents (preferably PDFs) the following materials by February 6, 2026.

- Cover letter expressing their interest in and qualifications for this particular position
- Current resume/CV
- One-page statement of educational or leadership philosophy and practice
- The name, relations, and email/phone number of at least three references, at least one of which is a supervisor (references will not be contacted until the finalist state of the search).

Selected candidates will be invited to an interview with the search committee in February. Finalists will be invited to campus for a comprehensive series of interviews shortly thereafter. Ideally, an appointment will be made by March or April.

Email submissions can be sent to the attention of the Search Committee at board@nativityprep.org Additionally, community members are encouraged to provide the search committee with nominations or feedback via the above email.

Compensation and Benefits

A comprehensive benefits package includes medical, dental, and vision coverage for the employee, 401(k) Match, 20 days of vacation, and 16 school holidays.

The President position offers a salary range of \$140,000 - \$160,000. The starting salary is negotiable based upon, but not limited to, several factors that include years of experience, education level, and expertise.

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