

Financial Aid Program Policies and Procedures

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ACADEMY OF OUR LADY OF MERCY

Lauralton Hall

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INTRODUCTION

The purposes of publishing the Financial Aid Program Policies and Procedures Manual for the Academy of Our Lady of Mercy, Lauralton Hall are: (1) to make the program evident and clear to all interested parties within and outside the Lauralton Hall community; (2) to clarify the rationale for the program’s existence; and (3) to set forth the parameters of participation for all who would seek financial assistance for the education of their daughters at Lauralton Hall.

HISTORY AND RATIONALE FOR THE PROGRAM

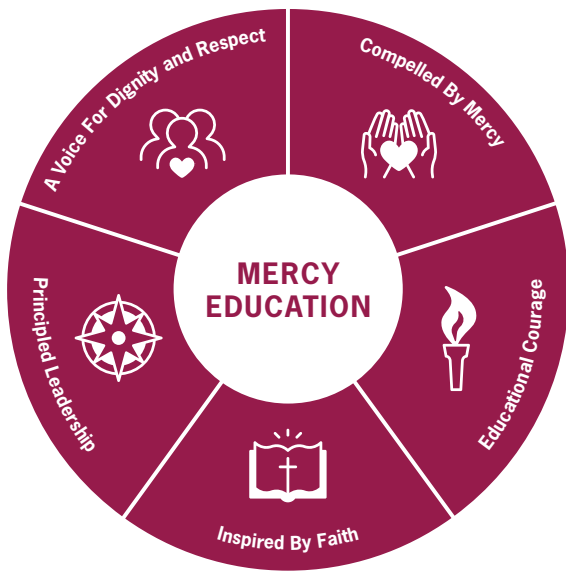
Inherent in Lauralton Hall’s philosophy and mission, there exists an obligation to seek to extend its educational programs to those qualified students of diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds who have the ability, but not the economic means, to pay the associated costs.

Lauralton Hall provides a need-based financial aid program. Consistent with the School’s mission, this program promotes and provides access to its educational programs to families who would be unable to avail themselves of a Catholic, college preparatory education without financial aid.

CORE VALUES

The Hallmarks of a Mercy Education

These are the ideals we stand up for and strive to live up to. We hold ourselves to these standards as an institution, as a community and as individuals.



Compelled By Mercy

Mercy students, in the spirit of our founder Catherine McAuley, are steadfastly determined to take Mercy into an interconnected world. Our shared sense of social consciousness is fortified by universal empathy and a conviction that all are worthy of God’s mercy. This deep awareness and compassion move us to take principled action and serve the needs of others.



Educational Courage

Mercy students welcome the challenge of pursuing their full potential in a culture of excellence, critical thinking and curiosity. Their multifaceted journey builds character while it builds essential skills. Our holistic program expects engagement, a thirst for knowledge and personal responsibility, while preparing students to thrive for a lifetime.



Inspired By Faith

Mercy students become living models of faith and forceful advocates for Gospel values. Grounded in our Catholic identity in the Mercy tradition, we welcome all faiths and are strengthened and shaped by these relationships. As we pursue a personal relationship with God, we strenuously follow Jesus Christ’s example of social justice, love and service.



Principled Leadership

Mercy students are poised to lead with their unique gifts. Prepared with an ethical and moral compass, we put Mercy values into action and work assertively for what is right. We’re equipped to make difficult choices, learn from our mistakes and develop high emotional intelligence. As an international community, we’re confident in our ability to make a positive difference and push for systemic change.



A Voice For Dignity and Respect

Mercy students honor the intrinsic value of the individual and recognize God’s presence in each person. We embrace a global vision and value differences of opinion, and are unafraid to confront hostile or hurtful attitudes. By standing up for those who can’t, we go beyond acceptance to help make sure everyone feels recognized and heard.



Mercy Education
Educación de la Misericordia

Courageous Action. Selfless Spirit.™
 Acción valiente. Espíritu altruista.™

Lauralton Hall is a sponsored ministry of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and is a member of Mercy Education.

MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY

The Academy of Our Lady of Mercy is the first Catholic college preparatory high school for girls in Connecticut, and among the first established in the United States. Our mission and our philosophy are as unique as our founding, well over a century ago.

A Lauralton Hall education empowers a young woman to excel in any endeavor, to find her own voice, and to be a bearer of Mercy to those in need. We offer students not only a holistic academic experience that develops the skills necessary for success in college and career, but also a supportive, caring and fun-filled environment that nurtures a young woman's understanding of herself and others. Our dedicated faculty and staff are wise role models who help each of our girls become the person that God created her to be—spiritually, intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically.

Our Mission

Inspired by the Mercy Tradition, Lauralton Hall empowers young women to pursue their highest potential through lifelong learning, compassionate service, and responsible leadership in a global society.

Our Sponsors

The Academy of Our Lady of Mercy is the first Catholic college preparatory high school for girls in Connecticut, and among the first established in the United States. Our mission and our philosophy are as unique as our founding, well over a century ago.

In a quiet, nondescript, and once poverty-stricken area named Lower Baggot Street in Dublin, Ireland, a socially sophisticated and financially secure woman named Catherine McAuley dedicated her life to the amelioration of the poor, especially women and children. Here, she began to make her mark on the future lives of generations of women who would find themselves growing and blossoming under her tutelage.

With a fortune at her disposal and a group of gentrified women volunteers at her side, Catherine McAuley built and opened a settlement house for women and children on Baggot Street in 1828. She wrote, quite succinctly, that "No work of charity can be more productive of good to society or more conclusive to the happiness of the poor than the careful instruction of women...wherever a God-fearing woman presides, peace and good order are generally to be found." And her promise has long been fulfilled here at Lauralton Hall.

Sisters of Mercy

Only a decade later, the Vatican recognized Mother McAuley as the foundress of the Order of the Sisters of Mercy (RSM), an Order that would continue shepherding theories of women's potential and serve as virtual catalysts of a gender revolution in female education. This unique Order, affectionately termed "the Mercies," began as a group of "walking nuns," formidably trodding the mean alleys of the socially alienated of Ireland. Their radical espousal of women's potential was—and remains—selfless, visionary, and indefatigable!



DIVERSITY AT LAURALTON HALL

Inspired by the Mercy Core Values, Academy of Our Lady of Mercy, Lauralton Hall endeavors to create, nurture, and sustain an inclusive culture that inspires all members of our community to share life experiences from their own diverse perspectives and to gain a deeper understanding of people from different races, cultures, religions, and backgrounds.

Faculty and staff embrace practices that inspire young women to open their minds and hearts to others during their time at Lauralton Hall and as they embark on their journey to find their place in the world beyond our campus; we strive to champion diversity, equity, and inclusion for all and empower young women to pursue their highest potential in our global community through lifelong learning, compassionate service, and responsible leadership.

STUDENT ATTRIBUTES

- Grace: Allowing others to be fully human without judgment, while honoring what is God-like within each person.
- Advocate: Being a forceful defender, supporter and sometimes spokesperson for the values and people we hold dear.
- Inclusivity: Going beyond tolerance to embrace diversity, while accepting and serving with open arms.

FINANCIAL AID OFFICE

The Business Manager is responsible for the overall administration and operation of Lauralton Hall's financial aid program and for maintaining its integrity. The Business Manager chairs the committee that makes final decisions on the allocation of funds. The Business Manager or committee member delegate will have these additional responsibilities:

- The program budget
- Dispensing information on the financial aid process
- Maintaining records
- Corresponding with families
- Corresponding with Financial Aid Company for School Tuition
- Analyzing and re-computing (if necessary) the Family Financial Profile
- Verifying, as necessary, submitted application information
- Requesting additional information from families, as needed
- Setting up and conducting meetings, as necessary, with applying families
- Making recommendations for financial aid awards to the Committee in accordance with the policies of the program

THE COMMITTEE

The Committee consists of the Head of School, Business Manager, and the Director of Enrollment. The responsibility of the committee is to execute policy for the program as established by the Board of Trustees, and attend meetings as scheduled by the Business Manager. The Head of School will report to the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees.

FINANCING A LAURALTON HALL EDUCATION THROUGH ASSISTANCE

BUDGET

The budget for financial aid, established for the ensuing academic year by the Board of Trustees and voted upon at a full board meeting, is derived from a portion of annual giving income (“Lauralton Fund”) as well as endowed and non-endowed funds. The Board also typically approves an operating budget that allows for generous financial and legacy awards to be given. If it is demonstrated and documented that a family qualifies for financial aid, they will be considered for grants derived from the approved financial aid budget. For the 2020-2021 academic year, for example, scholarships and financial aid amounted to \$1.25 million dollars.

GRANTS

Financial aid grants are solely need-based awards that do not have to be repaid. Most often they are partial; historically, no grant covers the full cost of tuition and fees.

SPECIAL NEED-BASED FINANCIAL AID GRANTS

Many individuals, organizations, corporations, and foundations contribute to Lauralton Hall’s financial aid program and have established certain grant criteria. When awarded, these special grants comprise part or a student’s entire total financial aid package.

GENERAL POLICIES

CONFIDENTIALITY

Philosophically, Lauralton Hall is opposed to any practice publicly identifying recipients of aid or distinguishing them from others. The Business Manager and the Committee treat financial information submitted by families with strict confidence. Occasionally certain faculty or staff will need to know who is receiving financial aid, but will not have access to parental financial information. With respect to incidental fees, specific faculty/staff involved in the planning inform the Dean of Academics of the fees and the Committee ensures that financial aid students may receive appropriate financial assistance.

There are exceptions to confidentiality. First, it may be requested that the student write a personal thank you letter to the donor of the Lauralton Hall fund providing her financial aid. Second, the student may be required to help at annual school sponsored events. Additionally, parents may be asked to assist as volunteers in fundraising events.

NEED-BLIND CONSIDERATION AND ACCEPTANCE

Lauralton Hall strongly believes in providing equal opportunity for acceptance to all financial aid applicants. Therefore, no student is denied acceptance on the basis of need for financial aid.

NEED-BASED AID

Families applying for financial aid must demonstrate need through application to the Financial Aid company. The "Calculated Payment Expected per Student" is based on a family's ability to meet educational expenses.

DURATION OF COMMITMENT

Lauralton Hall is committed to longevity of enrollment among its students who receive financial aid. Every attempt is made to meet the needs of returning financial aid students from year to year who demonstrate continuing need. This effort extends to keeping pace with increases in tuition and fees.

PERFORMANCE RIDER

Lauralton Hall is opposed to academic performance riders philosophically and in practice. An admitted financial aid student is held to the same standards and requirements—no more, no less—than those whose parents pay the full cost. Students receiving financial aid are eligible for all the benefits and services available to the student community, but they may find optional trips that are not included in tuition that scholarships and financial aid do not address.

ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

Lauralton Hall encompasses grades nine through twelve, and it is our policy to provide financial aid for students in each of those grade levels.

In the interest of maintaining the enrollment of current students, first priority on funding financial aid awards will be as follows:

1. Previous financial aid student recipients
2. Current returning students requesting financial aid for the first time
3. Newly-admitted students

When evaluating the needs of newly admitted students, the financial aid committee may look at certain criteria. Special consideration may be given to siblings of current or former students, relatives of alumnae, Catholic students or students who contribute to the diverse texture of the Lauralton Hall Community.

Consideration will also be given to the following factors: an assessment of past tuition payment history, student behavior, amount of awards already received or designated for the student, and number of children concurrently attending Lauralton Hall from the same family.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Lauralton Hall strongly believes that the primary financial responsibility for a child's education rests with the parents. Lauralton Hall is not in a position, philosophically or financially, to assume the financial obligation of a custodial parent, non-custodial parent, or step-parent who chooses to step away from the situation. Aid is based on a family's ability to meet educational expenses, not willingness or inclination to pay.

It is the position of Lauralton Hall that separated or divorced parents retain the obligation to contribute to the educational expenses of their children, whether or not there is a legal agreement between them to do so.

MINIMUM PAYMENT

Financial aid budget constraints preclude the granting of full tuition scholarships. The family must be responsible for a portion of the cost. The amount of financial assistance offered to a student will be calculated using the following criteria: (1) The total amount of tuition; (2) The Financial Aid company estimate of need or the family's estimate of need, whichever is lower; and (3) a minimum tuition payment and the non-refundable \$1500 deposit.

EDUCATION EXPENSES

The Committee considers the total annual tuition to Lauralton Hall in determining financial aid grants. Tuition of siblings attending other primary/secondary private schools will not be considered in calculating need. However, tuition paid for children attending college will be considered with appropriate documentation. Education expenses for adults are not taken into consideration.

CHILD SUPPORT IN CASES OF SEPARATION OR DIVORCE

Child support is considered as an expense to the payer and income to the payee.

BARTERING

Lauralton Hall is often asked by parents to consider bartering professional or volunteer services in lieu of tuition payments. This arrangement is prohibited by the IRS and therefore not allowed by Lauralton Hall.

WORK STUDY PROGRAM

Lauralton Hall does not offer a Work Study program for students to offset tuition payments.

HOME EQUITY

Lauralton Hall treats home equity as an asset. It provides a measure of financial security, creates loan leverage, and presents a family enjoying home ownership an advantage over those who are not homeowners—building a "savings account" while utilizing mortgage interest as a tax deduction.

CAPITAL GAINS

Capital gains are included and treated as income for financial aid purposes.

DEPRECIATION

The policy of Lauralton Hall is to disallow loss against income that is due to business depreciation, as doing so constitutes a loss on paper only.

TRUST FUNDS AND MONETARY GIFTS

Lauralton Hall considers trust funds and monetary gifts—to parents or to children—an asset, though they may be restricted or earmarked for college or other specifics. Their existence indicates that a greater amount of the family's income is available to pay the costs associated with a Lauralton Hall education.

FINANCIAL AID FOR SCHOOL TUITION

Though Financial Aid companies will provide Lauralton Hall with a calculation of financial need, it is a recommendation only. The School is not in a position to automatically meet the financial need as calculated by the Financial Aid Company. The Financial Aid company recommends and assumes that each member school will review, reanalyze and, if necessary, re-compute the data in accordance with its in-house policies and procedures.

FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION

It is necessary that all families apply each year for financial aid, and that they demonstrate continued need. The complete financial aid application link is available on the Lauralton Hall website www.lauraltonhall.org under the Admission tab-Financial Aid.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

All parents wishing consideration for financial aid for the education of their daughter at Lauralton Hall must adhere to all set dates. Parents of applicants for admission must be mindful that they do not wait for an admission decision before completing the process, but that they complete both processes simultaneously.

Parents making an application for financial aid consideration are held accountable for reading all of the materials contained in the packet and on the financial aid section of the website prior to completing the financial aid form online. The Business Manager is available to speak to or meet with any parents who have questions and/or concerns about the required forms, process, or timetable. A phone call to the Business Manager is the first step in gaining assistance.

Procedures to be followed by parents in completing the application process for financial aid should be followed closely in the following order:

1. Figures from the completed tax forms are used to complete the Financial Aid online application form. A letter of explanation may be written giving any additional information considered pertinent by the parents in making their financial situation known and clear to the Financial Aid Committee.
2. The online Financial Aid application form must be completed and appropriate forms uploaded before November 15.

It is important that parents keep a copy of each form submitted in connection with the financial aid application process. In reviewing an application for financial aid, the Financial Aid Committee will utilize all information submitted by the parents and any further clarification or documentation requested, as well as any and all information that may be available or forthcoming from any source. In the case of lack of clarity or discrepancy, the parents will be notified.

It must be emphasized that any and all policies and procedures related to Lauralton Hall's financial aid program are intended to ensure and maintain its need-based foundation and integrity.

POLICIES APPLICABLE TO SPECIAL SITUATIONS

PARENTS VOLUNTARILY REDUCING INCOME

Lauralton Hall maintains a policy of not subsidizing with financial aid a parent's voluntary reduction of income—i.e. voluntarily terminating employment or separating from employment to become self-employed. It is assumed that the parent has considered the impact that this would have on their ability to afford Lauralton Hall costs, and that they are aware of the possible separation of the child from Lauralton Hall. This situation would call for recalculation of the Financial Aid company's "Calculated Payment Expected per Student" where the previous income would not be deducted from the total family income.

PARENTS RETURNING TO SCHOOL

If a parent leaves employment to return to school, it is considered a conscious, voluntary reduction of income after taking into account the potential impact on the ability to afford Lauralton Hall costs. Though this situation would reduce parental income and create greater financial need, Lauralton Hall is not in a position philosophically or financially to subsidize the parent's decision. If a parent leaves employment to return to school, there is no allowance for the tuition paid on behalf of the parent.

SEPARATED AND DIVORCED PARENTS

Lauralton Hall expects parents to pay the educational costs to the full extent that they are financially able. That principle applies to all parents, including those who are separated or divorced. Lauralton Hall is not bound by a divorce decree or legal document excusing a parent from financial responsibility for a child's educational expenses, or the fact that a parent has disclaimed financial responsibility for the student.

Re-marriage of either natural or adopted parent creates a new family unit with new relationships, but because the natural parents still have a parental obligation, the income and assets of the entire family unit are seen to have a bearing on the natural parents' ability to contribute to the educational expenses of the children.

MID-YEAR CHANGES IN FAMILY FINANCIAL STATUS

Lauralton Hall recognizes that an unexpected negative change in a full-tuition paying family's financial circumstances during the course of an academic year can necessitate the need to request consideration for financial aid. Should this occur a family is welcome to complete the online application. However, with funds being disbursed as early as December, the family will be placed on the financial aid waiting list, possibly joining enrolled financial aid recipients hoping to receive additional assistance.

NON-TAX FILERS

If a parent did not file taxes, they will need to submit a Non-filer letter to the Business Manager, which can be obtained through the IRS website. An IRS Verification of Non-filer letter (VNF) will provide proof from the IRS that there is no record of a filed tax form (1040, 1040A, or 1040EZ) for the year under review for Financial Aid purposes. Requests can be made using this link: <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/transcript-types-and-ways-to-order-them>

AWARDING AND ACCEPTING FINANCIAL AID

Financial aid decisions are made for an amount for the entire year and take into account the total cost of tuition at Lauralton Hall. Parents are advised not to accept the financial aid award offered unless they are in a financial position to pay, when due, all balances of tuition, transportation, fees, books, uniform, and lunch and other charges not covered by the financial aid package.

When a parent accepts a financial aid award—so indicated when the contract is signed, dated, and returned to Lauralton Hall—it is assumed by Lauralton Hall that the parents and student have read, understood, and accepted all of the stipulations as stated on the applicable award forms. Parents must adhere to all enrollment deadlines (deposit and contract); failure to do so may result in withdrawal of the award.

RESCINDING FINANCIAL AID

Tuition grants are based on the financial resources of the family, limited financial aid resources of Lauralton Hall, and required school expenses.

Determination of the grant is based on information provided by the family directly to Lauralton Hall and the Financial Aid online application form, and the recommendation of Lauralton Hall and the Financial Aid company, which analyzes the financial statement. If Lauralton Hall determines that the provided information is materially inaccurate or misleading, Lauralton Hall reserves the right to rescind the grant at any time.

In addition, the continuation of financial aid can be jeopardized if the tuition account is not kept current. If Lauralton Hall's periodic review of the tuition account indicates a failure to keep tuition payments timely, future financial aid can be rescinded.

APPEAL PROCESS

Parents who are denied financial aid or receive an amount of financial aid that they find to be questionable can make their concerns known to the Business Manager in writing, stating the reason for their concern. The Business Manager will offer the family an opportunity to submit a formal appeal and will refer the correspondence to the Financial Aid Committee and, subsequently, will inform the parents of the Committee's decision.