
THE MISSION, VALUES AND HISTORY OF ROCKHURST UNIVERSITY

Our Mission

Rockhurst University is a learning community, centered on excellence in undergraduate liberal education and graduate education. It is Catholic and Jesuit, involved in the life and growth of the city and the region, and committed to the service of the contemporary world.

Our Values

Catholic and Jesuit. Rockhurst is a Jesuit school, whose educational philosophy is rooted in the spirituality of the founder of the Jesuits, Ignatius of Loyola, who believed that God's Spirit is constantly at work in all of creation and especially in every human being whose gifts and talents mirror the goodness and grandeur of God. Ignatius treated everyone with reverence and respect, and strove to bring forth each person's best gifts. He had a deep appreciation for the value of education, believing in the ultimate harmony between faith and reason, and he knew that solid intellectual work was one of the best means to develop one's gifts and to appreciate God's presence in creation. Rockhurst expresses its Catholic character by including the Scriptures and the Christian classics in its curriculum, by its liturgical life, by its emphasis on the relationship between social justice and Christian morality, and by its ecumenical openness to other religious traditions.

Learning. Rockhurst University has gained national recognition because we have faculty who are committed to developing a deep understanding of how students learn and discovering ways to share that understanding with their peers at Rockhurst and at other educational institutions. It is through excellence in teaching that Rockhurst supports the growth of the very best of what each student has to offer. Rockhurst believes that every one of our students is a unique reflection of God and without the fullest development of that student's gifts and potential the world will be diminished. Rockhurst seeks to teach its students how to think. Students learn to analyze information and make sense of it, to appreciate new concepts and expand their understanding of the world, and to listen with respect to different viewpoints and make informed ethical judgments about critical issues.

Liberal and Graduate Education. Rockhurst believes in the enduring value of a liberal education, an education which emphasizes core studies in disciplines such as literature, rhetoric, history, philosophy, theology, natural and social sciences, mathematics, art, and music in order to develop the very best gifts in each of our students. A Rockhurst education is education for life, intended to cultivate those dispositions of mind and spirit which keep the love of learning and the awareness of moral responsibility alive in us. At the same time, a Rockhurst education prepares men and women in depth, through specific majors in the arts, sciences, humanities, and business and with excellent graduate programs in business, education, and allied health sciences.

Service. Rockhurst education is education for citizenship. Thus, Rockhurst devotes its resources to enhancing the quality of life of all citizens, rich and poor alike, of metropolitan Kansas City, of its own neighborhood, and of all the other communities in which its students and alumni live and work. At the same time, students must become citizens of the world, conscious that all of their personal decisions have economic and moral implications for themselves and others. They should look upon all men and women as one human family whom they serve.

Our History

The spirit behind Rockhurst University was born in 1521, when a Spanish soldier took a cannonball in the leg at Pamplona. That soldier, later to be known as St. Ignatius of Loyola, used his recovery period to develop his spirituality and approach to life. That new spirituality led to the formation of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). The subsequent Jesuit tradition of service to others through a value centered liberal education has been renowned worldwide for more than 450 years. Today there are 186 Jesuit Colleges and Universities throughout the world – 28 in the United States.

Rockhurst University was founded in Kansas City in 1910 with a charter from the state of Missouri empowering Rockhurst University to grant degrees. The construction of Sedgwick Hall in 1914 allowed the opening of high school classes in 1914; college classes began in 1917. Small in numbers but infused with the Jesuit spirit, the first Rockhurst University students were all taught by the Rev. Alphonse Schwitalla, S.J. Just as the Jesuit order grew from the calling of one man into a worldwide force, so Rockhurst has grown from the dream of a small, hardy crew of Jesuits into an institution with national reach.

Today the University serves approximately 3,000 students at the main campus in Kansas City's cultural district and at the Ignatius Center located in suburban Kansas City. Both undergraduate and graduate degree programs feature the lifelong liberal arts learning approach that is a hallmark of Jesuit education.

A summary of historical highlights is offered in the “Rockhurst Traditions” section.

