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Attitudes Toward Proposed Changes at Mercy High School

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ATTITUDES TOWARD PROPOSED CHANGES
AT MERCY HIGH SCHOOL

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Prepared for
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Acknowledgments

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PREFACE

As in similar schools in cities throughout the nation, Omaha's Mercy High School has been confronted with enrollment declines during the past decade, with the city expanding toward the west and as educational preferences of Omaha Catholic families change. The Board of Directors was asked to consider four alternatives for changing the basic program of Mercy High School in order to reverse this trend. The Center for Applied Urban Research was then asked to assist the Board in assessing which of the alternatives would have the greatest potential for maintaining Mercy's educational excellence.

In response to this request, Dr. Paul S. T. Lee of the CAUR staff directed a survey of four elements of Mercy High's past, present and potential future student body: (a) current students, (b) their parents, (c) alumni, and (d) parents of children currently enrolled in other Omaha Catholic schools. The survey was designed to elicit attitudes about Mercy High School and reactions to each of the proposed program changes. It is hoped that the analysis of survey results will assist the Board in assessing the impact of each of the proposed program changes on their future enrollment.

Because each of the alternatives studied (except the "no change" option) has the potential to discontinue aspects of the Mercy High tradition that may now attract students, it has been necessary to examine the strengths of the current tradition as shown by the attitudes of current and past students. Nevertheless, the Board has also determined that Mercy must attract students not served by the current program at the current location. In some cases these two considerations are nearly contradictory. However, the approach in the present study has been to assume that the best alternative for Mercy High is that which will allow it to increase its attraction to students not now reached without sacrificing any traditions essential to students currently enrolled.

Many of the implications of the four options for the future of Mercy High School can be foreseen only by those now involved with the administration of the School. However, the findings of the survey are presented in the hope that objective analysis may provide some insights not available to those most closely related to the future of the School.

Ralph H. Todd
Director
Center for Applied Urban Research

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Background, Problem and Purpose of the Study

The Religious Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy has been offering spiritual and educational service all over the world since its establishment in 1827 in Dublin, Ireland. In the Omaha community the Sisters of Mercy have staffed several high schools, offering educational services to girls for almost one hundred years. In 1956, two of these girls' schools, St. John's and St. Mary's, merged to form the new Mercy High School at 1501 South 48th Street, Omaha, Nebraska.

For the past 20 years, Mercy High has served the Omaha community with quality educational programs. In addition to religion and the all-girl discipline, two main attributes of its educational service, the school offers three educational programs: a college preparation program, a business program and a general program. Each is designed to provide maximum opportunities for students with a wide range of interests. Mercy High provides counseling services to students with special personal needs. Two types of financial assistance are provided. In order to attract outstanding freshmen, Mercy offers a variety of academic scholarships; to those who like to work for tuition credits, Mercy offers work-study programs.

Mercy High School, however, has experienced a decline in enrollment, from 741 in 1966 to 235 in 1977. This represents an average annual decrease of 10 percent for the past ten years. Contributing factors are numerous. Faced with a declining birth rate and an out-migration of households from the inner city to western suburbs, the neighborhood surrounding Mercy High has been losing population, particularly in families with secondary school age children. With fewer potential secondary school students in the area, Mercy High has experienced increasing competition for the area's students from other schools such as Gross High and Ryan High.

Catholic high schools throughout Omaha have also been changing during the past decade. Overall, two mechanisms have emerged: (1) expanding the service area by relocating or merging, or (2) utilizing unique educational

programs. Rummel High and Notre Dame academy merged into the coeducational Roncalli High. Sacred Heart High became an archdiocesan downtown school; Dominican High developed a nongraded curriculum; Ryan pioneered modular scheduling and other innovations. During this period Gross High was constructed on the southern fringe of the city and land was purchased for a new Catholic high school on the western fringe, but was sold in 1972.

Although tuition and fees have almost tripled in the past ten years, Mercy's gross revenue remains about the same due to the decline in enrollment. Given also the element of inflation, Mercy High has found itself operating at an average annual deficit of \$24,000 over the past five years. Moreover, nothing indicates that Mercy High could improve this financial situation without outside support.

Both School Board members and administrative officials of Mercy High have sought solutions to these problems. New directions as well as alternative programs have been proposed. However, information on the implications of each of these alternatives has been lacking. Genuine decisions cannot be made without this information.

The Center for Applied Urban Research at the University of Nebraska has been asked to conduct a "market study" for Mercy High School to determine the feasibility of these alternatives. Major purposes of the study are: (a) to analyze the attitudes toward these proposed alternatives of those who have been involved, are currently involved, or would be potentially involved with Mercy High School, (b) to evaluate these alternatives and other possible changes and (c) to suggest to school administrators and the Board of Directors of Mercy High School changes designed to maintain Mercy High as a viable educational unit.

A Hypothetical Framework

The framework of the study lies in the assumption that Mercy High School operates as a firm that offers educational services to all its clients, the students of Mercy High. Hence, students currently enrolled in Mercy High and their parents are its immediate customers, alumnae of Mercy High its past customers, and Catholic families with school-age children in the Omaha area its potential customers since they are most likely to send their children to a Catholic secondary school such as Mercy. As Figure 1 indicates, Mercy High's clients are both the recipients and the determinants of the

educational program. Hence, a survey of Mercy High's present, past and future clients would generate considerable information on the type of education they expect from Mercy High.

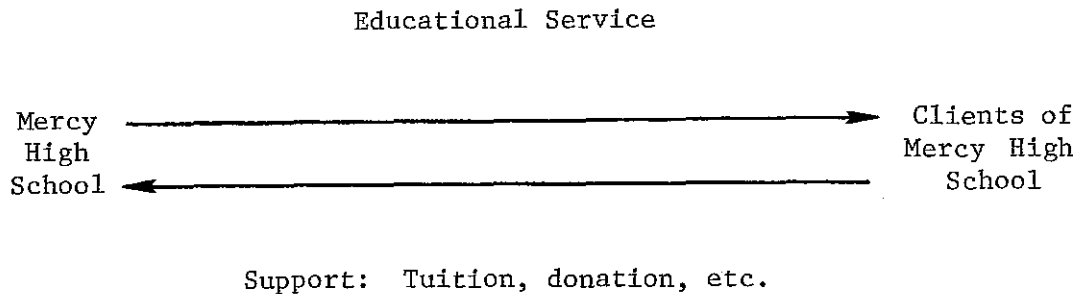


Figure 1

Market Structure of Mercy High School

Survey Design

The study comprises a series of surveys designed for different segments, of population. These are: parents of Mercy High students and of students in other Catholic elementary and secondary schools in the Omaha area, and Mercy High's students and alumnae.

Sampling Procedure. Four surveys were conducted. Client populations included parents, Mercy High students, parents of students attending other Omaha Catholic schools and Mercy High alumnae.

School records indicate that Mercy High has 235 students coming from 183 families for the 1977-78 school year. These students and families are Mercy High's current clients; as such, they are most familiar with Mercy High's present educational programs and their opinions should be obtained and carefully evaluated. Hence it was determined that questionnaires should be sent to all these students and their parents. A 91 percent rate of return from students and a 63 percent rate of return from their parents were achieved respectively. (Rate of return is presented in Appendix A, the questionnaires comprise Appendix B and geographic distribution of respondents is in Appendix C.)

Parents of students attending Catholic elementary and secondary schools other than Mercy High are considered potential customers. These families

might consider sending their children to Mercy High if certain changes were made. Statistics indicate a total enrollment of about 12,000 students in these schools. Records of student enrollment from these schools constitute the sampling framework with 8,813 families identified. A sample of 1,400 families was randomly selected. It was estimated that a sample of this size would yield estimates with an average of three to five percent margin of error if a 30 percent return rate is assumed. A 32 percent rate of return was achieved.

Mercy High School attained its present status after a merger of two all-girl schools, St. John's and St. Mary's, in 1956. School records indicate that there are about 4,500 Mercy High alumnae, including those from both St. John's and St. Mary's. Most live in Omaha and nearby midwestern states; a small number are scattered throughout the United States. Alumnae are familiar with Mercy High's past tradition and the overall quality of its educational program; thus their opinions were sought for possible program improvements. A random sample of about 900 was selected from Mercy High's alumnae records. It is estimated a sample of this size with 40 percent rate of return would generate information with a considerable level of reliability. A 35 percent rate of return was achieved.

Method of Interview and Quality Control. Questionnaires were distributed to Mercy High students by their class officers; students were given the equivalent of one class period to complete questionnaires. The Center for Applied Urban Research mailed surveys to all parents of students currently enrolled at Mercy High and to a sample of parents of students attending Catholic elementary and secondary schools other than Mercy High. Surveys were also mailed to a sample of alumnae of Mercy High. Respondents were asked to return the completed questionnaires in pre-paid postal envelopes within 10 days. A second questionnaire was sent to parents who failed to respond within 14 days. Parents of students at Mercy High who failed to respond to the first mailing of questionnaires were telephoned to encourage them to return the questionnaire. All returned questionnaires were checked for completion and verified for possible errors prior to being sent to data processing.

Assumption

The assumption underlying this study is:

For families with children attending Catholic schools other than Mercy High, those who responded may be assumed to represent the universe of Catholic families with children in Catholic schools regarding their attitudes toward education. In other words, those who did not respond do not represent a distinct segment of the entire population. The broad geographic distribution of respondents enhances this assumption. (See Appendix C).

Organization of the Study

The report is organized in five parts. Chapter 1 includes the background of Mercy High School, the purpose of the study, and a description of the survey design and methodology. Chapter 2 presents an evaluation of Mercy High's educational program, including the tuition rate and transportation facilities available to students. Chapter 3 discusses survey responses relating to five options that have been proposed to reverse declining enrollment. Chapter 4 evaluates the impact of these options on Mercy High's student enrollment. Chapter 5 contains a summary and recommendations from the study. At the conclusion of the report, five appendices present detail about respondents, questionnaires and comments.

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Chapter 2

FACTORS INFLUENCING MERCY HIGH ENROLLMENT

In the Mercy High School market structure, students and their parents are consumers, while School Board members, administrators, faculty and staff are producers of educational services. Hence, the quality of Mercy High's educational program and its costs, principally tuition and transportation, have major effects on student enrollment. This chapter deals mainly with responses from surveys of Mercy High's students, their parents, alumnae and parents of students attending other Catholic schools regarding Mercy High's educational quality, tuition rate and transportation.

Attitudes Regarding Quality of the Educational Program

Throughout its existence, Mercy High School has become known for its all-girl tradition and school spirit. The school's "unique image" was cited by 63 percent of Mercy students as an important reason they chose to attend Mercy High School (Table 1). The reason cited second most frequently was the location of Mercy High in an area near the student's home (55 percent). The general quality of education at Mercy High was cited by only 20 percent of the 213 student respondents.

Mercy High is a four year secondary school offering courses ranging from religion and English to shorthand and accounting. Students may enroll in the college preparatory, business or general program. A close examination of student reaction to these programs and courses reveals that Mercy High's current curriculum is inadequate to meet the needs of present day students. Courses students would like to see offered include more diversified and creative sports programs, auto mechanics, driver's education and shop (Table 2). Specific curricular problems cited most often related to a lack of diversity in course offerings. Other changes the students recommended are: improve the quality of faculty and administration, enhance human relationships, relax school restrictions and lower tuition (Table 3).

TABLE 1

STUDENTS' REASONS FOR ATTENDING MERCY HIGH

Reasons	Number of Students	Percent of Total Students
Total Responding	(213)	
Mercy High's Unique Image	135	63.4
Location Close to Home	117	54.9
Parental Decision	76	35.7
Influence of Friends	58	27.2
General Quality of Education	42	19.7
Faculty and Administrators	12	5.6
Others	43	20.2

TABLE 2

CURRICULUM CHANGES RECOMMENDED BY STUDENTS

Courses	Frequency	Percent
Sports Programs	53	13.9
Auto Mechanics	48	12.7
Driver's Education	47	12.4
Shop	33	8.7
Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation & First Aid	27	7.1
More Languages	20	5.3
More Science	19	5.0
More Arts and Crafts	18	4.7
Creative Writing	16	4.2
More Home Economics	7	1.8
Advanced Math	7	1.8
Business	6	1.6
Mini Courses	6	1.6
Speed Reading	5	1.3
More Electives	4	1.1
Computer Science	2	0.5
Others	62	16.3
TOTAL	380	100.0

TABLE 3

STUDENTS' RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

Recommendations	What do you feel needs to be changed, or introduced, in order to make Mercy High a better school? Please explain.	
	Number of Students	Percent of Total Students
Total Respondents	(213)	
Improve Curriculum	54	25.4
Improve Quality of Faculty, Administration	42	19.7
Human Relationships:	36	16.9
Improve Faculty-Student Relationships		
Get New Honor Roll System		
End Favoritism		
Increase Discipline		
Improve Selection of Students and Faculty		
Improve Smoking-non-smoking Situation		
Relax Restrictions:	29	13.6
Uniforms, Passes, Detentions, etc.		
Various Improvements:	25	11.7
Bring in Hot Lunch Program		
Improve Public Relations		
Attract More Students		
Become Coeducational		
Lower Tuition:	22	10.3
End Fees for Each Class		
Solicit Parish Support		
Upgrade Physical Facilities and Equipment	17	8.0
Other	6	2.8
Keep Mercy as Is	13	6.1
No Response	28	13.1

Tuition Rate

An annual tuition rate of \$600 is one factor influencing the decision whether or not to attend Mercy High School. (Tuition rates for Omaha Catholic high schools are presented in Appendix D.) Exactly half of the parents of Mercy girls and the majority of Mercy High students felt the cost of tuition kept pupils away (Table 4). However, fewer parents of students attending other schools believed the tuition was out of range; only one-third of them felt it deterred enrollment. Similarly, slightly over one-third of Mercy alumnae thought the tuition rate discouraged attendance.

Thirty-five percent of parents of students attending other Catholic schools said the Mercy tuition rate would not be a factor in determining whether their children would enroll there, while another 32 percent did not know whether it would influence their decision. Parents of students attending other Catholic schools would be most likely to make comparative assessments about the costs of tuition, thus their opinions should not be overlooked.

Alumnae responses are not as startling, as only one-quarter answered no to the tuition question. Nearly the same percentage of alumnae answered don't know (38 percent) on the subject as answered yes (37 percent). The alumnae survey form also invited comments on this question. The majority of comments fell into two categories. Those who felt the tuition rate prevented students from attending Mercy most often stated that the high cost of living and other expenses made it too difficult to meet costs of a parochial school. Others commented that the cost was too high if a family had more than one high-school age child. Alumnae who believed the tuition rate was not a factor in keeping students away pointed out that \$600 per school year compares favorably with other Catholic secondary schools. Other alumnae wrote that a good education was worth the investment.

Transportation

The difficulty of obtaining transportation to Merch High School is a third potential deterrent to enrollment addressed in the survey. Nearly three-quarters of parents of Mercy pupils stated they had no transportation problems (Table 5). Similar opinions were expressed by Mercy High students.

TABLE 4

TUITION RATE

Survey Group	Responses	The tuition presently charged Mercy High students is \$600. Do you think the tuition rate is one of the main reasons preventing some students from attending Mercy High?		
		Yes	No	Don't Know
	Number	Percent		
Parents of Students Attending				
Mercy High	112	50.0	29.5	20.5
Other Catholic Schools	460	33.0	35.0	32.0
Mercy High's				
Students	213	58.2	21.1	20.7
Alumnae	306	37.2	25.2	37.6

TABLE 5

TRANSPORTATION

Survey Group	Responses	Is transportation from your home to Mercy High School a problem?		
		Yes	No	Don't Know
	Number	Percent		
Parents of Students Attending				
Mercy High	116	27.6	70.7	1.7
Other Catholic Schools	449	49.2	37.4	13.4
Mercy High Students	208	14.9	83.2	1.9

In contrast, half of parents of students at other Catholic schools felt transportation to Mercy would be a problem. This response indicates that location and distance to school are significant factors in determining a student's enrollment in a particular school. Mercy High alumnae were not asked about the influence of transportation.

Chapter 3

NEW DIRECTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES

Facing a decline in student enrollment and school finances, both School Board members and administrators have sought to attract students through fundamental program changes. Five alternatives have been proposed to the School Board:

1. Maintain the educational program as it currently exists.
2. Change from all-girl school to a coeducational school.
3. Merge with another Catholic secondary school.
4. Relocate to western Omaha.
5. Develop a joint program with the College of St. Mary.

This chapter examines responses from the four segments of the Mercy client population concerning each of the five alternatives.

Change Versus Status Quo

The question of whether to continue to operate Mercy High at its present location and in its present form brought favorable response from Mercy parents and students (Table 6). The majority (66 percent of Mercy parents and 61 percent of Mercy students) supported maintenance of the status quo. These favorable responses were anticipated. Although parents of students at other Catholic schools and Mercy alumnae (30 percent and 39 percent respectively) were not strongly in favor of continuing Mercy High in its present form, even fewer voted to change the present situation (26 percent and 27 percent respectively). Nearly half of the parents of students at other Catholic schools (45 percent) and one-third of Mercy alumnae (34 percent) expressed a lack of knowledge about Mercy's present situation.

Comments on this question were much the same in all three groups surveyed. Parents of students at other schools and alumnae gave three main responses. Those who favored maintaining the status quo most often favored

TABLE 6

SUPPORT OF STATUS QUO

Survey Group	Responses	Would you advocate that Mercy High School continue to operate as an all girl school with its current curriculum and at its current location?		
		Yes	No	Don't Know
	Number	Percent		
Parents of Students Attending				
Mercy High	115	66.1	15.6	18.3
Other Catholic Schools	460	29.8	25.6	44.6
Mercy High's				
Students	210	61.0	28.6	10.4
Alumnae	304	39.2	26.6	34.2

the school's central location and all-girl enrollment. Respondents who recommended a change most often advocated a coeducational program. The high percentage who marked their comments indicate that a number of potential clients are not well informed about the current Mercy program. Comments of Mercy students and their parents supported the school. Most of them preferred an all-girl program and appreciated the location and convenience Mercy offered. Mercy students also feared losing the qualities and traditions of the school if changes were made. The majority of Mercy parents and students who favored some change believed curriculum changes were necessary. A noticeable number of students also suggested that the school become coeducational.

Change from All-Girl to Coeducational

The question regarding whether Mercy should become coeducational received few favorable responses. Opinions on this question were widely divided. Respondents who advocated that Mercy High maintain the status quo (Table 6) were excluded from the following four questions about the options for change. Tables 7 through 10 thus present two types of tabulations. Column A tabulates responses of only those who were asked about each specific option for change; Column B tabulations include responses of those who advocated "no change" (Table 6), assuming that they would have answered "no" about each of the four options for change.

Table 7 shows that a majority of Mercy High students (77 percent) and alumnae (56 percent) oppose the option to have Mercy High become coeducational. Nevertheless, this option received considerable support from those who advocated that some change must be made. Among these, 44 percent of current students, 40 percent of alumnae and 44 percent of parents of students attending other Catholic schools favored a coeducational Mercy High School.

In all four survey groups, those in favor of a coeducational Mercy High School considered that such a change would increase school enrollment and add new courses and activities and thereby improve the quality of Mercy's education and help the school financially. The majority of those who opposed such a change gave no reasons for their opposition; some commented that such a change would destroy Mercy's traditions and uniqueness and others opposed the change because current school facilities were inadequate and would not easily accommodate the addition of males to the school.

TABLE 7

OPTION TO BECOME COEDUCATIONAL

Survey Group	Do you think that Mercy High should change from an all-girl school to a coeducational school?							
	A				B			
	Response ^a	Yes	No	Don't Know	Response ^b	Yes	No	Don't Know
	Number	Percent			Number	Percent		
Parents of Students Attending								
Mercy High	38	29.0	52.6	18.4	114	9.7	84.2	6.1
Other Catholic Schools	317	43.8	13.3	42.9	454	30.6	39.4	30.0
Mercy High's								
Students	83	39.7	42.2	18.1	211	15.6	77.3	7.1
Alumnae	176	43.7	25.6	30.7	296	26.0	55.8	18.2

^aIncludes respondents to this question only.

^bIncludes respondents who advocate no change (Table 6), assuming they would answer no to this question.

Relocation to West Omaha

An option involving a move from Mercy High to West Omaha brought another clear-cut response against change (Table 8). Among those who considered a change necessary, (Table 8, Column A) fewer than one-fourth of any respondent group favored relocating in west Omaha. Including those who advocate no change (Column B), only about one of eight persons in each category supported relocation, while more than half opposed it. Nearly one-third of parents of students at other schools responded don't know, as did approximately one-quarter of alumnae respondents. Comments of respondents in all four groups who opposed a move stated the central location was convenient and served the needs of students in the area. Respondents who opted for relocation pointed out that a move would mean additional space and facilities, as well as a higher percentage of population likely to have school-age children. Still others felt that wealthier people tended to live in West Omaha and might be better able to pay rising tuition costs.

Merger

The proposal to merge Mercy High with another school was not favored by a majority of respondents in three survey groups (Table 9). Nearly half of parents of Mercy High students favoring some change opposed a merger (Column A), and a majority of all respondent groups either opposed or was undecided about this option. Fewer than ten percent of all survey respondents in all categories except current students supported the option, while 83 percent of Mercy parents, 78 percent of Mercy students and 56 percent of alumnae opposed it (Column B). Forty-two percent of parents of students in other Catholic schools opposed a merger, including those who favored no change, but 48 percent of them answered don't know to the question. Thus, nearly half the general Catholic population felt they lacked the knowledge to judge the options on this question.

Most comments against the merger feared a loss of Mercy's tradition, spirit and educational quality. Many supported the merger only as a last resort to keep Mercy going, or as a means of meeting rising expenses. Such comments seemed to indicate that a merger was viewed to have little potential for positive impact on Mercy High.

TABLE 8

RELOCATION

		Do you think that Mercy High should be relocated in a western section of the city of Omaha?							
		A				B			
		Response ^a	Yes	No	Don't Know	Response ^b	Yes	No	Don't Know
Survey Group	Number	Percent			Number	Percent			
Parents of Students Attending									
Mercy High	40	22.5	52.5	25.0	116	7.8	83.6	8.6	
Other Catholic Schools	316	19.9	35.5	44.6	453	13.9	55.0	31.1	
Mercy High's									
Students	81	23.5	53.1	23.4	209	9.1	81.8	9.1	
Alumnae	178	19.7	41.0	39.3	298	11.7	64.8	23.5	

^aIncludes respondents to this question only.

^bIncludes respondents who advocate no change (Table 6), assuming they would answer no to this question.

TABLE 9

MERGER

Survey Group	Do you think that Mercy High should merge with another Catholic secondary school?							
	A				B			
	Response ^a	Yes	No	Don't Know	Response ^b	Yes	No	Don't Know
	Number	Percent			Number	Percent		
Parents of Students Attending								
Mercy High	38	18.4	47.4	34.2	115	6.1	82.6	11.3
Other Catholic Schools	311	13.5	17.0	69.5	448	9.4	42.4	48.2
Mercy High's								
Students	83	28.9	43.4	27.7	211	11.4	77.7	10.9
Alumnae	176	14.6	26.4	59.0	298	8.7	56.1	35.2

^aIncludes respondents to this question only.

^bIncludes respondents who advocate no change (Table 6), assuming they would answer no to this question.

Joint Program

The option for change which received the most support from Mercy parents and alumnae was a suggestion to develop a joint program between Mercy High and the College of St. Mary for either college credit or college preparation. About one of six Mercy High parents and one of five Mercy High students including all responses supported this option, while more than one-third of alumnae believed it a viable alternative (Table 10, Column B). However, more than half of respondents who favored some change preferred this option (Column A). Forty percent of parents of students at other Catholic schools who favored a change in Mercy liked this option, a preference second only to their support of changing Mercy to a coeducational school. The percentages of responses against this option are still high, but if a change must be made in the Mercy High program this alternative appears least objectionable.

Respondents commenting in support of the merger cited an interest in college prep courses as an attraction to a joint program. Others believed such a system would upgrade curriculum and academic standards, while encouraging students to continue on to college. A number of remarks against the merger centered around the concern that all students would be forced into a college prep program and denied the choice in the course of their studies that exists in the current Mercy program. Approximately 71 percent of Mercy High's students are now enrolled in the college preparatory program.

TABLE 10

JOINT PROGRAM WITH THE COLLEGE OF ST. MARY

Survey Group	Do you think that Mercy High and the College of St. Mary should develop a joint program program emphasizing a college preparation curriculum for retroactive or dual credit?							
	A				B			
	Response ^a	Yes	No	Don't Know	Response ^b	Yes	No	Don't Know
	Number	Percent			Number	Percent		
Parents of Students Attending								
Mercy High	39	51.3	25.6	23.1	115	17.4	74.8	7.8
Other Catholic Schools	310	39.7	9.7	50.6	447	27.5	37.4	35.1
Mercy High's								
Students	81	48.1	27.2	24.7	209	18.7	71.8	9.5
Alumnae	181	55.8	14.4	29.8	301	33.6	48.5	17.9

^aIncludes respondents to this question only.

^bIncludes respondents who advocate no change (Table 6), assuming they would answer no to this question.

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Chapter 4

EVALUATION OF OPTIONS

Evidence has shown that the majority of Mercy High's students, parents and most of Mercy's alumnae were in favor of retaining the current status of Mercy High School. However, maintaining the status quo implies that Mercy High would have to live with its problems. If administrative officials of Mercy determine a change is necessary for Mercy's survival, the options brought out in the questionnaire must be examined and evaluated against their respective impacts on student enrollment.

Options Preferred

Table 11 shows a comparison of options preferred by those who expressed that a change has to be made. Among respondents who favored a change in three of the four survey groups, the support was greatest for development of a joint program with the College of St. Mary. A majority of Mercy parents and alumnae favored this option, while 48 percent of Mercy students approved this alternative. The fourth group, parents of students attending other Catholic schools, most strongly supported changing Mercy to a coeducational school by a vote of 44 percent. Their second choice was the College of St. Mary option, supported by almost 40 percent of respondents to the question. In comparison, the other three groups chose the coeducational option as their second alternative.

Thus, considering Mercy parents, students and alumnae, the only change receiving near majority support was the option to organize a joint system with the College of St. Mary. The option favored by parents of other Catholic students, change to a coeducational school, would require further examination before it could be considered a viable alternative.

TABLE 11

PROGRAM CHANGES PREFERRED BY RESPONDENTS WHO
OPPOSED MAINTAINING THE STATUS QUO

Options	Parents of Students Attending		Mercy High's	
	Mercy High	Other Catholic Schools	Students	Alumnae
Change from All Girl to Coeducational				
Total No. of Responses	38	317	83	176
Yes (Percent)	29.0	43.8	39.7	43.7
No (Percent)	52.6	13.3	42.2	25.6
Don't Know (Percent)	18.4	42.9	18.1	30.7
Merge With Another Secondary School				
Total No. of Responses	38	311	83	176
Yes (Percent)	18.4	13.5	28.9	14.6
No (Percent)	47.4	17.0	43.4	26.4
Don't Know (Percent)	34.2	69.5	27.7	59.0
Relocate to Western Omaha				
Total No. of Responses	40	316	81	178
Yes (Percent)	22.5	19.9	23.5	19.7
No (Percent)	52.5	35.5	53.1	41.0
Don't Know (Percent)	25.0	44.6	23.4	39.3
Develop a Joint Program with College of St. Mary				
Total No. of Respondents	39	310	81	181
Yes (Percent)	51.3	39.7	48.1	55.8
No (Percent)	25.6	9.7	27.2	14.4
Don't Know (Percent)	23.1	50.6	24.7	29.8

Enrollment Estimations

One way to evaluate the options is to examine their impact on Mercy High's enrollment against the number of families who would send their children to Mercy High if their options were put into effect. Table 12 shows the enrollment estimates under various options from survey responses of parents of students attending other Catholic schools. It can be seen that changing Mercy into a coeducational school has the greatest enrollment potential. If this option were put into effect, Mercy High would be likely to gain more students, although the ages of the students in question would spread this increase over a ten-year period. The option with the least enrollment impact appears to be merger with another school, with a possibility of 204 more students. In studying this table, however, the reader is cautioned: (1) these figures are not additive among cross-section options; (2) estimates result from an attitude survey and do not necessarily represent respondents' behavior; and (3) in weighting enrollment potentials among different options, one should consider program costs and the possibility of losing a portion of Mercy's current students who attend the school mainly because of its unique image.

TABLE 12

ESTIMATED IMPACT OF PROPOSED PROGRAM CHANGES ON MERCY HIGH ENROLLMENT

Options Preferred	Sample					Estimation of Population							
	Number of Families	Percent of Total Respondents	School-age Children			Families		Girls		Boys		Total	
			Girls	Boys	Total	95 percent Probability Total	95 percent Probability Range ^a	95 percent Probability Total	95 percent Probability Range ^b	95 percent Probability Total	95 percent Probability Range ^c	95 percent Probability Total	95 percent Probability Range
Change Into A Coeducational School	31	6.8	43	45	88	599	397-802	833	552-1,115	869	576-1,163	1,702	1,128-2,278
Relocate to West Omaha	24	5.3	41	36	77	467	378-556	799	646-951				
Merge with Another School	7	1.6	11	12	23	141	88-194	221	138-305				
Develop A Joint Program with College of St. Mary	26	5.8	37	38	75	511	414-608	726	588-863				

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^aThe 95 percent probability range of number of families were computed by the following formula $N (P \pm t \sqrt{\frac{Pq}{n}})$

Where: P = percent of respondents in favor of the option who would send children to Mercy High
 q = (1-P)
 n = sample size
 N = 8,813 = total number of families in the population
 t = student t-value

^bThe 95 percent probability range of number of girls was computed by multiplying the number of families with average number of girls per family.

^cThe 95 percent probability range of number of boys was computed by multiplying the number of families with average number of boys per family.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY

Mercy High School has experienced a continuous decline in student enrollment in the last decade. Compounding the problem of enrollment decline is the worsening of the school's financial situation. Both School Board members and administrative officials have been seeking ways to solve their problems and proposed new directions and alternatives. The Center for Applied Urban Research surveyed four segments of the population and arrived at the following conclusions:

1. Mercy High's tradition, spirit and location are major reasons influencing students to attend the school.

2. Transportation to and from the school is a problem that may prevent some families from sending their children to Mercy High. Although the majority of Mercy parents did not consider transportation a problem, nearly half of the parents of students attending other Catholic schools expressed the opposite opinion.

3. Mercy High's \$600 tuition is relatively high compared to other Catholic high schools. Over half of Mercy parents and students voiced their complaints.

4. Mercy High's current curriculum is not adequately meeting student desires. More advanced offerings in academic areas such as science and language, and more electives such as gymnastics, driver training and auto mechanics were among student suggestions.

5. Students suggested a number of other changes to improve the school: raise the quality of education, faculty and administration, enhance human relationships, relax restrictions and reduce tuition.

6. Attracted by Mercy High's image and its nearby location, the majority of Mercy High parents and current students oppose any drastic form of change. They prefer that the school maintain the status quo with improvement in the general quality of education and adding creative courses if possible.

7. The option for change receiving the most positive votes from respondents of all four groups is the development of a joint program with the College of St. Mary. This option appeals to all four groups because it has several features: it permits Mercy High to retain its own image; it leads toward improvement in quality of education; and it is probably the least-cost option.

8. The second most popular option for change is to develop a coeducational program. This alternative received the most positive votes from both Mercy High alumnae and parents of students attending other Catholic schools. This choice would result in the greatest enrollment potential with a possible increase of students at its present location. The feasibility of this option cannot be determined without evaluation of the costs involved and the possibility of losing a portion of Mercy's current students who attend the school mainly because of Mercy's tradition and spirit.

Appendix A

RATE OF RETURN OF SURVEYED POPULATION

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TABLE A-1

RATE OF RETURN OF SURVEYED POPULATION

Survey Group	Sample Size	No. of Respondents	Percent of Total
Parents of Students Attending			
Mercy High	183	116	63.3
Other Catholic Schools	1465	473	32.3
Mercy High's			
Students	235	213	90.6
Alumnae	904	316	34.7

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Appendix B
QUESTIONNAIRES

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1. How many school-age children do you have?
a. Number of girls _____ b. Number of boys _____

2. Do any of your children attend a high school?
a. Yes _____ b. No _____
2a. (If yes) Which high school do they attend?
a. Mercy High _____
b. Other _____
(Please specify)

2b. (If no) Will any of them enter high school within the next two years?
a. Yes _____ b. No _____
2ba. (If yes) To which high school do you plan to send them?
a. Mercy High _____
b. Other _____
(Please specify)
c. Do not know _____
3. Are you familiar with Mercy High School educational program?
a. Yes _____ b. No _____

4. If you now have, have had, or plan to have any daughter(s) attending high school(s) other than Mercy High, please give your major reason(s) for doing so.

5. The tuition presently charged the students of Mercy High is \$600 per school year. Do you think that this tuition rate is one of, if not the main reasons preventing some students from attending Mercy High?
a. Yes _____ b. No _____ c. Do not know _____

6. Is transportation from your home to Mercy High School a problem?
a. _____ Yes. It is a problem that influences my decision in sending my children to Mercy High.
b. _____ Yes. It is a problem but it does not influence my decision in sending my children to Mercy High.
c. _____ No. It is not a problem.
d. _____ I do not know.

In answering Question 7 through 11, please consider each question independent of the others and include your comment(s) as to the reason(s) for your answer.

7. Would you advocate that Mercy High School continue to operate as an all girl school with its current curriculum and at its current location (1501 So. 48th Street, Omaha)?
a. Yes _____ b. No _____ c. Do not know _____
7a. Comment: _____

(PLEASE CONTINUE ON OTHER SIDE)

(NOTE: IF YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 7 IS "YES," PLEASE SKIP QUESTIONS 8 THROUGH 11.)

8. Do you think that Mercy High should change from an all girl school to a coeducational school?
a. Yes _____ b. No _____ c. Do not know _____

8a. Comment: _____

9. Do you think that Mercy High should be relocated in a western section of the City of Omaha?
a. Yes _____ b. No _____ c. Do not know _____

9a. Comment: _____

10. Do you think that Mercy High should merge with another Catholic secondary school?
a. Yes _____ b. No _____ c. Do not know _____

10a. Comment: _____

11. Do you think that Mercy High and the College of St. Mary should develop a joint program emphasizing a college preparation curriculum for retroactive or dual credit?
a. Yes _____ b. No _____ c. Do not know _____

11a. Comment: _____

12. If one or more options in Questions 7 through 11 were put into effect, would you send (or continue to send) your children to Mercy High, assuming the present tuition rate remains unchanged.
a. Yes _____ b. No _____ c. Do not know _____

Just for classification, please give your address or the nearest intersecting streets:

Address or location _____

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Please return this questionnaire in the enclosed envelope, or mail to:

Mercy High School Survey
Center for Applied Urban Research
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Box 688
Omaha, Nebraska 68101

* * * * *

1. How many years have you attended Mercy High? _____
2. Which academic, or vocational, program are you enrolled in?
 - a. _____ general
 - b. _____ business
 - c. _____ college preparatory
 - d. _____ other (please specify) _____
3. Do you feel that Mercy High has a special image which makes it more appealing than any other high school in the area?
 - a. _____ yes
 - b. _____ no
 - c. _____ do not know
4. Which of the following best represents the reason(s) you are attending Mercy High? (select more than one, if appropriate)
 - a. _____ Mercy High's unique image (spirit, tradition, etc.)
 - b. _____ influence of friends
 - c. _____ parental decision
 - d. _____ location close to home
 - e. _____ general quality of education
 - f. _____ faculty and administrators
 - g. _____ other (please specify) _____
- 5a. Which courses do you like most? 5b. Which courses do you dislike most?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
6. Which courses would you like to see offered in the near future?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
7. What do you feel needs to be changed, or introduced, in order to make Mercy High a better school? Please explain.

8. The tuition presently charged the students of Mercy High is \$600 per school year. Do you think that this tuition rate is one if not the main reason preventing some students from attending Mercy High?
 - a. yes _____
 - b. no _____
 - c. do not know _____
9. Is transportation from your home to Mercy High School a problem?
 - a. yes _____
 - b. no _____
 - c. do not know _____

In answering Questions 10 through 14, please consider each question independent of the others and include your comment(s) as to the reason(s) for your answer.

10. Would you advocate that Mercy High School continue to operate as an all girl school with its current curriculum and at its current location (1401 So. 48th Street, Omaha)?

a. yes _____ b. no _____ c. do not know _____

10a. Comment _____

(IF YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 10 IS "YES," PLEASE SKIP QUESTIONS 11 THROUGH 14.)
(IF "NO" PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.)

11. Do you think that Mercy High should change from an all girl school to a coeducational school?

a. yes _____ b. no _____ c. do not know _____

11a. Comment _____

12. Do you think that Mercy High should be relocated in a western section of the city of Omaha?

a. yes _____ b. no _____ c. do not know _____

12a. Comment _____

13. Do you think that Mercy High should merge with another Catholic secondary school?

a. yes _____ b. no _____ c. do not know _____

13a. Comment _____

14. Do you think that Mercy High and the College of St. Mary should develop a joint program emphasizing a college preparation curriculum for retroactive or dual credit?

a. yes _____ b. no _____ c. do not know _____

14a. Comment _____

15. If one or more options in Questions 10 through 14 were put into effect, would you recommend Mercy High to other students assuming that the present tuition rate remains unchanged.

a. yes _____ b. no _____ c. do not know _____

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

SURVEY OF ALUMNAE
OF MERCY HIGH SCHOOL

Conducted by
Center for Applied Urban Research
University of Nebraska at Omaha

* * * * *

1. What years did you attend Mercy High School (formerly St. John's and St. Mary's)? From 19____ to 19____.
2. Are you acquainted with Mercy High's present educational program?
 - a. Yes _____ b. No _____
 - 2a. (If Yes) Do you feel that changes should be made in Mercy High's educational program in order to better meet the present day students' needs?
 - a. Yes _____ b. No _____
 - 2aa. (If Yes) What changes would you recommend for Mercy High's program?

3. The tuition presently charged the students of Mercy High is \$600 per school year. Do you think that this tuition rate is one of the main reasons preventing some students from going to Mercy High?
 - a. Yes _____ b. No _____ c. Do not know _____
 - Comment: _____

4. Do you have high school-age children?
 - a. Yes _____ b. No _____
 - 4a. (If Yes) Which school(s) has(ve) your high school-age child(ren) been attending? Give number attending.
 - a. Mercy High School _____
 - b. Another Catholic high school _____
 - c. A public high school _____
 - d. Other (specify) _____
5. If you now have, or have had, or plan to have any children attend high school(s) in Omaha other than Mercy High, give the main reason(s) for their doing so.

In answering Question 6 through 10, please consider each question independent of the others and include your comment(s) as to the reason(s) for your answer.

6. Would you advocate that Mercy High School continue to operate as an all girl school with its current curriculum and at its current location (1501 So. 48th street, Omaha)?
 - a. Yes _____ b. No _____ c. Do not know _____
 - 6a. Comment: _____

(NOTE: IF YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 6 IS "YES," PLEASE SKIP QUESTIONS 7 THROUGH 10.)

7. Do you think that Mercy High should change from an all girl school to a coeducational school?

a. Yes _____ b. No _____ c. Do not know _____

7a. Comment: _____

8. Do you think that Mercy High should be relocated in a western section of the City of Omaha?

a. Yes _____ b. No _____ c. Do not know _____

8a. Comment: _____

9. Do you think that Mercy High should merge with another Catholic secondary school?

a. Yes _____ b. No _____ c. Do not know _____

9a. Comment: _____

10. Do you think that Mercy High and the College of St. Mary should develop a joint program emphasizing a college preparation curriculum for retroactive or dual credit?

a. Yes _____ b. No _____ c. Do not know _____

10a. Comment: _____

11. If one or more options in Questions 6 through 10 were put into effect, would you send (or continue to send) your children to Mercy High, assuming the present tuition rate remains unchanged?

a. Yes _____ b. No _____ c. Do not know _____

Just for classification, please give your address or the nearest intersecting streets:

Address or location _____

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Please return this questionnaire in the enclosed envelope, or mail to:

Mercy High School Survey
Center for Applied Urban Research
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Box 688
Omaha, Nebraska 68101

Appendix C
MAPS OF RESPONDENTS' ADDRESSES

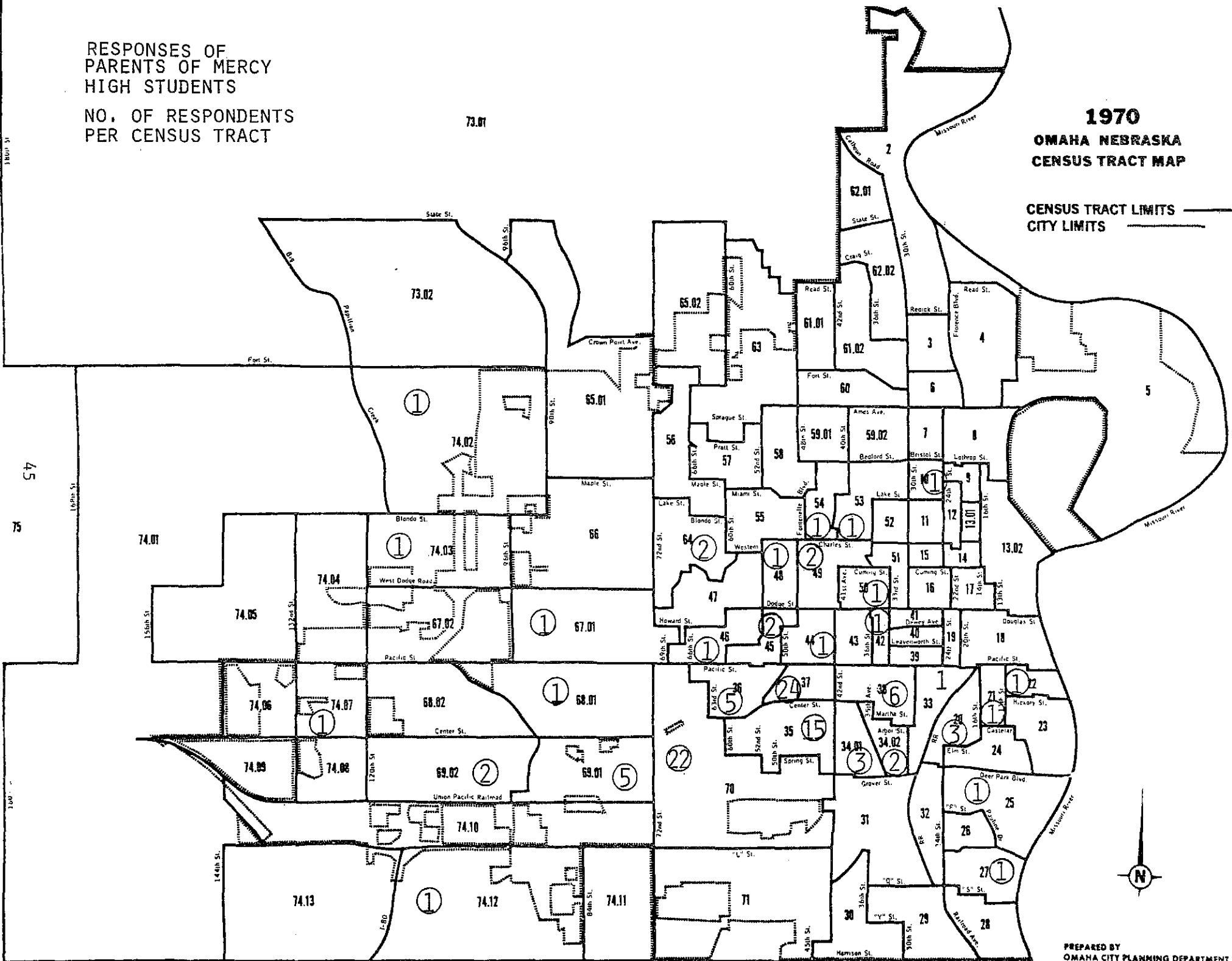
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RESPONSES OF
PARENTS OF MERCY
HIGH STUDENTS

NO. OF RESPONDENTS
PER CENSUS TRACT

1970
OMAHA NEBRASKA
CENSUS TRACT MAP

CENSUS TRACT LIMITS ———
CITY LIMITS ———



SARPY COUNTY-105①

PREPARED BY
OMAHA CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

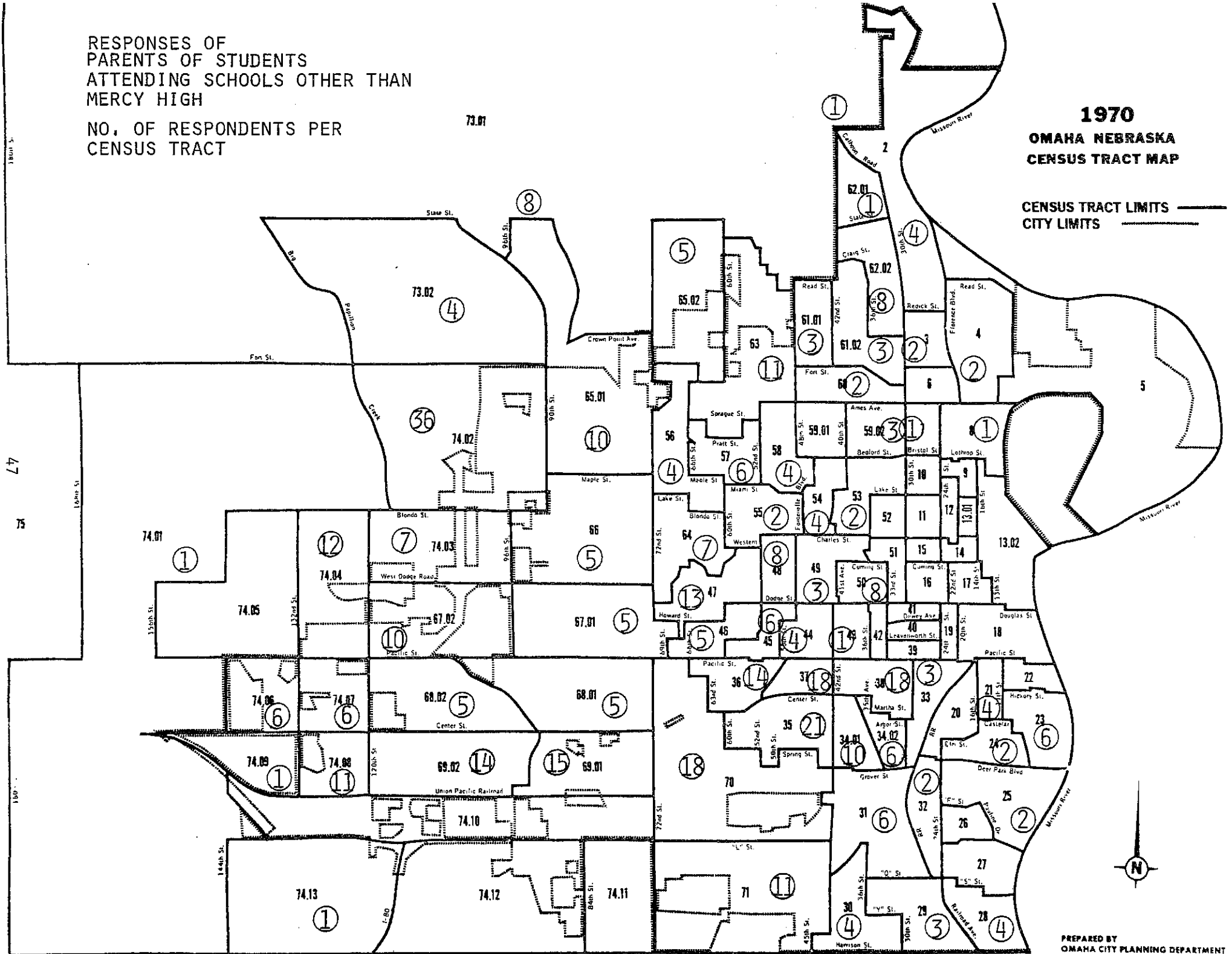
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RESPONSES OF
PARENTS OF STUDENTS
ATTENDING SCHOOLS OTHER THAN
MERCY HIGH

NO. OF RESPONDENTS PER
CENSUS TRACT

1970
OMAHA NEBRASKA
CENSUS TRACT MAP

CENSUS TRACT LIMITS ———
CITY LIMITS ———



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Appendix D

TUITION RATES IN OMAHA PAROCHIAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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TABLE A-2

TUITION RATES
PAROCHIAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OMAHA

		<u>In Parish Student</u>	<u>Out of Parish Student</u>
Cathedral High School (Parish supported)	Freshmen	\$ 390	\$565
	Sophomore	435	610
	Junior	490	660
	Senior	545	715
Creighton Prep	Freshmen	\$ 890	
	Sophomore	950	
	Junior	1,010	
	Senior	1,070	
Dominican High School	\$240 per school year; charged \$25 per month and \$15 for entry fee		
Duchesne Academy	\$1,375 per school year		
Gross High School	Freshmen	\$ 490	
	Sophomore	510	
	Junior	520	
	Senior	530	
Holy Name High School (Parish supported)		\$ 425	\$525
Marian High School		\$ 650	More than one student per family second student gets \$50 deduction.
Paul VI High School	Freshmen	\$ 515	
	Sophomore	510	
	Junior	525	
	Senior	540	
Roncalli		\$ 665	Actually tuition is \$765, but \$100 is paid by parishes
Ryan High School	Freshmen	\$ 600	
	Sophomore	650	
	Junior	650	
	Senior	650	

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Appendix E
SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

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SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM
SURVEY OF MERCY HIGH ALUMNAE^{1/}

2aa. (f Yes) What changes would you recommend for Mercy High's program?

Upgrade curriculum (28) including:

Science and math (8).

Basics (4).

Business (1).

Upgrade faculty (12) including:

More lay teachers (3).

Bring back Sisters (1).

Change from exclusive college prep. (5).

More emphasis on college prep. (7).

Encourage high personal morals and discipline. (6).

Change the image, more public relations. (3).

3. The tuition presently charged the students of Mercy High is \$600 per school year. Do you think that this tuition rate is one of the main reasons preventing some students from going to Mercy High? Yes No Don't Know

Yes

Comments on expense and cost of living (39).

More than one child in high school makes it too expensive (12).

No need for all-girl, all-boy schools (2).

Parish or Archdiocese support would lower costs (2).

^{1/} Since respondents may have given more than one reason in answer to a question, they were often listed under more than one category head. Thus, adding the totals for each category will not give the total number of respondents. This also holds true for all other questions and respondent groups.

Question 3. (Cont.)

Yes (Cont.)

High tuition does not mean quality; better buy elsewhere (2).

Tuition comparable to other Catholic schools (5).

No

A good education is worth the money (20).

Reasonable or less cost compared to other Catholic schools (37).

Girls prefer coeducational schools (4).

Mercy has gone down hill in quality of school and student (3).

Better education elsewhere (3).

Location problems (3).

Better public relations-image needed (5).

Curriculum revision (3).

5. If you now have, have had, or plan to have any children attend high school(s) in Omaha other than Mercy High, give the main reason(s) for their doing so.

They attend a school closer to home (45).

Finances (27).

Children want to go elsewhere (22).

Better curriculum, activities elsewhere (29).

Have only sons (32).

They attend a coeducational school (23).

Comments supportive of Mercy High (7).

Better facilities elsewhere (2).

Wants secular school (1).

Better administrators elsewhere (2).

6. Would you advocate that Mercy High School continue to operate as an all girl school with its current curriculum and at its current location?

Yes No Do not know

Yes

Supportive of all girls school (55).

Wants centrally located school (32).

Comments supportive of Mercy (11).

With curriculum always improving or being updated (7)

Better public relations needed (3).

Maintain current curriculum (2).

No

Wants coeducational school (50).

Curriculum needs upgrading (12).

Bad location (11).

Move to Southwest (6).

Lack of facilities and parking (5).

Upgrade faculty (1).

Wants boarding school (1).

Too expensive (5).

Close it (2).

Not financially possible to continue (2).

7. Do you think that Mercy High should change from an all girl school to a coeducational school? Yes No Do not know

Yes

Supportive of coeducational school (33).

Only as a last resort, to keep the school going (7).

Only to keep the school filled (7).

If quality remains the same (3).

Question 7. (cont.)

Yes (cont.)

To help meet costs (1).

Better education will result (1).

No

Want a girls school (19).

Lack of facilities to go coeducational (6).

Keep Mercy as is (5).

Enrollment probably wouldn't change (1).

Nuns can't handle coeducational schools (5).

Other Catholic schools can handle coeducational students (1).

Too expensive to change (1).

8. Do you think that Mercy High School should be relocated in a western section of the City of Omaha? Yes No Do not know

Yes

More students in West Omaha (11).

Move west (12).

Wealthier people in West Omaha (4).

Need new facilities (4).

Move anywhere with more room (3).

No

Keep school in a central area (35).

Too expensive to move (17).

Too much concern for people in West Omaha (6).

Transportation concerns (4).

Location not the problem (8).

Use existing facilities (2).

Too many public schools in West Omaha (3).

9. Do you think that Mercy High should merge with another Catholic secondary school? Yes No Do not know

Yes

To help meet costs (10).

To keep the school going (5).

Only if feasible (5).

Supportive of merger (5).

For better curriculum (4).

Go coeducational (3).

No

Against Merger (15).

Merger not the issue, quality is (2).

Maintain Mercy's individuality and traditions (5).

10. Do you think that Mercy High and the College of St. Mary should develop a joint program emphasizing a college preparation curriculum for retroactive or dual credit? Yes No Do not know

Yes

Supportive of merger (45).

Interest in college prep (26).

Do not completely rule out vocational training (8).

Good for public relations (4).

Will increase enrollment (4).

Modernize the program (3).

No

Comments against merger (11).

Cost (3).

Against women's universities (4).

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM SURVEY OF
PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN OMAHA CATHOLIC SCHOOLS^{1/}

4. If you now have, have had, or plan to have any daughter(s) attending high school(s) other than Mercy High, please give your major reason(s) for doing so.

Other schools are closer (136).

Better education or curriculum elsewhere (78).

Coeducational school (48).

Child's preference (48).

Cost (37).

Children not high school age (14).

Family members are alumnae of other schools (33).

Given scholarships elsewhere (4).

7. Would you advocate that Mercy High School continue to operate as an all girl school with its current curriculum and at its current location?

Yes

Like location (41).

Like all girls school (50).

Keep Mercy as is (20).

Prefer a Catholic education (12).

But change curriculum approach (11).

No

Go Coeducational (76).

Move west, location change (20).

Not financially able to keep going (6).

^{1/}Since respondents may have given more than one reason in answer to a question, they were often listed under more than one category head. Thus, adding the totals for each category will not give the total number of respondents. This also holds true for all other questions and respondent groups.

Question 7. (cont.)

No (cont.)

Poor facilities (5).

Bad location (3).

Upgrade faculty (2).

Consolidate with another school (4).

Tuition costs (2).

8. Do you think that Mercy High should change from an all girl school to a coeducational school?

Yes

For coeducational (66).

Will bring in more students (13).

To help financially (10).

To have all children in one school (2).

To keep the school going (5).

No

Desire all girl school (32).

No need for another Catholic local high school (2).

Emphasize quality instead (2).

Sisters cannot handle male students (2).

Coeducational will not help (2).

Facilities not adequate to go coeducational (7).

9. Do you think that Mercy High should be relocated in a western section of the City of Omaha?

Yes

More convenient (6).

Move west somewhere (23).

Wealthier people in west Omaha (9).

Question 9. (cont.)

Yes

Mercy needs new facilities (3).

More students out west (16).

No

Keep central location (51).

Too much concern for west Omaha people (11).

Relocation not the problem, quality will attract students (6).

Other schools out west (8).

Too expensive to move (17).

Already have good facilities (7).

Go coeducational (3).

10. Do you think that Mercy High should merge with another Catholic secondary school?

Yes

For merger (14).

Go coed (8).

Merge only as a last resort (10).

Expand curriculum (5).

If it's kept a girl's school (3).

To meet expenses (18).

To increase enrollment (3).

No

Against merger (11).

Quality and tradition will suffer (8).

11. Do you think that Mercy High and the College of St. Mary should develop a joint program emphasizing a college preparation curriculum for retroactive or dual credit?

Yes

For merger (41).

Will upgrade curriculum and academic standards (13).

Excellent for better students, will encourage college (19).

Increased enrollment and interest (9).

No

Against merger (6).

Against exclusive college prep (13).

Improve image instead (2).

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM SURVEY OF 1/
PARENTS OF MERCY HIGH STUDENTS

4. If you now have, have had, or plan to have any daughter(s) attending high school(s) other than Mercy High, please give your major reason(s) for doing so.

Comments supportive of Mercy High (12).

Better education elsewhere (8).

Desire to go to a coeducational school (1).

Desire to go elsewhere (3).

Cost factors (2).

Location-distance factors (2).

7. Would you advocate that Mercy High School continue to operate as an all girl school with its current curriculum and at its current location (1501 S. 48th Street, Omaha)? Yes No Do not know

Yes

Prefer Mercy as it is good education (20).

Prefer all girls' school (24).

Desire curriculum upgrading (5).

Location, convenience (14).

Increase number of pupils (2).

No

Desire curriculum change (15).

Go coed (7).

More students would result (1).

1/ Since respondents may have given more than one reason in answer to a question, they were often listed under more than one category head. Thus, adding the totals for each category will not give the total number of respondents. This also holds true for all other questions and respondent groups.

Question 7. (cont.)

No (cont.)

Location change (7).

Parking transportation problems (3).

Become a Diocesan school (1).

Costs indicate closing (1)

8. Do you think that Mercy High should change from an all girl school to a coeducational school? Yes No Do not know

Yes

Go coeducational (6)

Would bring more students (1).

Would bring more income (1).

To keep the school going (1).

No

Desire to maintain an all girl school (13).

Lack of facilities and poor location for coeducational school (7).

Against change because the curriculum is the problem, not the issue of a girls' school (3).

9. Do you think that Mercy High should be relocated in a western section of the City of Omaha? Yes No Do not know

Yes

Additional space and facilities (6).

Additional student gain (3).

Move to College of Saint Mary (1).

No

Prefer central location (23).

Girls school needed (2).

Other negative reasons (10).

Question 9. (cont.)

No (cont.)

Good facilities at this location (1).

Wants college prep courses, curriculum change (1).

10. Do you think that Mercy High should merge with another Catholic secondary school? Yes No Do not know

Yes

If inadequate operation continues (4).

To keep tuition down and help financially (2).

If standards maintained (1).

If school remains at the same location (3).

With another all girls' school (2).

No

Supportive of Mercy's traditions and educational quality (7).

Wants a girls' school (1).

Keep Mercy as is (2).

11. Do you think that Mercy High and the College of St. Mary should develop a joint program emphasizing a college preparation curriculum for retroactive or dual credit? Yes No Do not know

Yes

Support merger (3).

For educational quality improvement (15).

For facility improvement (3).

For increased student numbers (4).

No

Against merger (3).

Against exclusive college prep (2).

Feels College of St. Mary curriculum is lacking (3).

College of St. Mary too expensive (1).

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM SURVEY OF
MERCY HIGH STUDENTS^{1/}

7. What do you feel needs to be changed, or introduced, in order to make Mercy High a better school? Please explain.

Improve quality of faculty, administration (39).

Improve quality of education; better class choices (58).

Upgrade physical facilities and equipment (19).

Relax Restrictions-uniforms, passes detentions (33).

Lower tuition (18).

Keep Mercy as it is (14).

Human Relationships (80) including :

Improve faculty-student relationships (10).

Get a new honor roll system (6).

End favoritism (12).

More discipline needed in classes (5).

Improve selection of students and faculty (3).

Improve smoking-non-smoking situation (4).

Various improvements (52) including:

Bring in a hot lunch program (11)..

Better public relations (5).

Attract more students (5).

Go coed (5).

^{1/} Since respondents may have given more than one reason in answer to a question, they were often listed under more than one category head. Thus, adding the totals for each category will not give the total number of respondents. This also holds true for all other questions and respondent groups.

10. Would you advocate that Mercy High School continue to operate as an all girl school with its current curriculum and at its current location?

Yes

Like all girls (42).

Like location (22).

Unique qualities; traditions at Mercy (25).

Like size (2).

Like curriculum (5).

Like Mercy as is (30).

Increase enrollment (3).

No

Improve curriculum (21).

Tuition too high/financial problems (5).

Better public relations needed (3).

Increase enrollment (1).

Go coeducational (20).

Make some change (7).

Move (14).

Need new building (4).

11. Do you think that Mercy High should change from an all girl school to a coeducational school?

Yes

Go coeducational (7).

Good location (1).

Need new building and grounds (2).

Need a change (1).

Will add to enrollment (14).

Question 11. (cont.)

Yes (cont.)

Will help financially (6).

Only to keep the school going (1).

Will add to curriculum and activities (3).

No

Likes all girls (15).

Boys won't come to Mercy (5).

Against change (2).

No facilities to go coeducational (2).

Would destroy Mercy's traditions and uniqueness (17).

12. Do you think that Mercy High should be relocated in a western section of the City of Omaha?

Yes

Move west (5).

Bad location, move somewhere (2).

Expensive to move (3).

For more room and a better building (4).

Will help enrollment (6).

Will build image (3).

No

Move will cause transportation problems; Mercy serves neighborhood girls (15).

Other schools in West Omaha; like present location (19).

Against relocation (5).

Doesn't think location matters (3).

13. Do you think that Mercy High should merge with another Catholic secondary school?

Yes

Would help economically (6).

For merger (8).

For a new location (2).

Merge only with a girl's school (5).

Would help expand enrollment (13).

Who to merge with (3).

No

Likes Mercy as is, merger would ruin traditions (18).

Against merger (4).

Against coed (1).

14. Do you think that Mercy High and the College of St. Mary should develop a joint program emphasizing a college preparation curriculum for retroactive or dual credit?

Yes

Good for some students (14).

Good for curriculum (7).

Supportive of program (5).

Will bring in more students (2).

Would bring better facilities (2).

Yes, if tuition is kept down (2).

Yes, if credit is acceptable at other colleges (2).

No

Don't like College of St. Mary, or fear pressure to go there (9).

Don't want to go to all girl college (5).

Against exclusive college prep, and college work in high school (3).