

Bishop Walsh adopts new administrative model

CUMBERLAND – Bishop Walsh School in Cumberland has recently adopted a president-principal administrative model, joining a growing list of Catholic high schools in the Archdiocese of Baltimore that have done the same.

Of the 21 high schools in the archdiocese, 12 already employ a president-principal model. The John Carroll School in Bel Air announced this year it will be switching to the two-pronged leadership approach next school year and other schools are considering it.

Sister Phyllis McNally, S.S.N.D., is the new president of Bishop Walsh and Sam Torres is the new principal of the pre-K-12 school. Sister Mary Francita Hobbs, S.S.N.D., will serve as assistant principal with primary responsibility for overseeing the pre-K-8 program.

A major reason Bishop Walsh made the leadership transition was to improve its development and marketing programs, according to Sister Phyllis.

“We need to put our school out front so more people know about it,” said Sister Phyllis, who previously served as longtime principal of Bishop Walsh.

The school has developed a partnership with Frostburg State University, where five graduate students have worked with school leaders in developing a new marketing plan for Bishop Walsh, Sister Phyllis said.

The new president said she will be focused on recruiting financial support from a wide network of sources throughout the region and beyond. The goal is to keep tuition affordable, improve facilities and enhance the educational program.

“We’ve never cultivated our alumni,” she said. “That’s going to be a major part of securing our future.”

The president said she will work closely with the school’s development office in

seeking grants and working with foundations and corporations.

Mr. Torres, the first lay person to serve as principal of Bishop Walsh, will be responsible for the overall day-to-day operation of the school. The former assistant principal for the high school, he will directly oversee the high school.

Mr. Torres said the new approach to governance will allow the president the time she needs to focus on securing the school's future.

"We will work hand in glove," he said.

There are currently 585 students at Bishop Walsh. Although the overall number of students has declined over the years as the population of young people in Allegany County has dropped, Sister Phyllis pointed out that the school has consistently enrolled about 5 percent of the student population in Allegany County. There are currently 9,800 students countywide, she said.

Bishop Walsh, located on Haystack Mountain, can support a maximum enrollment of 650 students, Sister Phyllis said.

Bishop P. Francis Malooly, western vicar, visited the school May 4 to lead an installation ceremony for the new leadership team.