

**Contact: Rachel DeGirolamo**  
440.845.2444 ext. 112  
rdegirolamo@paduafranciscan.com

6740 State Road  
Parma, OH 44134  
Phone 440.845.2444  
Fax 440.971.0575



**Padua Franciscan High School**

# Press Release

## Padua Becomes First & Only Internationally Accredited High School in U.S.

PARMA, Ohio – (August 15, 2023) Padua Franciscan High School has earned the distinction of becoming the first school in the U.S. to earn full accreditation from the *American International Accreditation Association of Schools and Colleges*. The accreditation showcases Padua’s academic strength and provides students with opportunities to elevate our MedTrack® and MyTrack® programs.

As an AIAASC-accredited school, Padua is now entitled to many resources to improve students’ education and curriculum, such as access to the Open Educational Resources Hub, which contains thousands of lesson plans, templates and other resources for faculty. Padua has the opportunity to partner and collaborate with dozens of AIAASC-accredited schools from 13 countries worldwide. This distinction is expected to put Padua on the map and grow its international and foreign exchange program, as well.

The accreditation application process is an intense, year-long endeavor, according to Padua’s Vice Principal Elizabeth Oles Smith, who served as the lead on this project. “I am incredibly proud of the work and effort my team put forth to make this accreditation dream a reality for the Padua Community,” said Oles Smith. “Partnering with AIAASC will open up many new opportunities for both our students and faculty, and will continue to strengthen our already exceptional academic program. This distinction puts Padua on the map. We’re ready to show the world who we are and what we can do.”

AIAASC is a non-profit that accredits schools (both K-12 and colleges) across the globe. The organization is dedicated to increasing quality education by applying rigorous quality standards and validating the educational quality of schools through on-site reviews conducted by evaluators.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, accreditation is the recognition that an institution maintains standards requisite for its graduates to gain admission to other reputable institutions of higher learning or to achieve credentials for professional practice. The goal of accreditation is to ensure that education provided by institutions meets acceptable levels of American educational quality.

Padua President Dave Stec is optimistic about the positive changes that will follow this accreditation. “I am so grateful for the vision, guidance, and support of AIAASC,” Stec said. “The impact of this distinction opens new doors to our global world and strengthens both the worldview of our students and access to a new depth of education for all involved. This partnership brings Padua to a next level of global understanding and provides access to dynamic academic platforms.”

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**School Background:**

Padua Franciscan High School is located at 6740 State Road in Parma, Ohio. Padua is a Catholic, college-prep, co-educational school with 750 students. Padua was founded by Franciscans in 1961 and bases its educational philosophy on the life and spirituality of Saint Francis of Assisi. The school's mission is to develop the unique talents of each student, while giving them the skills they need to succeed in college and beyond.

**About AIAASC:**

The AIAASC Accreditation Standards closely monitor the mission and vision of the school, how the school builds curriculum, the certifications and qualifications of the staff, the operating procedures, the financial strength of the school, the school improvement plan, and other such key elements that demonstrate the accredited school is a quality, well-functioning school and follows the best proven practices of the finest schools. The AIAASC Accreditation Standards were developed specifically for international schools that indicate high-quality educational practices. These standards and indicators should be used by the school to self-assess their practices and programs to ensure that they are providing excellent education for all students. A full accreditation visit is conducted by our team of highly-competent volunteers who use these standards and indicators in addition to the school's self-assessment to evaluate, provide feedback for, and verify the school's improvement plan. Schools that continually engage in self-assessment and set goals based on these standards and indicators will ensure that they are providing superb educational program for all students.