

Report to the Board of Saint Ann's School

Some portions of this report are sensitive and graphic. It is not intended for children.

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I. Executive Summary

Debevoise & Plimpton LLP (“Debevoise”) was retained by the Board of Trustees (the “Board”) of Saint Ann’s School (“Saint Ann’s” or the “School”) in July 2024 to investigate the hiring and tenure of former Saint Ann’s teacher Winston Nguyen. Saint Ann’s also asked Debevoise to review the School’s policies and practices relating to the hiring and supervision of employees more broadly. This Executive Summary includes an overview of Debevoise’s Key Findings,¹ which are described in detail in Sections V–VII.

Saint Ann’s hired Nguyen in August 2020 while the School was preparing for the 2020–2021 academic year. The School urgently needed to hire short-term staff members to assist with the logistics of remote and hybrid learning given the Covid-19 pandemic. Maureen “Mo” Yusuf-Morales, who had recently been hired as the Head of the Upper Middle School, recommended Nguyen to Melissa Kantor, then-Dean of Faculty. At the outset, Yusuf-Morales informed Kantor that Nguyen had a criminal record, and Kantor informed then-Head of School Vince Tompkins in writing that Nguyen had a conviction relating to a “financial issue with his prior employer.” The following morning, a Saturday, Tompkins authorized Kantor to hire Nguyen without any record of further inquiry about the nature of Nguyen’s crime. Kantor spoke with two references provided by Nguyen before offering him the position, but there is no evidence that Kantor or anyone else took any further steps to learn more about his conviction at that point.

Although Nguyen was initially hired for a temporary “Classroom Assistant” role, at the outset, Kantor and Yusuf-Morales discussed their hope that Nguyen might have a future teaching

¹ The facts in this Executive Summary and throughout these Key Findings are derived from witness interviews conducted by and contemporaneous documents reviewed by the Debevoise investigative team, as described further in Section II.

role. He began working before the School received the results of his background check and quickly was viewed as critical to the effort to open Saint Ann's during a difficult time.

In early September 2020, after Nguyen had already begun working on campus, the results of Nguyen's formal background check showed that he had pled guilty in 2019 to several charges, including endangering the welfare of an incompetent or physically disabled person. The endangerment charge was new information to Tompkins and Kantor, but they did not make any changes to Nguyen's employment or supervision or notify anyone else at the School about his criminal history.

In October 2020, Saint Ann's offered Nguyen a full-time salaried position for the remainder of the 2020–2021 school year. At no point during Nguyen's first year did Saint Ann's leadership inform the School community about Nguyen's criminal history beyond certain core administrators. Tompkins and Kantor told investigators that this was an intentional decision in order to allow people to evaluate Nguyen based on their experiences with him rather than on his past. During the 2021–2022 school year, Nguyen began teaching math and had an administrative role in the Upper Middle School office. Saint Ann's did not communicate Nguyen's conviction to the Chair of the Math Department at the time she accepted him as a teacher in the department or to the families of students in his classes. Even after students learned the details of his criminal history on the internet, Tompkins emailed only the families of students in that class to address Nguyen's history and did not inform the larger School community, including any families of students enrolled in Nguyen's classes in subsequent school years.

Throughout Nguyen's tenure at Saint Ann's, witnesses observed Nguyen crossing professional boundaries, though not all witnesses identified his behaviors as crossing boundaries at the time. For example, Nguyen claimed a space near the Upper Middle School office as his

own personal office, stocked it with snacks, and allowed certain students to spend time alone in his office, in violation of School policies. Nguyen bought Starbucks for certain students and gave gifts to students. Nguyen tutored numerous Saint Ann’s students, often for free, both on and off campus. From the outset, Nguyen had keys to the main School building and spent excessive amounts of time at the School, kept his clothes and belongings there, and at times even slept overnight at Saint Ann’s.

In August 2023, administrators learned that Nguyen was hosting an unauthorized math “boot camp” at the School. Administrators, including the new Head of School Kenyatte Reid, considered terminating Nguyen, but instead placed him on a performance improvement plan (“PIP”) that emphasized boundaries, removed him from his administrative role in the Upper Middle School, and revoked certain credentials to School databases. In February 2024, the Chair of the Math Department learned that Nguyen used artificial intelligence to write his student evaluations. In light of Nguyen’s prior infractions and challenges, Reid and the department chair did not renew Nguyen’s contract for the 2024–2025 school year.

In February 2024, Saint Ann’s learned from certain high school students that they had been the victims of a catfishing scheme on Snapchat involving solicitation and distribution of inappropriate photographs. School employees told investigators that given how frequently inappropriate behavior occurs on social media in general, Saint Ann’s does not have a practice of informing the community of specific social media incidents. In this instance, administrators did not believe that the account was connected to Saint Ann’s and did not alert students, families, or employees about the incident.

In April and May 2024, other administrators separately learned of similar catfishing on Snapchat involving middle school students. Once again, Saint Ann's leadership did not inform the community about the incidents.

On June 6, 2024, Nguyen was arrested, and on July 25, 2024, he was charged by the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office with various charges, including use of a child in a sexual performance, promoting a sexual performance by a child, and disseminating indecent material to minors. Prior to his arrest, Saint Ann's leadership had no awareness that he was under investigation and did not suspect him of involvement in the Snapchat misconduct.

Importantly, despite his boundary crossing, the investigation did not find evidence that Nguyen had a physical relationship with any Saint Ann's students. No other employees have subsequently been discovered to have criminal records. The investigation also found that Saint Ann's administrators were committed to students' wellbeing; however, in some instances, they prioritized teachers including Nguyen over the concerns of students and their families about the teacher's background or behavior.

This document contains Debevoise's key findings and will principally cover five topics: (1) the circumstances surrounding Nguyen's hiring and promotion at Saint Ann's; (2) Nguyen's conduct while employed at Saint Ann's and any knowledge of Saint Ann's administration and faculty of Nguyen crossing professional boundaries; (3) Saint Ann's hiring, training, and supervision practices generally, with particular focus on employees moving from role to role within Saint Ann's; (4) the current culture of communication within Saint Ann's, including how faculty raise concerns, how administrators communicate internally, and how the School communicates with families; and (5) recommendations for how Saint Ann's policies should be

further strengthened to improve the hiring process and prevent future instances of boundary crossing.

The vast majority of witnesses who spoke with investigators, even those who shared specific concerns, expressed a deep appreciation for Saint Ann's approach to education and the Saint Ann's community. Debevoise has observed that the leadership of Saint Ann's is committed to ensuring that the disturbing circumstances that led to this review become an opportunity to learn and further improve the School and the Saint Ann's community.

II. Scope of Investigation

On June 14, 2024, the Board established a Working Group to review the School's policies and practices of hiring, mentoring, and managing employees (the "Working Group"). On July 11, 2024, the Working Group sent an email to the Saint Ann's community announcing the Debevoise investigation. The email encouraged anyone with information related to Nguyen's time at Saint Ann's or any related concerns that would assist the investigation to contact Debevoise at SaintAnnsReview@debevoise.com. On August 6, 2024, the Working Group sent an additional email encouraging the community to speak with Debevoise and emphasizing Debevoise's role as a fact finder, separate from the Board and the Saint Ann's administration. In addition to speaking with those who reached out to Debevoise, Debevoise contacted people directly who were thought to have relevant information.²

² Though Debevoise's investigative work was largely complete by September, we were delayed in finalizing our investigation and report because one former administrator, Yusuf-Morales, did not agree to be interviewed until the end of October.

In total, Debevoise interviewed 68 individuals, including 36 current and former faculty and staff, 28 current and former Saint Ann's families, and others.³ Debevoise spoke to everyone who requested an interview, and the selection of additional witnesses to interview was made entirely by Debevoise. Debevoise did not share the identities of any witnesses who reached out to investigators with the Board or the Saint Ann's administration.

Debevoise obtained documents from Saint Ann's and other sources, and Saint Ann's was cooperative with our requests. A total of over 30,000 documents were reviewed, including emails, personnel files, and policies.

The investigators carefully analyzed all information in order to make their determinations about the credibility of what they learned. The investigators considered, among other things, whether the information was provided by someone with direct knowledge, whether there were multiple sources for the information, and whether contemporaneous documents supported a finding.

III. Limitations

The findings in this document are limited to information that the investigators could obtain through voluntary interviews and documentary evidence. In some instances, individuals contacted by the investigators did not respond to our emails or declined to speak with Debevoise. Debevoise requested to speak with Nguyen, whose counsel refused our request for an interview. Both the current and former Heads of School voluntarily met with us and answered our questions.

³ Many witnesses also discussed topics that were not related to Nguyen. We have incorporated those topics into our findings to the extent that they were relevant to our findings about Saint Ann's policies and procedures, but do not address each topic specifically in these Key Findings.

IV. Naming Conventions and Confidentiality

In deciding whether to name in this document the individuals involved in Nguyen’s hiring, promotion, supervision, and retention, as well as the individuals aware of Nguyen’s violation of boundaries, Debevoise considered the individual’s body of knowledge, position of authority, and supervisory role.

Many of the individuals who agreed to be interviewed requested anonymity, and we have honored those requests in conducting the investigation and in preparing this document for all witnesses who were not directly involved in Nguyen’s hiring or supervision. In reporting our findings, Debevoise is sensitive to the fact that a number of the witnesses with whom we spoke are still employed by Saint Ann’s. We have not reported on certain facts if they were not necessary to our findings and their disclosure might impact reputations, damage current and future personal working relationships, or make the identity of the reporter apparent.

V. Winston Nguyen

A. Nguyen’s Hiring and Positions at Saint Ann’s

1. Interviewing, Hiring, and Onboarding

During the summer of 2020, as Saint Ann’s was trying to open with hybrid instruction, many teachers expressed a fear of appearing in person before vaccinations were widely available. Then-Dean of Faculty Kantor led a hiring effort for temporary employees to help monitor those students who came to school in person. On August 6, 2020, Yusuf-Morales, the newly-hired Head of the Upper Middle School, recommended Nguyen to Kantor, describing him as her “mentee,” a “long time friend,” and “brilliant.” Yusuf-Morales informed Kantor that Nguyen had a criminal record, but said that he was “reformed.”

Yusuf-Morales had known Nguyen since approximately 2006 when they both served as facilitators at a conference for students and employees of independent schools. Thereafter, Yusuf-Morales and Nguyen both worked at an educational program in New York, Breakthrough New York.

At Breakthrough New York, Yusuf-Morales found Nguyen to be a strong teacher who was good with children. She also saw that he was highly organized and effective at handling administrative tasks. Nguyen and Yusuf-Morales had a friendly professional relationship but did not frequently interact outside of work.

Nguyen and Yusuf-Morales were not in touch for several years, and when they got back in contact, Yusuf-Morales was aware that Nguyen was working for an elderly family as a home health aide. At some point, Nguyen knew he was going to be arrested for defrauding the couple and told Yusuf-Morales that he had stolen money from the family and went to jail. Yusuf-Morales maintained a friendship with Nguyen after he served his sentence and believed that he was rehabilitated.

Following the conversation with Yusuf-Morales in early August 2020, Kantor shared Nguyen's resume with another member of the hiring team and encouraged the employee to interview Nguyen; the employee only knew that Nguyen came recommended by Yusuf-Morales and was not told about Nguyen's conviction before or after the interview.

On Friday, August 7, 2020, after Nguyen's interview, the employee expressed a desire to hire Nguyen. At 3:50 pm, Kantor emailed then-Head of School Vince Tompkins, copying Yusuf-Morales, about her desire to hire Nguyen as a Classroom Assistant for the Middle and High

Schools.⁴ Kantor noted that Nguyen was “highly recommend[ed]” by Yusuf-Morales and was well-liked by the employee who interviewed him. She also informed Tompkins that Nguyen had a criminal record that “has nothing to do with children (it was a financial issue with his previous employer).” Kantor’s email did not specify the charges, the circumstances of the crime, or how recently the crime had occurred. Yusuf-Morales added that Nguyen was also a diversity, equity, and inclusion (“DEI”) facilitator and was “great with kids and can teach almost anything.” Another senior employee noted that since the conviction was allegedly related to money and Nguyen’s role would have no financial responsibilities, his background was “likely less of an issue.” At 9:09 am on Saturday, August 8, Tompkins replied, “You can proceed.”

On August 10 and 11, 2020, Kantor spoke with two references Nguyen provided: a reverend from his church, and a public defender that he knew, both of whom met Nguyen after his prior arrest. In particular, the reverend told Kantor that Nguyen was very devoted to the church, and that while he had committed a terrible crime, the reverend believed that Nguyen was rehabilitated. On August 12, Kantor formally offered Nguyen the job. No one at Saint Ann’s took any steps to verify the employment or education credentials listed on his resume.

Nor did anyone at Saint Ann’s take any steps to learn more about the specific nature of his criminal history. Tompkins told investigators that at some point he had Googled Nguyen, but could not recall whether he did so before or after authorizing Nguyen’s hiring. A Google search would have revealed a series of articles in the *New York Post* and other publications about Nguyen’s 2017 arrest and subsequent guilty plea for defrauding a couple in their 90s—one of whom was blind—of \$300,000 while he worked as their home health aide. Tompkins and

⁴ In the summer and fall of 2020, the job title “Classroom Assistant” reflected a temporary role assisting with the logistics necessary to open the School with a hybrid learning model.

Kantor both told investigators that they did not talk to Nguyen about his criminal conduct at the time of hiring or any time thereafter. Thus, the only individual at Saint Ann's who may have discussed Nguyen's criminal conduct with him before he was offered a job was Yusuf-Morales, who had no formal role in his hiring. Kantor was eager to onboard Nguyen due to the challenges associated with opening the School during the pandemic, and on August 20, Kantor asked to "fast track" Nguyen's onboarding so that he could get access to the School's information system, Veracross, and coordinate the effort to send supplies to students. Nguyen began working on campus on August 24. At that time, Nguyen had been fingerprinted for a background check, but his results had not yet been provided to the School.

On September 3, 2020, Saint Ann's received the results of Nguyen's background check, which showed that he had pled guilty to three felonies: grand larceny in the second degree, scheme to defraud in the first degree, and endangering the welfare of an incompetent or physically disabled person in the first degree. Based on our investigation, this was the first time that anyone at the School (apart from the information that Yusuf-Morales had) was aware that Nguyen's criminal history involved felony-level convictions and included a non-financial conviction for endangering the welfare of a vulnerable person. One senior employee strongly discouraged Tompkins from hiring Nguyen from a risk-perspective, and told Tompkins in an email that it was up to him to consider whether to keep Nguyen on in light of "the reputational risk for the school given the highly public nature of the charges." The additional details regarding Nguyen's criminal history did not change Tompkins and Kantor's view that Nguyen's charges were "financial" in nature, and we find that Tompkins and Kantor were of the view that Nguyen's conviction, having nothing to do with children, meant that people at the School would not be at risk.

The only individuals who were aware of Nguyen’s criminal history in late August and early September 2020 were Tompkins, Kantor, Yusuf-Morales, and individuals involved in the background check. Tompkins and Kantor decided not to disclose Nguyen’s history to other individuals at the School because they wanted Nguyen to have a “second chance” and to be permitted to enter the Saint Ann’s community without preconceived judgments about his past. After another administrator Googled Nguyen and approached Kantor with questions about his convictions, Kantor and Tompkins decided to tell the other members of the core administration. Kantor and Tompkins also decided that individuals supervising Nguyen should be informed of his criminal background, but that otherwise, the information should not be proactively shared with other members of the Saint Ann’s community. Accordingly, Nguyen’s criminal history was not communicated with the broader community, and indeed was not even communicated to all of Nguyen’s supervisors.

2. *Evolving Roles and Responsibilities*

Emails from September 2020 show that certain faculty and administrators viewed Nguyen as “an angel from heaven.” He was given a key to the School within his first few weeks at Saint Ann’s, which very few staff members had. Nguyen soon began assuming responsibility for additional administrative tasks, such as coordinating class schedules, overseeing Covid test results, and proctoring standardized exams. Witnesses described him to investigators as a “workaholic” who “had his hands in everything.” There was early confusion about who would be Nguyen’s supervisor, given that he was working in many of the divisions at Saint Ann’s and it was difficult to keep track of all of his projects. In late September 2020, Kantor became his official supervisor.

Emails show that Saint Ann’s had been more lenient in assessing the credentials of candidates for short-term Covid-related positions in the summer of 2020 on the assumption that

they would not have significant interactions with students beyond supporting hybrid learning logistics. However, Nguyen was placed in a student-facing role in his third week at Saint Ann's when he began leading a sixth grade Community Meeting section.⁵ He also began tutoring students in math, English, and history within his first month at the School at the recommendation of Yusuf-Morales and other administrators, and also began facilitating an affinity group. In early October 2020, Kantor suggested that Nguyen take over two math classes. Tompkins and Associate Head of School Jason Asbury both responded that it was not the right year to put Nguyen in the classroom because, in Asbury's words, it might "put Winston in an awkward position" if students and parents were to learn about his criminal history. The decision not to give Nguyen a teaching role in fall 2020 seems to have been made out of a desire to protect Nguyen's privacy and avoid community backlash.

In October 2020, Kantor proactively looked for a longer-term position for Nguyen. Because of Nguyen's criminal history, School leadership put in place a guardrail that Nguyen should not have any access to School finances, and Tompkins authorized giving Nguyen a full-time role as Special Assistant for Covid Related Projects for the remainder of the 2020–2021 school year on the condition that Nguyen not have any financial responsibilities or access to School credit cards. However, we know of no actual controls put in place to monitor Nguyen, and School leadership did not inform Nguyen or his supervisors of that restriction or take any steps to enforce it—and indeed, Tompkins later learned that Nguyen had requested to use a School credit card and did not do anything with that information. Once again, the administration did not inform the wider Saint Ann's community about Nguyen's past.

⁵ Community Meeting was a mandatory weekly session for all students in the Upper Middle School facilitated by Saint Ann's faculty.

3. *Nguyen's Transition to the Classroom*

In early 2021, Kantor and possibly Yusuf-Morales began reaching out to the chairs of several academic departments about allowing Nguyen to teach one class during the upcoming 2021–2022 school year. Some witnesses recalled hearing that Kantor and Yusuf-Morales were “aggressively” lobbying department chairs to find a position for Nguyen. One department chair, aware of Nguyen’s record, was not comfortable and declined to consider Nguyen for a position. Kantor then encouraged the Chair of the Math Department to consider making Nguyen a math teacher. Nguyen excelled at teaching a sample class, and the Chair of the Math Department, unaware of his conviction, hired him to teach one section of middle school algebra for the 2021–2022 school year. Despite the core administration’s initial plan to inform Nguyen’s supervisors of his criminal convictions, Kantor did not tell the Chair of the Math Department before or after he was hired to teach in her department. Other than teaching one sample class, School leadership did not arrange any additional interview process, background check, or reference check for Nguyen to move from administrative assistant to teacher. While the Chair of the Math Department felt pressured by Kantor to consider Nguyen, she did not feel pressured to hire him, and made the decision based on his merit—but unaware of his history. The Chair of the Math Department learned of Nguyen’s criminal history from another teacher during the summer of 2021 and was furious with Kantor for not disclosing the information when she suggested that he should teach in the Math Department, but still permitted Nguyen to teach a math class that fall.

During the 2021–2022 school year, Nguyen was a full-time Special Assistant to the Administrative Team and taught a section of eighth grade algebra. He also facilitated a seventh

grade Community Meeting section and a group of students for Morning Meeting.⁶ Despite his new role in the classroom and the administration’s initial hesitation to put him in a teaching role because students would invariably learn of his history, Saint Ann’s leadership did not proactively tell students, parents, or faculty in the Math Department about Nguyen’s criminal convictions. To the extent people discovered Nguyen’s history on their own, they were told it was a “financial crime” and that he deserved a second chance.

In early October 2021, students in Nguyen’s math class Googled their new teacher and discovered his convictions and the circumstances surrounding the charges. Students were shocked and disturbed to learn that their teacher had taken advantage of vulnerable seniors. When students confronted him in class, Nguyen discussed his criminal history, explaining that he committed his crimes because he felt the need to buy things for his friends in order to be liked by them.

Multiple witnesses told investigators that students who expressed that they were upset or talked about Nguyen’s conviction with other students were “shamed” by Yusuf-Morales for not supporting restorative justice or for spreading rumors. One student, who did not want to remain in Nguyen’s class, was required to have a one-on-one conversation with Nguyen to work through the student’s concerns and ultimately remained in Nguyen’s class.

On October 5, 2021, Tompkins emailed the families of students in Nguyen’s class, choosing again not to inform the broader Saint Ann’s community of Nguyen’s history. In his email to families, Tompkins stated that Nguyen had pled guilty to a “financial crime.” The email did not mention the endangerment charge to which Nguyen also pled guilty. Tompkins’ email

⁶ Morning Meeting was an initially weekly, later monthly, small group meeting aimed at building community as well as exposing students to critical digital media workshops, social-emotional learning, and study skills.

also assured families that the School had been aware of Nguyen’s history from the start and had “discussed it at length with Winston” before hiring him. However, no one involved in hiring Nguyen engaged in any probative discussions of his criminal history with him at the time of hiring or any time thereafter.

After Nguyen’s class learned of his convictions, he continued teaching algebra and working in the Upper Middle School office. During the 2022–2023 school year, Nguyen taught a second middle school math class as well as an elective seminar titled “Crime and Punishment.” The seminar examined criminal punishment—whether, how, and why society punishes someone who has broken the law—through philosophical, legal, and personal perspectives. Nguyen also began supervising the middle school newspaper, *The Owl*, and facilitating a “non-affinity group” called “identity exploration.” During the 2023–2024 school year, Nguyen was removed from his administrative role in the Upper Middle School office (as explained in greater detail in Section V.B.3, below) and took on a third math class, this one at the high school level. Throughout his tenure as a teacher, Nguyen continued to tutor students in math and chaperoned various events and field trips, including an all-night event at the School.

By most accounts, Nguyen was an engaging math teacher, and many families reported that their children’s interest and performance in the subject improved while in Nguyen’s class. However, other parents told investigators that external measures of their children’s math capabilities, such as standardized tests or private tutors, did not align with Nguyen’s positive reports of their progress. Witnesses told investigators that, in retrospect, overstating students’ math skills was consistent with Nguyen’s other efforts to curry favor with students and their parents.

B. Nguyen's Conduct at Saint Ann's

From his initial hiring in 2020 to his termination in 2024, Nguyen pushed boundaries at the School. While our investigation did not reveal any evidence of physical interactions between Nguyen and students, many of Nguyen's actions violated the School's policies, involved overly-familiar and excessive interactions with students or were designed to ingratiate himself in order to gain trust and access.

1. *Professional Boundaries*

Nguyen immediately gained a reputation for spending an excessive amount of time at Saint Ann's. By October 2020, Kantor estimated that Nguyen was working close to 100 hours per week, and in her evaluation of Nguyen in February 2021, she noted that she frequently saw him still in the building or reentering the building at 7 pm. In October 2021, a witness told Kantor that he had seen Nguyen in pajamas at the School, and Nguyen admitted that he slept in the building because he worked a lot and lived far from the School. When Kantor confronted Nguyen, he said that he had fallen asleep working, and Kantor emphasized that he was not allowed to sleep in the school. However, evidence suggests that Nguyen slept in the School often, including after being told not to do so. One witness heard that a faculty member arriving on campus on a Saturday morning seemed to have startled Nguyen, and contemporaneous documents show that another faculty member encountered Nguyen alone in the School on a Saturday evening when the faculty member came to set up an event. Several witnesses told investigators that Nguyen had several sets of spare clothes and shoes in his office.

Nguyen also claimed spaces for himself at the School that he had not been assigned. First, during the 2021–2022 school year, Nguyen took over an unused classroom, which he decorated and called his office. The following year, he used an annex of the Upper Middle

School office as his personal office and stocked a supply closet down the hall with snacks. Nguyen allowed certain high school students to spend time in his office when he was not there, including times when the students should have been in class, and gave students the key to his office. He also allowed students to use social media on their phones in his office, which constituted a violation of School policy. Multiple individuals expressed concerns to Yusuf-Morales and others about how Nguyen's office was being used. Witnesses reported various reactions by Yusuf-Morales to the concerns, ranging from appreciation to dismissal, but the investigators credit numerous recollections from witnesses that Yusuf-Morales believed that because the students who spent time in Nguyen's office were predominantly students of color, taking Nguyen's office away from him would be unnecessarily punitive to Nguyen and the students. Ultimately, Nguyen was permitted to keep his office for the remainder of the year and the students were provided a different location in which to spend their time.

Nguyen was seemingly unable or unwilling to stop taking on responsibilities and participating in school activities, even when instructed to pull back. In one instance, Nguyen gave administrative approval of a student's permission slip, which was not within his authority to do. In another, Nguyen was told he was not needed to chaperone an event and told not to attend; he appeared at the event anyway.

Given the many roles that Nguyen played at Saint Ann's, some witnesses were concerned that Nguyen was using the information he learned in one role in other contexts and was not discrete with information. For example, Nguyen had access to Kantor's calendar in order to assist her in scheduling time to observe classes. On one occasion, Kantor learned that Nguyen was talking about a meeting on Kantor's calendar with another colleague. Another witness told

investigators that Nguyen discussed confidential aspects of the faculty evaluation process in front of a group.

Kantor and other senior administrators attempted to limit the projects that Nguyen was taking on so that they could better supervise him, and instructed administrators to check with them before reaching out to Nguyen with tasks. Maintaining boundaries and being more discerning in what work to take on were recurring themes in Nguyen's evaluations. When Asbury or Kantor confronted Nguyen about assuming responsibilities outside of his role, he would either rationalize his actions or adjust his behavior for a short period of time before reverting to the prior conduct. According to Kantor, around the spring of 2022, after Nguyen demonstrated that he would not follow directions from Kantor and Asbury, they told Tompkins that they no longer wanted to be responsible for supervising Nguyen. Rather than terminate an employee whom two of the most senior administrators at the School felt they could not successfully supervise, Tompkins decided to limit Nguyen's responsibilities to the Upper Middle School office and Math Department, and Yusuf-Morales and the Chair of the Math Department were solely responsible for his supervision going forward.

2. *Boundaries with Students*

Kantor and Asbury recognized that Nguyen was unwilling or unable to follow rules or maintain professional boundaries. However, no one in the administration considered that Nguyen was at risk of also crossing personal boundaries with students. Kantor told investigators that she viewed Nguyen as a risk to the School, but not a risk to children, although we know of no efforts taken to confirm that Nguyen's interactions with students were appropriate.

Nguyen was known for giving out snacks to students and staff from the "snack closet" or the "candy closet." He also gave out snacks during classes, including pencil cases full of candy. Several witnesses told investigators that Nguyen also brought students off campus for coffee and

meals, including bringing members of his affinity group out for ice cream or to a high-end bakery. In the spring of 2024, after learning that his contract would not be renewed for the 2024–2025 school year, Nguyen arranged a dinner with students at an upscale restaurant.

Nguyen went so far as to bring food to students' homes unannounced. Witnesses told investigators about two different instances in which Nguyen brought desserts to students' homes without being invited or warning families that he would be coming. One witness was particularly alarmed because they did not know how Nguyen learned their address.

Nguyen also gave out gifts and prizes to his students. In 2022, he had custom sweatshirts made for his class as a reward for doing their homework. Witnesses told investigators that they saw the lavish gifts as problematic at the time and thought the behavior was consistent with the prioritization of gifts and status that had led to his prior financial crimes.

Documents reveal Nguyen's attempts to ingratiate himself with particular students. He exchanged hundreds of emails with certain students: some of these emails related to class assignments or attendance; many others involved Nguyen offering to bring students drinks from Starbucks or snacks. On more than one occasion, Nguyen or the students exchanged links to videos from TikTok that were related to math or reminded them of each other. Nguyen frequently attended sports games on campus or at other schools and watched live streams of the games. He also leveraged his administrative access to the School's Veracross system to share information with selected students without permission. Nguyen frequently talked about select students with other staff, and one witness described Nguyen as being "obsessed." However, witnesses had no concern at the time that Nguyen was engaging in sexual or romantic relationships with these students, and we have seen no evidence of such behavior.

a) Tutoring

Nguyen tutored numerous students in math, sometimes off campus during nights and weekends and during late night Zoom calls. Nguyen texted with students he tutored (in violation of School policy prohibiting faculty from texting students), met them for dinner at restaurants, invited them to cultural events, and gave them gifts. Based on our review of documents and the level of interaction, we find that Nguyen was seeking an inappropriate level of closeness and familiarity with his students.

b) Social Media

Nguyen also interacted with students online in violation of School policy. In April 2021, Nguyen sent Yusuf-Morales an Instagram post made by a student, claiming that it had just “popped up” on his feed. However, given the functionality of Instagram and the screenshot of the post, it is more likely that Nguyen had looked up the student’s account. Yusuf-Morales told investigators that she reminded Nguyen that he should not be viewing students’ social media pages. However, other witnesses told investigators that Nguyen followed students on social media to monitor against bullying, and that Yusuf-Morales was aware that he did so. The Faculty & Staff Handbook specifically prohibits employees from following students on social media.

3. *Unsanctioned Math Camp*

Nguyen’s lack of boundaries culminated in his organization of a summer math camp that was not appropriately sanctioned by School leadership. In July 2022, on his own, Nguyen reached out to select students, inviting them to a “Pre-Season Math” program to take place at the School prior to the start of the school year. Though Nguyen had told the Chair of the Math Department that he had offered to meet with some students during pre-season to review math concepts, he had not been authorized to run a formal program or to conduct his program on

campus while the School was closed. Other than a sports coach, whom Nguyen emailed in order to coordinate the math camp's schedule with pre-season practices, and Yusuf-Morales, who believed that the Chair of the Math Department had approved the program, no one from Saint Ann's knew that Nguyen was hosting students on campus in August 2022.

In August 2023, Nguyen emailed several students, and then separately emailed their parents, about offering another year of his "program." While Nguyen had informally mentioned the idea of a camp to one administrator, Nguyen did not get any formal approval, nor were administrators aware of Nguyen's plan to offer the two-week math camp on Saint Ann's campus in August 2023. For at least one day, there was not even security present at the School while the math camp was in session.

Midway through the first week, an administrator saw Nguyen teaching the pre-season math camp and immediately escalated the issue. Several senior administrators, including Asbury, Kantor, Yusuf-Morales, and others, met with Reid—who had just started at Saint Ann's as Head of School—to discuss how to respond. Asbury expressed that Nguyen should be fired. Kantor affirmatively argued against terminating Nguyen and felt that it would be a mistake for Reid's very first act as Head of School to be firing a well-liked teacher.

Ultimately, School leadership decided to relieve Nguyen of his administrative duties in the Upper Middle School office and place him on a performance improvement plan that emphasized boundaries. Nguyen was supposed to turn in his keys to the School and limit his time at the School beyond his teaching schedule; he needed specific permission from human resources if he sought to deviate from that plan. Kantor and a human resources administrator monitored Nguyen's compliance with the terms of the PIP, and on one occasion met with Nguyen when he was seen in the building beyond his teaching hours. At the conclusion of the PIP

period, the human resources administrator informed Reid that Nguyen had successfully completed the PIP. Reid met with Nguyen to discuss the PIP in December 2023 and noted that while Nguyen had substantially complied with the PIP’s requirements, he still did not seem to appreciate what he had done wrong.

Reid later decided not to renew Nguyen’s contract for the 2024–2025 school year in early 2024, when the Chair of the Math Department learned that Nguyen had used artificial intelligence to draft his student reports. Together with the unauthorized math camp, Reid determined that Nguyen should not return to Saint Ann’s for the upcoming school year. Even after undergoing the PIP and learning that his contract would not be renewed, Nguyen occasionally chaperoned School trips and tutored students outside of class. Yusuf-Morales and other administrators continued to recommend Nguyen as a tutor to families until May 2024.

VI. Hiring, Supervision, and Retention at Saint Ann’s

Several witnesses, including administrators and parents, reported their belief that Saint Ann’s “systematically asystematic” culture made Nguyen’s hiring possible. According to witnesses and the School’s website, Saint Ann’s has historically hired teachers with expertise and passion in their fields, while traditional educational training is not a prerequisite. Once at the School, teachers are given a wide degree of latitude to design their curricula free of interference of parents, who are encouraged to “leave their children at the door” and trust Saint Ann’s to educate them.

A. Hiring and Role Shifting

1. Hiring Process

In practice, when hiring a new employee, Saint Ann’s first reviews the applicant’s resume, but does not have a practice of verifying information on the resume, such as requesting a

transcript or specific job references. The next step is one or more interviews. Saint Ann’s does not have a practice of providing guidance for interviewers, and there are no specific questions or topics that interviewers should cover in order to assess a candidate. After a successful interview, Saint Ann’s requests that the applicant provide multiple references, and the School speaks with the references provided. In most cases, Saint Ann’s does not speak with applicants’ former employers unless they are among the references provided by the applicant.⁷

Like many independent schools, Saint Ann’s does not have any formal requirements for the credentials of prospective faculty, administrators, or staff. Many faculty and parent witnesses lauded the practice of hiring experts with nontraditional backgrounds and felt that it resulted in many fantastic teachers who inspired students in their classes. However, witnesses also observed that Saint Ann’s hired some individuals to the faculty who did not have experience in teaching and did not have deep experience in the subject matter they were hired to teach.

The only written policy at Saint Ann’s related to newly-hired employees concerns background checks. For over a decade, Saint Ann’s has mandated that all prospective employees undergo a background check through the New York State Department of Education “prior to their start date.”⁸ The background check takes several weeks to process. Because new employees are typically hired in the spring for the following academic year, there is usually ample time for the background check to be processed and shared with the School before a new faculty or staff

⁷ The exception to this rule occurs when applicants have previously worked at an institution that is a member of the New York State Association of Independent Schools (“NYSAIS”), like Saint Ann’s. In those instances, Saint Ann’s reaches out to the other NYSAIS school to confirm that the applicant is not already contracted with the other school and there are no reasons why Saint Ann’s should not hire the individual.

⁸ Under New York City’s Fair Chance Act, employers cannot ask candidates about their criminal history or conduct a background check until after making a conditional offer of employment. N.Y.C. Human Rights L. §§ 750-755.

member needs to begin their role or come on campus. However, during the School's urgent effort to hire administrative support in August and September 2020, new employees were permitted to work on campus before their background checks were processed. Documents show that since 2020, there have been other employees who began working on campus before Saint Ann's received their background check results, including, in some cases, at Kantor's request.

Though the School did not always comply with the timing requirements of its background check policy, all employees have complete background checks on file and no other employees working at the School have criminal records.⁹

2. *Role-Shifting*

Based on our interviews, it is not uncommon at Saint Ann's for individuals to join the School in non-teaching roles and later transition to the faculty with minimal additional scrutiny. With Nguyen in particular, Kantor told investigators that she was comfortable hiring Nguyen because he would not be in a student-facing role and said that School leadership only considered him as a potential teacher after he had begun working at the School and had earned their trust. However, contemporaneous documents show that Kantor and Yusuf-Morales wanted Nguyen to become a teacher even before his first interview. When Kantor emailed Tompkins about Nguyen's candidacy and criminal history on August 7, 2020, she noted that Nguyen "has a degree in Classics from Columbia, which could be great down the road," and Yusuf-Morales followed up that "[h]e's great with kids and can teach almost anything." In other emails between Kantor and Yusuf-Morales in August 2020, Kantor said she would "love to have him in the

⁹ After Nguyen's arrest in June 2024, Saint Ann's required all employees who were hired before background checks were required to undergo a background check. All of the employees whom the School required to undergo a background check complied and none had any adverse results.

classroom” and that she was “confident we can get Winston hired [as a teacher] a year from now if not before.”

During the course of the investigation, documents showed and witnesses stated that when other individuals were onboarded in administrative roles, Kantor and others were already thinking about in which departments they could teach in the future. This “back door” faculty hiring process, as one witness called it, elevated several individuals to teaching roles who did not have the teaching experience or unique subject matter expertise that Saint Ann’s advertised in its teachers—Nguyen, for example, did not have a math degree and had no experience in math beyond tutoring. This approach to hiring is a longstanding practice at Saint Ann’s, and several witnesses told investigators that the process has resulted in numerous excellent teachers at the School. However, in some cases, it also resulted in a set of teachers who were brought into the classroom with little scrutiny of their public history, including prior writings and social media posts. Prospective teachers must teach a sample class and be approved by the chair of the relevant academic department, but there is no additional application, interview, reference or education check, or even an online search of the individual. Administrators told investigators that those steps were not taken because by the time someone is considered for a teaching role, the School already knows the person. However, this approach does nothing to confirm that what the School knows of the person’s past is true. Furthermore, without doing even a cursory Google search of a prospective teacher, the School may be caught unaware of public information such as articles or social media posts that students will find when they inevitably research their new teachers, as they did with Nguyen.

3. *Values-Driven Hiring*

Tompkins and Kantor decided to hire Nguyen, in part, because of their view that Saint Ann’s as an institution “believes in second chances” and hiring someone with a criminal record

was an opportunity to act in accordance with what they saw as the School's values. When Nguyen's criminal history became public knowledge, some parents and Saint Ann's employees supported the decision to hire him, on the assumption that he had been appropriately vetted, though they expressed frustration that the School had not informed the community earlier. However, other families were "horrified" to learn that the School had hired a felon who had committed a crime that violated trust. Tompkins and Kantor cited bringing Nguyen into the Saint Ann's community as an example of the School's, and their own, commitment to affording second chances.

Several witnesses reported to investigators that Nguyen appeared to be protected from criticism by senior administrators, including Tompkins, Kantor, and Yusuf-Morales, in part because his hiring was seen by those administrators as an expression of the School's progressive values. Numerous witnesses also stated that Tompkins, Kantor, and Yusuf-Morales were not receptive to issues raised by members of the faculty, and felt that raising issues might place their own reputations and careers in jeopardy. This fear was particularly acute with respect to individuals whom faculty viewed as "protected" by senior administrators because they were people of color, or, in Nguyen's case, because the School had afforded them a second chance. Multiple witnesses told investigators that they feared that they would be viewed as racist or not progressive enough if they raised a substantive concern about a person of color or individuals whose identities were touted as reflections of the School's values.

B. Supervision

1. Access to Keys

During the pandemic and in its aftermath, Saint Ann's did not have a clear record of who had access to which spaces. In theory, Saint Ann's employees are permitted to have keys to

classrooms in which they teach and division offices in which they work with the permission of their direct supervisor, while keys to sensitive areas, such as administrative offices or building entrances, require approval from Asbury. Relatively few employees have keys to the main school building, though additional keys were distributed during the pandemic. Nguyen was given a key within his first weeks at Saint Ann's in August or early September 2020.

In the fall of 2021, the School made an effort to catalogue keyholders and retrieve some of the keys that had been distributed during the pandemic, including Nguyen's key. Nguyen told facilities staff that he had returned his key to the security staff. However, the School discovered that Nguyen still had a key to the main school building as late as August 2023 in connection with his PIP. Asbury personally collected Nguyen's key to the School in late August 2023. Nguyen also turned in eleven additional keys to various offices and told administrators that the only keys he retained were to the Math Department office and his classroom. However, after his arrest, almost 30 keys to various offices and storage spaces, as well as a master key to all of the classrooms, were found among Nguyen's belongings.

2. Access to Finances

While several witnesses told investigators that the School implemented "guardrails" to prevent Nguyen from accessing School funds, it is evident that those guardrails did not exist. Most importantly, there is no evidence that Nguyen was told about the restrictions. Only one administrator took any concrete steps to prevent Nguyen from accessing School finances by periodically checking in with the School's information technology team to confirm that Nguyen had no access to financial information in the School's systems. When another teacher asked for permission to loan their School credit card to Nguyen to pay expenses, the administrator refused. However, these ad hoc checks of Nguyen's access were not systematic, and the evidence shows

that Nguyen did assist with budgets, make purchases on behalf of the School, and have access to at least one School credit card.

In July 2022, one of Nguyen's supervisors, who had not been told that Nguyen was not permitted to use School funds, sent Nguyen a photograph of a School credit card to pay for a professional development course. And while there is a section of the Faculty & Staff Handbook that discusses corporate credit cards, the policy does not prohibit employees with School-issued credit cards from sharing those cards with other employees for legitimate School-related purchases.

One witness recounted to investigators that in December 2022, Nguyen asked the witness to borrow their School credit card, ostensibly to use for a School-related purchase. The witness declined, and informed Tompkins about Nguyen's request. Though this exchange suggested that Nguyen was either unaware that he was prohibited from using School credit cards or was directly flouting the prohibition, we found no evidence that Tompkins took any action in light of that information.

3. Lack of Guidance for New Teachers

In recent years, Saint Ann's has enhanced its process for providing feedback to faculty and staff. All first-, second-, and third-year teachers and administrators receive a formal evaluation each year, and teachers and administrators who have been at the School for four or more years receive a formal evaluation at least every four years. The Dean of Faculty and department chairs also drop in unannounced to observe classes of faculty in their first three years of teaching. Nguyen received evaluations in each of his four years at the School; during the two years he worked both in the Upper Middle School office and the Math Department, he received an evaluation from each of his supervisors. All of his evaluations applauded his work ethic and his care for the students, but several also noted his need to build better professional boundaries.

C. Culture, Communication, and DEI

1. *Lack of Boundaries*

Some witnesses told investigators that Saint Ann's treats its students more like graduate students than children. At teachers' discretion, students often address faculty by their first names and are permitted to have informal interactions with their teachers; several witnesses said that it would not be unusual for students and faculty to meet at a coffee shop near the School. Multiple witnesses told investigators that this informality was a core element of what makes Saint Ann's special. Efforts to inject more rules into the School have been met with resistance from those who do not think that the School should change.

Nonetheless and importantly, Saint Ann's requires all employees to take an online training related to boundaries each year, which Nguyen completed every year. The Saint Ann's Faculty & Staff Handbook includes clear provisions outlining appropriate employee-student boundaries, including a complete prohibition on any interaction on social media between faculty and students. In recent years, the School has supplemented this training with in-person boundary training. Saint Ann's recently made the in-person boundary training mandatory, although attendance is not tracked.

Despite the School's boundary training, interviews and contemporaneous documents demonstrate that Nguyen exhibited many behaviors that constitute grooming and had inappropriately close relationships with several students that did not raise concerns at Saint Ann's. Groomers use strategies such as bribery, gifts, and extra privileges to earn the affection of children.¹⁰ Being "highly accessible around the clock" is another indicator that a groomer is

¹⁰ Samantha Craven, Sarah Brown, Elizabeth Gilchrist, *Sexual Grooming of Children: Review of Literature and Theoretical Considerations*, 12 *J. Sexual Aggression* 287, 295 (2006).

trying to immerse themselves in someone's life.¹¹ Even if School leadership did not know that Nguyen was meeting in person and via Zoom with students during nights and weekends and emailing with some students at all hours, Nguyen showed clear signs of grooming the adults at Saint Ann's by being "charming, very helpful, and [gaining] insider status."¹² Groomers "make themselves indispensable, too good to be true and will freely undertake jobs that others do not want to do."¹³ Nguyen did just that; Kantor said in an October 2020 email that "the school would close without him," and one witness described administrators' reliance on and support for Nguyen as the "Cult of Winston." Nguyen's observable behavior—giving out excessive snacks and gifts to students and staff, spending too much time at the School, and taking on any and every project in order to become an indispensable member of the School in a short time—presented serious red flags that, at a minimum, warranted taking a closer look at his interactions with students, particularly given his conviction for preying upon vulnerable persons.

The Faculty & Staff Handbook includes a policy about employee-student boundaries; however, the Handbook does not provide any details or examples about what constitutes grooming behavior or how employees can report potential grooming that they observe.

2. *Employees' Fear of Speaking Up*

Faculty witnesses were nearly unanimous in describing a sense of distrust between faculty and the administration, which one witness described as a "culture of fear." Teachers who provide feedback are viewed as "confrontational." Many witnesses felt that administrators, especially Yusuf-Morales, often dismissed substantive concerns as being racially motivated.

¹¹ Helen Whittle, Catherine Hamilton-Giachritsis, Anthony Beech, Guy Collings, A Review of Online Grooming: Characteristics and Concerns, 18 *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 62 (2013).

¹² Carla van Dam, *Identifying Child Molesters: Preventing Child Sexual Abuse by Recognizing the Patterns of the Offenders* (2001).

¹³ Eric Leberg, *Understanding Child Molesters: Taking Charge* (1997).

Witnesses also said that Yusuf-Morales would escalate any perceived racism to Tompkins, who would scold the person raising the issue for not abiding by Saint Ann's values.

Many witnesses believed that Nguyen was protected by Yusuf-Morales, and that Yusuf-Morales was in turn protected by Tompkins. Many also believed that Tompkins and Kantor were staunch supporters of Nguyen because they had brought him into the Saint Ann's community. Because of this dynamic, several faculty members did not attempt to express certain concerns about Nguyen's behavior to Yusuf-Morales or to more senior administrators.

When people did raise concerns about Nguyen to Tompkins, their concerns were ignored. The same senior administrator who alerted Tompkins that Nguyen was trying to access School credit cards also informed Tompkins that Nguyen had invited himself to a dinner with two Board members. The administrator shared with Tompkins his view that Nguyen was trying to be liked and ingratiate himself, which the administrator told Tompkins was "dangerous" as the same motivation had led to his prior convictions. In early 2021, another faculty member told Tompkins that Nguyen was encouraging Saint Ann's employees to sign up for Covid vaccine appointments by lying on the intake form. Rather than appreciate that Nguyen's behavior demonstrated a willingness to lie and break rules, Tompkins decided to tell Nguyen to stop spreading information about vaccine eligibility in order to "protect him, not correct him."

3. Dismissal of Parent Concerns and Lack of Communication

Saint Ann's philosophy encourages parents not to interfere with their children's education. There is no parent-teacher association, and parents reported to investigators that they are generally discouraged from reaching out to teachers directly rather than first contacting a division head or grade dean. The School's Faculty & Staff Handbook goes so far as to state:

It is hard to imagine a school at which teachers are given more latitude to explore and express their intellectual and artistic vision than Saint Ann's. We thrive on the

idiosyncratic and the iconoclastic. Woe to the parent, administrator or student uneasy with a grand experiment.

Many faculty and parent witnesses lauded this approach to education and said it was the reason they had chosen to work at or send their children to Saint Ann's. However, witnesses expressed that in order to maintain this philosophy, the School must earn and maintain parents' trust.

Witnesses observed that this fervent independence of teachers on occasion led to administrators dismissing substantive concerns raised by parents, choosing to protect certain teachers rather than prioritize the wellbeing of students. Multiple parents expressed a fear that if they spoke up about issues at the School, they would be labeled "not a good fit" or that their children would be asked to leave. Several witnesses told investigators that they heard of parents expressing various concerns to Yusuf-Morales and feeling dismissed by her. Others who objected to Nguyen's continued employment at the School given his criminal history were afraid to speak up for fear of being labeled not sufficiently progressive.

Whether accurate or not, this fear was particularly expressed by parents whose children receive financial aid or have learning differences. One witness was aware of another family who had raised concerns about Nguyen to Tompkins and was disregarded and shamed for not supporting restorative justice. Given Tompkins' reaction to the other parent, the witness believed that their feedback would be even more harshly received.

Some parents also feel that the communication they receive from the School is inadequate or even misleading. In the case of Nguyen's arrest, the School sent several emails to the community, but did not disclose Nguyen's prior felony until its third email eight days after the arrest. Some parents told investigators that the lack of transparency following Nguyen's arrest was an example of poor communication that caused them to lose trust in the School.

While we do not cite other examples, we did hear of different instances of incomplete or slow communication that exacerbated these tensions.

VII. Criminal Activity Involving Snapchat

On February 5, 2024, certain Saint Ann’s employees learned that three Snapchat accounts had allegedly sent inappropriate photos of girls who attended Saint Ann’s and another school to other students at Saint Ann’s. The owner of the accounts appeared to have information about the students’ relationships at the School, leading some to suspect that the accounts were run by a student at Saint Ann’s or another school, but they did not consider that the account holder might be an adult affiliated with Saint Ann’s.

Over the next three days, various Saint Ann’s employees met with certain students and their parents to provide the students with support and try to ensure that the photos would not be further distributed by the students who received them. The School worked with some families who made a report to law enforcement, but it was not otherwise in touch with the District Attorney’s Office. Saint Ann’s administrators decided that communication about the issue would draw unwanted attention to the catfishing victims. Thus, information that some Saint Ann’s students were being targeted by an unknown Snapchat account was not shared beyond a small group of administrators.

On April 19, 2024, members of the Upper Middle School administration learned about similar conduct involving upper middle school students. Middle school administrators met with certain students and their parents. However, because the incidents were handled by different divisions—High School in February, Upper Middle School in April—there was a lack of connection between the two events. Yusuf-Morales was aware that there had been a Snapchat

catfishing scheme affecting high school students, but she did not have sufficient information about the High School incident to connect it to the Upper Middle School activity.

Administrators did not think that the account holder was affiliated with Saint Ann's and, believing it was unrelated to the School, did not notify anyone beyond certain affected families. When the School learned in late May 2024 that the same account was again requesting to connect with several high school students, the School again did not inform students and families. School leadership learned for the first time that Nguyen might be connected to the Snapchat accounts on June 6, 2024, when police officers told Reid that Nguyen's arrest was related to Snapchat incidents from February 2024. Only after receiving this information from the police and revisiting Snapchat incidents at Saint Ann's did administrators realize that the February and April/May messages were likely sent by the same person.

A. Internal Communications Regarding Snapchat Incidents

Saint Ann's is organized into six divisions, each with a division head and several grade deans. The Upper Middle School and High School offices, in particular, work together closely since many faculty members teach in both divisions. However, the offices do not always update each other on issues that they believe to be limited to students in their division.

Facts related to the catfishing on Snapchat were not shared among divisions until after Nguyen's arrest, nor did the School notify families of the catfishing before then.

VIII. Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to be guidelines for School leadership to consider as Saint Ann's seeks to prevent the circumstances that led to Nguyen's hiring and retention from recurring. We recommend that the Board require School leadership to study the following areas and to propose a plan to address each area to the Board within 180 days. Once

finalized, School leadership should consider sharing the plans with the broader Saint Ann's community.

A. Enhance Policies and Ensure They Are Applied Consistently

Saint Ann's should evaluate its hiring process and procedures. The review process should be aimed at preserving the characteristics of Saint Ann's that have made it such a special institution, while taking into account recent issues and considering how to prevent similar issues in the future.

1. *Enhance External Hiring Procedures*

Saint Ann's should develop a written plan to enhance screening procedures for new faculty and staff. For example, individuals involved in hiring could be provided sample questions to ask during interviews and a simple checklist of necessary information to collect before hiring a new employee, including reference checks and verification of prior employment and education.

The School should also consider whether to conduct an internet search and social media review for new hires. Saint Ann's should also consider developing a procedure for how to evaluate prospective employees whose background checks reveal a criminal history. Factors under consideration should include the nature of the offense (such as an offense involving children or an abuse of trust), the recency of the offense, independent demonstration of rehabilitation, and the insights of additional references.

2. *Formalize Internal Hiring Procedures*

Saint Ann's should establish a clear written process for evaluating current employees who apply for a new role within the School. Staff members seeking to join the teaching faculty or other student-facing roles should be evaluated with the same rigor as prospective new hires.

3. *Review School Policies Related to Student-Employee Interactions*

Saint Ann's should review its policies relating to how faculty, staff, and administrators are expected to interact with students. In particular, the School should enhance its policy regarding interacting with students off campus and on social media.

The School should also review its policies relating to the contexts in which it is or is not permissible for Saint Ann's employees to tutor students. There should be clear parameters about when and where tutoring can take place and at what cost, and all tutoring relationships should be known to students' families.

4. *Assess the School's Position on Political Activism*

Parents told investigators that many faculty members incorporated political activism in their lessons, wore political symbols to class that caused some students to feel uncomfortable, and posted about politics on their public social media accounts that were seen by students. Saint Ann's has recently developed a political activity policy that prohibits political activism during school and provides guidelines for employees' engagement in political activism on social media. The School should continue this effort by ensuring that the policy is clearly communicated to employees and to the parent and student community.

B. Enhance Staff Training and Supervision

In recent years, Saint Ann's has made efforts to improve its supervision of employees. Most notably, Saint Ann's hired its first director of human resources in 2022. It has also strengthened the evaluation process by requiring annual reviews for new faculty and staff and reviews on a regular cadence for longer-tenured employees. The following recommendations build upon the enhancements that Saint Ann's has already implemented.

1. *Employee Training*

While we understand this may already be in process, Saint Ann's should enhance its training for new and returning employees. In particular, the School should provide refresher training on various topics, such as (i) student-staff boundaries, (ii) use of social media, both with respect to what staff posts on social media and the prohibition on interacting with students via social media, (iii) how to identify grooming behavior, and (iv) use of School credit cards.

The staff and faculty orientation that occurs at the beginning of each academic year should be made mandatory for all new *and* returning employees. In addition to presenting an opportunity to provide trainings, the orientation should be used to ensure that everyone is aligned on the School's mission and goals and to foster community and open dialogue between administrators, faculty, and staff.

2. *Establish a New Teacher Training Program*

Saint Ann's should consider developing a formal training program for new teachers that includes curriculum support, best practices for working with students, and regular mentorship and feedback. This would ensure consistency among new teachers and avoid addressing concerns in an ad hoc fashion.

3. *Improve Monitoring of Keys*

While we understand this may already be in process, Saint Ann's should review and strengthen its processes for determining who has keys to various spaces at the School, keeping track of who has access to what spaces, and revoking access to spaces when no longer necessary. Transitioning from physical keys to key cards, as the School has already begun to do, will streamline this effort.

C. Improve Communications

Saint Ann's should develop a plan for improving communications and transparency among its constituencies. In particular, Saint Ann's should consider a procedure for improving communications within the School. Such a procedure could include, for example, mechanisms for enabling communication across divisions and guidelines for information sharing among key individuals.

In addition, Saint Ann's should develop a plan for improving conflict resolution within the School and communication with families. The School should consider making listening sessions, like those Reid held following Nguyen's arrest, a regular occurrence so that the Head of School can hear concerns directly from the community. These listening sessions were almost universally praised by witnesses.

IX. Conclusion

Debevoise has endeavored to present the information obtained during the investigation of Saint Ann's in as forthright a manner as possible, based on the information that the investigators were able to garner, while protecting the identities of families and others with whom the investigators spoke.

These key findings conclude Debevoise's investigation, but the investigators remain available should anyone wish to come forward with additional information.