



SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY – SCHOOL OF  
EDUCATION & COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY



**Santa Clara  
University**

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Excellence in  
Catholic Education  
and Leadership

# **ExCEL Handbook**

## **2023-2024**

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The following handbook represents a summary of the Excellence in Catholic Education and Leadership (ExCEL) program, which is operated by and housed within Santa Clara University's School of Education and Counseling Psychology. This handbook aims to articulate the foundational principles upon which ExCEL is established; the brief history of the program; the expected participation of current and future members within each of the program's pillars; and important information regarding resources and procedures of the program.

## **Foundational Principles of ExCEL**

### **Launching Vocations in Catholic School Education**

A foundational goal of the ExCEL program is to recruit and partner with individuals who are open to a vocation in Catholic school education. ExCEL understands the work of teaching in Catholic schools as a holy mission—one that shapes the future Church and brings about the Kingdom of God on earth. Thus, the program aims to partner with individuals who are excited by and take seriously the prospect of a career in Catholic education, who envision their opportunity in ExCEL as not just a chance to engage in temporary service, but as the first step in a lifelong calling to work with Catholic schools.

### **Developing the Whole Teacher**

ExCEL seeks to prepare and develop teachers for Catholic schools through a specific model of teacher formation adopted and promoted by [University Cortium of Catholic Education](#) (UCCE) programs. Just as Catholic schools aim to develop the whole child through academic, Christ-centered, and communal learning opportunities, UCCE programs pursue *cura personalis* by developing well-rounded teachers who commit to growing professionally, spiritually, and communally. Toward this end, the UCCE model calls for Catholic school teachers to take university-based teacher education courses while they teach full-time; to live in community with one another and practice living simply; and to make concerted efforts toward spiritual development. ExCEL and other UCCE programs have adopted such structures through the belief that living together, teaching and learning together, and seeking God together bolster each member's pedagogical skills, empathy as community members, and faith as followers of Christ.

### **Working for Social Justice through Educational Equity**

ExCEL also aims to develop teachers who learn about and practice social justice through a commitment to educational equity. In accordance with Catholic social teaching and the Church's [preferential option for the poor](#), ExCEL seeks to place teachers in Catholic schools where they are most needed: schools serving students from historically marginalized populations, schools that have been traditionally hard-to-staff, and/or schools that have fewer resources than neighboring communities. We in ExCEL believe that working, teaching, and learning with the least privileged sisters and brothers of our society not only brings special purpose to a vocation in teaching, but helps give each child of God what he, she, or they deserve (that is, seeks *equity*) and aligns with the Christ's challenge to find himself in all communities. Moreover, we hold that all students deserve a good teacher; ExCEL teachers aim to be excellent teachers for students from historically marginalized communities - students of color, students from low-income families, students with disabilities, students from the LGBTQ community, and students who have experienced low-status at some point during the educational experiences. When ExCEL teachers

plan and reflect on their instruction, they do so first with such students in mind, and they commit to continually growing in their asset orientations toward such students and their families.

## **Fostering Leadership in Teaching, Community, and Spiritual Guidance**

ExCEL recognizes that Catholic schools today need and expect teachers to take on various leadership roles, often early in their careers as educators. Some will be called to lead others professionally and pedagogically, some will be drawn towards fostering community, and still others will be asked to inspire colleagues and friends toward a closer relationship with Christ. Leadership comes in many forms but we are all called to undertake its mantle. Thus, a final principle of the program holds that ExCEL members will discern, explore, and seek development in the type of leadership where their personal strengths intersect with the needs of their schools, communities, and society more generally.

## **Program Background**

In 2014, the Sobrato Foundation, Santa Clara University, and the [Diocese of San José Department of Catholic Schools](#) partnered to envision a program that could meet an urgent need to prepare more Catholic school teachers to serve in the diocese, where retirement trends were opening dozens of teaching jobs each year. In just over a year, Santa Clara launched the ExCEL program out of its School of Education and Counseling Psychology, and a handful of intrepid candidates forged a new pathway of teacher education in the area. Within its first year ExCEL was awarded the Catherine T. McNamee, CSJ, President's Award by the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) for exceptional leadership in promoting a vision of Catholic education that welcomes and serves cultural and economic diversity. By 2016, in response to changes in the California laws impacting salaries and the teacher credentialing process, ExCEL transitioned from a 3-year program to a 2-year program. Despite the challenges associated with such a major transition, nine members from Cohorts 1 and 2 proudly graduated in June of 2018 with a Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT), marking the program's first graduating class and supplying the diocese with a talented group of well-prepared, credentialed classroom teachers. In 2019, the program expanded and began serving the Diocese of Monterey, starting a community at the Julie Center in Watsonville and placing teachers at Moreland Notre Dame School and Madonna del Sasso. In 2022 ExCEL shifted its financial model to become more independent from outside sources of funding. This change necessitated the closure of its Monterey on at least a temporary basis, but it has allowed the program to expand its presence in San José and explore new potential options for housing..

## **Mission of ExCEL**

Guided by Santa Clara University's Jesuit foundations and the School of Education and Counseling Psychology's guiding principles, Excellence in Catholic Education Leadership endeavors to develop lifelong Catholic school educators for the Diocese of San José by supporting them pedagogically, spiritually, and communally; by fostering leadership among them; and by working for social justice through educational equity.

## **ExCEL Program Description: Four Pillars**

### **Pillar 1: Development and Practice of Teaching for Educational Equity**

Teaching (and teacher development) represents the work of service that ExCEL teachers engaged in for and with others. All ExCEL teachers are employed as full-time teachers of record in a diverse school setting where instruction is guided by the California content standards and framework.

ExCEL teachers pursue equity in teaching by providing equal opportunities for ALL students to deepen their faith and relationship with God, to experience belonging within classroom community, to explore academic content in meaningful ways, and to work for personal and social transformation.

Toward this end, ExCEL teachers make commitments to develop:

1. An asset orientation toward all students and their families, but especially students whose communities historically have been viewed through a deficit lens;
2. Culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies that honor and center the cultural practices, linguistic resources, lived experiences, and ways of knowing of students, especially those from minoritized communities;
3. Spiritual and socioemotional well-being of students, particularly those suffering from isolation, struggling with faith, enduring mental health challenges, experiencing loss or stress, and surviving trauma;
4. Differentiated instructional practices that responsively adapt to learning assets and needs of students, particularly those identified with exceptionalities;
5. Student voice in and outside the classroom so that all students gain agency and experience in the practice of democracy; and
6. A personal/ professional anti-racist stance that seeks to locate and resist manifestations of white supremacy (and other forms of oppression) in one's own life and instructional practices, as well as educational policies within schools.

To develop into such equity-oriented teachers, ExCEL members engage in two years of intensive professional learning through Santa Clara's School of Education and Counseling Psychology.

- In their first summer, ExCEL teachers will intern in a summer school program for 8-10 weeks, when they will assist an experienced teacher with at least 2 hours of instruction each weekday. This summer school internship is meant to provide ExCEL teachers with critical experience in lesson planning and delivery, as well as classroom management. To support ExCEL teachers in this endeavor, the ExCEL director will guide them in an informal daily support seminar, where ExCEL teachers will reflect on their previous lessons and plan for later lessons. This summer school teaching assignment is an integral part of ExCEL teacher preparation but does not represent paid employment.
- During the regular academic year, the ExCEL director will visit each teacher a minimum of twice a month, and upon request. The purpose of the visit is to provide the director the opportunity to witness the teacher in action and to offer feedback and recommendations.
- Some ExCEL teachers (i.e., those in the early elementary grades) are also observed and coached by a university-based literacy coach approximately once a month.
- ExCEL participants engage in a Catholic-school course of studies within Santa Clara's teacher preparation track, the Master of Arts in Teaching and Teaching Credential (MATTC) program. Through the MATTC program, ExCEL members complete two years of courses, which meet the coursework requirements for a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT), as well as a California state teaching credential. To fulfill the [fieldwork component of the California state teaching credential](#), however, ExCEL students must

accumulate three total years of teaching in a private or Catholic school. Thus, if an ExCEL student had completed one or more years as a teacher prior to joining ExCEL, he/she/they would be eligible for a credential upon completion of ExCEL. However, most ExCEL teachers (who enter the program without having taught before) must complete an additional third year (one year outside of and beyond the ExCEL program) to fulfill the fieldwork requirement of the credential process.

- As part of their academic program, all ExCEL teachers must participate in a weekly support seminar (EDUC 231E: External Practicum) during each academic term (apart from their second summer). The purpose of these support seminars is to provide ExCEL teachers with opportunities to collaborate with one another in sharing, discussing, and solving problems of practice from their K-12 classrooms.
- To receive credit for a MATTC course, ExCEL members must earn at minimum a B-letter grade.
- To pass their coursework requirement for the MAT and credential, ExCEL members must maintain a 3.0 GPA across all MATTC courses.
- ExCEL teachers are highly encouraged to take and pass all examinations required by the [California Commission on Teacher Credentialing for their Preliminary Teaching Credential](#) prior to applying for a credential.
- ExCEL teachers must abide by all policies set forth by the [University Bulletin](#).
- The program director will serve as Academic Advisor for each ExCEL teacher. The director will meet with each teacher every quarter to discuss progress toward the MAT and state credential and to plan the registration of future courses.
- ExCEL applicants have agency in choosing and selecting their teaching position and [school site](#): The ExCEL director connects applicants with supportive principals who have job openings. The applicants then interview with as many principals as they need to before finding one that seems like a good fit for them. ExCEL teachers find jobs in a grade-level or subject area that allows them to pursue the credential they desire. In accordance with the program's dedication to social justice, ExCEL teachers often work for schools that are underresourced and/or hard-to-staff.
- ExCEL teachers are encouraged to accept positions in K-12 schools that have supportive cultures. Additionally, ExCEL members are assigned a mentor teacher (usually an experienced colleague from their school site), who checks in with the ExCEL teacher on a weekly basis to provide advice/ guidance about life at the school. The mentor teacher is paid a yearly stipend at the conclusion of this work.
- ExCEL teachers are expected to participate in all scheduled Diocesan professional development and other professional development opportunities that will strengthen their teaching skills and will not interfere with their coursework or other ExCEL commitments.
- ExCEL teachers must follow all guidelines, policies, and procedures of the Diocese and the school for which they work.
- All ExCEL teachers must be fingerprinted, and provide the results of a TB test taken within the last three years and all necessary documents required by the Diocese of San José and the school site for hiring. ExCEL teachers must also take an online training in child abuse reporting called [Virtus](#).
- All newly hired ExCEL teachers are employed by the school and remain at class one, step one of salary during their time in ExCEL. In the Diocese of San José during the 2023-2024 school year, teacher at this step and class are paid a salary of ~\$60,000 before taxes.

- ExCEL teachers receive health insurance as part of their employment in the Diocese of San José. This medical insurance begins on August 1st of a member's first summer in the program. Thus, members must seek health insurance (or retain their previous insurance plan) for their first seven weeks of the program (mid-June to July 31st of their first summer).
- In their first year within the program, ExCEL teachers may not accept summer jobs or work outside of their contract in order to avoid conflicts with MATTC courses and program expectations for community and spirituality. (This does not include occasional babysitting, house sitting or periodic commitments.) If extenuating circumstances occur, please contact the director. Per diocesan policy, a second-year ExCEL teacher may tutor students for pay only so long as such students are not currently in the teacher's classroom and only so long as the tutoring is not taking place on campus.

### **Credentialing Requirements**

The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing requires private school teachers to apply for their preliminary credentials once they have completed three requirements: testing, coursework, and experience.

The state of California requires teacher candidates to take and pass 3 or 4 exams::

- [CBEST](#) – California Basic Educational Skills Test (or SAT/ ACT scores)
- [CSET](#) – California Subject Examinations for Teachers
- [RICA](#) – Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (Multiple-subject only)
- [U.S. Constitution](#) – or complete a course in the provisions and principles of the U.S. Constitution

In addition to testing, a preliminary credential requires a set of teacher education courses, all of which ExCEL provides. This course of studies is verified by your transcript from SCU and a letter from Student Services at ECP.

Finally, beyond testing and coursework, the state of California requires three full-time years of private school teaching experience before a candidate can apply for their credential. This means that any ExCEL member who joins the program with one year (or multiple years) of previous experience will be able to apply for their credential at the end of their time in ExCEL. For all other ExCEL members, they will have to teach one more year after the conclusion of their ExCEL program in order to accumulate the three years of experience required by the state. This experience is verified by a [letter](#) from a principal and two formal teaching [evaluations](#) completed by the principal.

For other credentialing information, please see this [credential checklist](#).

### **Pillar 2: Spiritual Development**

The spiritual pillar of ExCEL is the program's anchor.

The development of one's spiritual life is one of the cornerstones of the ExCEL program for several reasons. Much like ExCEL teachers are called to teach the whole child in their classroom, the ExCEL program recognizes that quality teacher education must attend holistically to the development of each dimension of a teacher: their pedagogy, their social-emotional growth, their dispositions, their professionalism, and their spiritual life. ExCEL understands the

faith and spiritual dimensions of a teacher as the essential “battery” for powering one’s work through the day-to-day endeavors and challenges of classroom teaching. The practice of one’s spirituality is also recognized as a key element of self-care and well-being, just as healthy eating, regular sleep, and consistent exercise are. All teachers deserve spiritual support in this regard.

ExCEL’s commitment to developing its teachers spiritually also stems from its vision of Catholic school education. While the pedagogy practiced in public schools and Catholic schools often looks the same, the reasons for teaching in those respective contexts is drastically different. From a Catholic lens, the interaction between teacher and student is a holy encounter—a space for Christ-centered communion with one another. ExCEL teachers teach because they recognize that their relationships with students create opportunities for encountering Christ in others and building the Kingdom of God on a daily basis. In short, ExCEL teachers are called to create sacred classroom communities with their students, and these communities are what make the work of teaching spiritually meaningful across one’s lifetime. Teaching in Catholic schools is also different because Catholic school teachers reveal God by teaching students about God’s creation—the world. Every lesson—no matter how small or trivial the objective may be—helps students learn more about the world that God created and therefore reveals more about God and God’s nature. Thus, while teaching in Catholic and public schools may appear similar, they are done for entirely different reasons, and this distinction requires ExCEL teachers to attend to the spiritual nature of Catholic school teaching.

Because spiritual development is so critical to the growth of Catholic school teachers, ExCEL asks its teachers to make two specific commitments: To spend the time and effort to deepen one’s relationship with God, and to walk with other ExCEL teachers along their individual path of faith. Inspired by its [Jesuit charism](#), ExCEL assumes that every individual walks their own unique spiritual journey, and ExCEL accepts and welcomes teachers of various faith traditions. However, ExCEL calls on each of its members to continually reflect on and advance their spiritual journey throughout their time in the program. Additionally, ExCEL teachers “walk with one another” by collaboratively praying, reflecting on, and sharing their faith lives with each other. Importantly, because each person’s journey of faith is so unique, ExCEL teachers anticipate differences will arise between how members view and practice their faith, and they embrace those differences as opportunities to more fully understand how humanity makes sense of the immense and beautiful mystery of God. ExCEL teachers do not attempt to proselytize or convert each other to their own individual view of Catholicism or Christianity; they tolerate different approaches to faith in the Christian tradition and seek to learn about them.

ExCEL members carry out these dual commitments—to work on one’s relationship with God and share this journey with others—through personal practices of prayer, as well as participation in the following required social activities:

- During their first and second summers in the program, ExCEL members attend weekly spirituality dialogues, as well as a Commissioning Mass (held in late July or early August).
- ExCEL members attend a retreat once in the summer, again in the fall, and once more in the winter. While the summer retreat is meant to build expectations for community and establish a sense of belonging and solidarity, the fall retreat seeks to provide consolation within the first challenges of the months of teaching, and the winter retreats provide an opportunity for deep spiritual reflection and a “re-missioning,” or opportunity to return to the underlying reasons for engaging in the vocation of Catholic education.



- Each month, ExCEL members commit to attending a Mass together with others in their small communities. Members use this participation in the sacrament of Communion to reaffirm their collective spiritual journey and to receive God’s graces
- Every month, ExCEL members also participate in “spirituality dialogue,” where they share the progress and challenges of their spiritual journeys, and study scripture or other inspirational texts together. While these gatherings may include a variety of activities (e.g., attending a campus ministry event, reading and discussing scripture or other spiritual writings, engaging in mindfulness in the Jesuit tradition, reflecting in the presence of nature, etc.), they nearly always involve some time in personal and group prayer and/or reflection.
- Members participate in Jesuit spiritual reflection activities that begin and end their External Practicum courses at Santa Clara University.

In addition, ExCEL members seeking more intense, personal spiritual development are encouraged to pursue guidance from a spiritual director from SCU’s campus ministry department.

### **Pillar 3: Community**

From the outside, it may initially appear that living in intentional community is simply a cost-saving approach to housing new teachers in the expensive Silicon Valley. However, the true purpose of communal living in UCCE programs like ExCEL is much deeper and richer than affordability. As a UCCE program, we believe that living in intentional Christian communities is a core feature of “whole teacher” formation.

ExCEL views the pillar of community as the “glue” of its program—that which most fully binds the teaching and spiritual pieces of the program while strengthening bonds among ExCEL members.

#### **Purpose of Community**

Communal living encourages each ExCEL teacher along his/her journey of faith by creating spaces and relationships for members to practice shared prayer, express their joys/ doubts/ fears, and find inspiration in the spiritual practices of others.

Moreover, we believe that communal living holds the potential to make us more fully human; that is, living in community necessitates that members engage in practices—compassionate communication, honest dialogue, compromise, and forgiveness—that are the hallmarks of Christ-centered humanity. Perhaps more directly, sharing meals and spaces, sharing time and existence, sharing moments of love and of struggle pulls members into tighter relationships with one another, and the Catholic Church holds that being in relationship with one another is what makes us more fully human and is what Christ calls us to at all times. In turn, by living out community with ExCEL members, each teacher is more prepared for the communal life in the classroom, where dispositions like compassionate communication, honest dialogue, compromise, and forgiveness are essential for good teaching. These dispositions are particularly important for future educational leaders - the type of professionals ExCEL aims to develop.

Although experienced teachers who have been in the profession for many years will openly acknowledge that good teaching is a collaborative “team sport,” often times new teachers in traditional teacher education programs experience a profound sense of loneliness and isolation in

their first few years in the classroom. They teach by themselves, lesson-plan by themselves, grade by themselves, and then are left to face the struggles and frustrations of classroom life by themselves, without any support network outside the faculty lounge (if that even is a supportive space). On the other hand, ExCEL teachers—because they live with other teachers—have a built-in pedagogical support system. After coming home from a challenging day of teaching, ExCEL members can vent to one another, help each other with ideas for lesson planning, assist in grading enormous projects, and give advice about classroom management or dealing with parents. In this way, ExCEL teachers have continual opportunities to learn about the work of teaching, a major advantage over more traditional approaches to teacher education.

While the affordances of community might be fairly clear, what is actually meant by *community* can often be vague. So what does ExCEL mean by community? ExCEL envisions true community as the enactment of “fellowship.” While friendships (indeed close friendships) form quite frequently among ExCEL members, the program makes a distinction between friendship and fellowship, with the latter being the explicit aim of community. In fellowship, members of the same community feel like they can honestly express who they authentically are with one another and feel like they are truly listened to and understood. In turn, members seeking fellowship commit to listening to and better understanding their community mates who express themselves fully and authentically. Finally, the ideal of fellowship calls for members to fully accept one another, in spite of any differences that may emerge among them. They recognize that they may not see eye-to-eye on big matters of faith or trivial matters of housecleaning, but ExCEL members make the commitment to embrace one another regardless. In short, fellowship is not forced friendship, but it is the expectation that we treat everyone in community like we would a friend.

To help members reach and sustain moments of fellowship with one another, ExCEL helps its teachers develop four particular tools of community life:

- *Nonviolent communication*, or the ability to speak with genuine care for community members.
- *Honest dialogue*, or the ability to fully and authentically express oneself while also listening to (and being open to changing with) other members who are authentically expressing themselves.
- *Acceptance of others* as they truly are.
- *Compromise*, or the ability to creatively bridge seemingly conflicting needs by making sure that all parties both give and receive.
- *Forgiveness*, or the ability both to soften one’s heart and accept an apology and to offer a sincere apology when we (intentionally or unintentionally) fall short of fully caring for our community members.

Additionally ExCEL asks its members to abide by five guidelines of community life:

1. *Be present*: ExCEL calls on its teachers to attend all required community events and to make oneself available to others during the downtime of one’s apartment or house. Put simply, it means being around and being open to hanging out. Individuals cannot live out what community represents when they are gone or shut themselves up for extended time in their rooms
2. *Leave no member behind*: ExCEL asks its members to consider each member of the community when planning events and to make sure that all community members feel welcomed and supported in such events.

3. *Assume good intentions:* Each ExCEL member arrives to the program fully committed to carrying out each of the three pillars of the program, and members are reminded to reflect on that, particularly when moments of difference or conflict arise in encounters between community members. We must remember that everyone in the program is trying their best.
4. *Balance commitments to ExCEL community and outside/ past communities:* ExCEL members often have close relationships to family and friends outside the program. ExCEL asks its members to balance those life-long relationships with their two-year commitment to intentional community in ExCEL. Similarly, many ExCEL members arrive at the program after having experienced intentional community through other volunteer programs. ExCEL asks these members to balance their previous experiences and new knowledge about community life with the need to re-create a new kind of community and fellowship in ExCEL.

### **Levels of Community**

In addition to the retreats and practicum courses mentioned earlier, ExCEL teachers are expected to gather as a whole-program community at least three times per month. One of these monthly commitments is a community-building event, which may include gathering for happy hour at a local pub, a hike in the foothills of the Coastal Mountains, a day at the beach, a kick-ball tournament, a game night, etc.. The purpose of such community-building events is to give everyone an opportunity to have fun, blow off steam, enjoy each other's company, and ultimately grow closer to one another. A more detailed explanation of expectations for whole-program community can be found in the ExCEL Teacher Agreement form (see appendices). Additionally ExCEL teachers are expected to gather for two more events each month: once for spirituality night and another time for an antiracist dialogue or workshop. During spirituality nights, one or two designated members teach the whole community a new spiritual practice and then engage in that practice together. These spirituality practices range from the more traditional Adoration service to less traditional yoga-and-meditation sessions. The purpose of spirituality night is to offer community members new exposures to prayer and to help everyone develop a deeper connection and love for God. Similarly, once a month the whole community gathers for an antiracist workshop or dialogue planned by one or two designated members. These antiracism meetings might consist of a discussion about a critical reading or video, or they might examine ideas for how to teach K-12 students about issues of oppression in the world. The purpose of these antiracism workshops/ dialogues is to help all members grow in their awareness and practice of antiracist teaching approaches.

Another level of community is found among apartment mates. During the 2023-2024 school year, ExCEL participants will live in two-bedroom [Park Avenue apartments](#), which is Graduate Student Housing managed by the University. The program director will assign each individual to live in an apartment with one other ExCEL member, whom they will live with for the remainder of their time in Park Avenue. Each ExCEL teacher will have a separate bedroom. It is expected that ExCEL members live primarily in their apartments with their apartment mates, meaning that they spend each week night at the apartment and most weekend nights at the apartment. If ExCEL members have family or close friends nearby, spending a weekend night away from the apartment is fine and expected. However, for the two years they've committed to the program, ExCEL members should treat the program as their first communal priority and should spend the vast majority of evenings at the Park Ave apartments. The community makes a commitment to "be there" for one another, that is, to give concerted support to each other during especially challenging moments of ExCEL life. The purpose of this level of community is to give each

ExCEL teacher a core of members with whom they can grow especially close and to whom they can always turn for support and/or celebration. To facilitate the function of these spaces, small communities will complete a Community Covenant (see appendices), to be agreed upon and signed by each member. It is also strongly encouraged that apartment mates share at least one dinner/meal a week (outside of the whole community setting) so that they have time to check in with one another, discuss any issues or challenges of life in the apartment, and begin to form stronger bonds with one another. The purpose of community within each apartment is to give each ExCEL member a more immediate and proximal support person that can help them navigate the challenges of ExCEL life. To facilitate apartment life, apartment mates will collaborate to construct and sign an Apartment Agreement (see appendices).

## **Housing**

During the 2023-2024 school year, ExCEL teachers in the Santa Clara community will live in the Park Avenue Apartments, Graduate Student Housing provided by the program. The director makes all housing assignments and housing assignments can only be changed by the director.

- ExCEL members will be charged ~\$21,500 for their rent for the year. They have the option of paying this rent per quarter or per month.
- Santa Clara University will be responsible for the housing expenses for the ExCEL teachers. This includes application, deposit, and rent.
- The University will also provide internet access and basic water/power utilities for each apartment.
- ExCEL participants are responsible for his/her phone service, television and additional media charges.
- Apartment inhabitants may agree to additional services and these costs are to be shared among the apartment inhabitants.
- ExCEL teachers may purchase property insurance to cover loss or damage of personal possessions.
- ExCEL teachers must follow all university parking regulations and may purchase a parking permit at their own expense (contact university parking services). Please see the state of California Department of Motor Vehicles for California car registration and license laws ([www.dmv.ca.gov](http://www.dmv.ca.gov))
- ExCEL teachers should report all maintenance issues promptly to university housing through the online work order. If issues arise with maintenance or in other areas, please contact Marc Alejandro ([malejandro@scu.edu](mailto:malejandro@scu.edu)) and SCU Housing ([housing@scu.edu](mailto:housing@scu.edu)) but make sure to cc the director on any correspondence.
- ExCEL teachers must follow all rules, policies and regulations for university housing.
- Santa Clara University will provide basic furniture for each apartment.
- ExCEL provides basic kitchen items for each apartment (see Appendix D).
- ExCEL teachers should bring their own laptop and personal items (toiletries, bedding, towels, desk lamps, etc.).

It is possible that ExCEL members will move into a converted convent on the grounds of St. Lawrence School (in Santa Clara) in the summer of 2024. In this event, all members will share the convent social spaces (kitchen, dining room, study rooms, laundry facilities, bathrooms, and patio) and will be afforded their own bedroom.

#### **Pillar 4: Critical Transformation**

ExCEL members commit to critical transformation centered on our growing awareness of the world, on our recognition of our shared human dignity, and on the creation of a more just human society.

Three mysteries of the Catholic faith anchor this pillar.

- The Paschal Mystery reminds us that Christ suffered while on earth, experiencing a painful, lonely demise; yet He rose from death and opened eternal life for us all. This mystery teaches us that the experience of suffering is inextricably tied to the human experience; all of us will fall prey to the pain and anguish caused by others, and all of us will intentionally or unintentionally hurt ourselves and others. We are called to rise above this in love.
- Another mystery - that of the Incarnation - explains that God not only entered the world and walked among us as Jesus, but God is also present in all things God created - nature, ourselves, our relationships with one another. God's presence in us is what gives us goodness and brings human dignity to every individual on earth.
- The third mystery anchoring this pillar is found in the Trinity: the idea that God *is* relationship - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Everything God created is part of this relationship, and everything God created is also in relationship with one another. As Fr. Ronald Nuzzi has explained, the purpose of Catholic education isn't so much to *build* relationship, but instead, to *reveal* it - to help us more clearly understand how dependent we are on God and how connected and interdependent we humans are to one another. Because all of us have inherent human dignity, we are called to live in right relationship with one another, that is, to treat one another with loving justice.

Put together, these mysteries collectively teach us that suffering and evil will unfortunately be present in our world. We must not turn away from it, but instead we must recognize the humanity of those experiencing suffering and help those perpetrating it remember their own. And, most importantly, we must work to bring healing to our society through the work of right relationship - the work of justice. In other words, this pillar of critical transformation calls on ExCEL teachers to grow in their awareness of oppression in the world, recognize the human dignity of those impacted by it, and work toward justice by promoting Christ's call of radical love.

But what does this look like in the program?

ExCEL members commit to expanding their critical awareness about each other and the world we share. In courses at Santa Clara University, ExCEL teachers learn about educational inequities endured by students from low-income families, students of color, students with disabilities, students from the LGBTQ+ community, and other students harmed by forms of oppression in schools. ExCEL members apply this new understanding of educational inequities to critically analyze their pedagogical practices and the structures that mediate them at their school sites. Through intentional living with one another, ExCEL members also learn about how forms of oppression (particularly race, class, and gender) have shaped each other's lives, they examine their own personal biases, and they remain vigilant in preventing these prejudices from mediating their own relationships with one another in community. And as ExCEL members accompany one another on their respective spiritual journeys, they learn more about voices and cultures that have often been marginalized in mainstream practices within the Catholic tradition.

ExCEL members uphold the human dignity of all those they encounter. In SCU classrooms, ExCEL members seek to understand and collaborate with their classmates, even when differences of viewpoints become apparent. At their school sites, ExCEL members hold an asset orientation toward all students, those students' families, and the other teachers and colleagues ExCEL members work with, even when challenges and conflicts arise. In intentional community, ExCEL members commit to loving one another by being present for one another, seeing Christ in one another, and maintaining right relationship with each other, even when differences of work, faith, and politics surface. This work requires consistent and nonviolent communication, productive conflict, compromise, and forgiveness. And when ExCEL members uncover differences of religious beliefs among community members, they commit to authentic self-expression balanced with empathetic understanding, and avoid ever judging or proselytizing each other.

ExCEL members also channel their work toward making the world more “peaceful, fraternal, and communitarian” (Second Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982). ExCEL recruits all applicants who are committed to Catholic education, especially those who come from historically marginalized communities, so that the field of education better reflects the rich diversity of students found in our Catholic schools. In their courses at SCU, ExCEL members encourage one another and their classmates to undertake more equitable teaching practices. In their work in schools, ExCEL members seek justice by using teaching practices that help every child - and especially students from historically marginalized communities - reach their maximum human potential. In intentional community, ExCEL members partner with one another each month to explore practices of antiracism through dialogues and workshops on the topic, and they encourage one another to undertake these practices in their lives and work. In shared engagements of faith and spirituality, ExCEL members value, expect, and contribute to multicultural and multilingual forms of praise and worship, including multilingual Masses and prayer services. ExCEL warmly invites families of its members to join in these shared practices of faith. And ExCEL members remember that Christ's love was radical - it centered those on the margins - and it calls us to put our faith into action for those experiencing suffering.

Finally, ExCEL members make a commitment to grow in loving awareness of each other - their worlds, lives, and identities. As part of this growth, mistakes will happen and people will likely feel hurt, especially when words are used in ways that offend the identity of a member. We expect that *dialogue within the community* will be the most effective and powerful avenue for addressing such harm, learning from it, and repairing/ restoring relationships. If the same mistakes are repeated over time or seem to target a particular member or identity, the community support person (and if necessary, the program director) will likely intervene for more intensive supports so that the individual causing harm can learn and grow more urgently.

### **Other Important Information**

#### **Tuition Charges**

All ExCEL teachers receive a full scholarship, which covers all tuition costs for every course taken in the Education Department at SCU. ExCEL members, however, must each pay their student enrollment fee each quarter, which amounts to ~\$40.

#### **Program Fees**

Members of Cohorts 8 & 9 (and every cohort thereafter) will pay a program fee of \$3000 per year, as determined by the School of Education. This fee will be billed in quarterly installments,

starting at the end of the fall quarter of 2023. This program fee will offset costs of community events, retreats, and celebrations.

### **Emergencies**

It is important that ExCEL teachers contact the ExCEL director immediately if there is any emergency or accident involving an ExCEL teacher or the ExCEL apartment residences. This includes medical, household, automobile or programmatic emergencies.

Should an incident occur, immediately report all accidents and instances of theft to the director, and if appropriate to the Campus Security. In case of an accident, mishap, or a substantial community conflict, ExCEL teachers may be asked to write an incident report that will be kept on file and used for clarification purposes if necessary.

In order to fully support ExCEL teachers, it is important that the director be made aware of any difficulties a member may be having at school or in the community. ExCEL teachers should seek assistance from the principal, mentor teacher, or ExCEL director if classroom management issues arise at school, or if difficulties with students' parents or other school staff members occur.

### **Program Correspondence**

Program correspondence will (with few exceptions) be conducted through email; thus, ExCEL members are asked to check their SCU email accounts at least once per day in order to keep up with ExCEL notices. While in the ExCEL program, all ExCEL teachers living in the Park Avenue apartments will have their mail delivered to campus mailboxes.

### **Holidays/Vacations**

ExCEL teachers should consult the school calendar for holiday/vacation information. Participants may spend their holiday/vacation time away from community unless a community event is planned for that time. In the event that a retreat or other community event is planned, ExCEL teachers are expected participate in the planned event. Community members are encouraged to maintain a community calendar on which members record dates when they will be away as well as scheduled school/ community events. Members are encouraged to take a vacation during Christmas break. Two vacation periods will be provided during the second summer, one week before summer school starts and another after it finishes. Because the first summer is an intensive training program in preparation for teaching in August, first year teachers just have one week off, following the conclusion of summer courses. If emergency situations occur and a lengthy trip needs to be taken outside of scheduled vacation times, please notify the director in writing to request approval. Every effort will be made to approve the request.

### **Non-Discrimination**

Santa Clara University, ExCEL, and the Diocese of San José do not discriminate in program admission based on religion, race, color, sex, age, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability.

### **Reasonable Accommodation**

In compliance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, The American with Disabilities Act of 1990 and other relevant local, state and federal legislation, Santa Clara's ExCEL program is accessible to persons with disabilities and will provide reasonable accommodation to the known mental or physical disabilities of ExCEL members and staff.

**Office Information**

The ExCEL office is located in the School of Education and Counseling Psychology at Santa Clara University, Guadalupe Hall, Room 234. The office mailing address is:

ExCEL  
Santa Clara University  
School of Education and Counseling Psychology  
500 El Camino Real, Guadalupe Hall 234  
Santa Clara, CA 95053-0215

The office phone number is 408-551-3525. The cell phone of the ExCEL director is 424-789-3375. You may email the director at [jbeltramo@scu.edu](mailto:jbeltramo@scu.edu).



## **Appendix A: ExCEL Teacher Commitment**

### **Teaching Expectations**

1. ExCEL members agree to serve as an intern for a summer school during their first summer in the program. This represents an opportunity to gain needed experience in teaching, planning, and reflection, and will be accompanied by an informal teaching seminar with the director. ExCEL members will not be paid for their work during this summer school internship.
2. ExCEL members agree to serve as full-time K-12 Catholic school teachers in the Diocese of San José and to engage in each facet of the work therein, including (but not limited to): constructing effective lesson plans for each day; creating classroom community and managing student behavior; regularly assessing and reporting student learning; attending faculty meetings and diocesan professional development sessions; participating in Back-to-School nights, formal and informal parent conferences, and parish Masses; attending school fundraisers/ festivals; etc.
3. ExCEL members agree to check-in with their mentor teacher at least once per week to ask the mentor any questions related to the culture or work-life at their school.
4. ExCEL members agree to be observed by the ExCEL director on at least 2 occasions per month. Early elementary teachers will be observed by a literacy coach in their first year of teaching once per month.
5. ExCEL members agree to fully prepare weekly lesson plans and submit them in a timely fashion to their principals. These lesson plans should offer a brief but essential outline of instructional activities for each period of each day. Appropriate thought and care should be applied to these lesson plans so that they reflect care and concern for students' learning.
6. When struggles occur in classroom teaching (or conflicts arise with staff) that require additional support, ExCEL members agree to reach out to the ExCEL director, university-based field supervisor, mentor teacher, and/or school administrator to seek out solutions and opportunities for growth.
7. ExCEL members agree to be paid by their employing school an annual salary of ~\$60,000 in the Diocese of San José. ExCEL members agree to budget this money responsibly to meet their obligations for taxes, as well as their individual needs for transportation, educational loans, dental, food, clothing, and miscellaneous expenses.

### **Graduate School Expectations**

8. ExCEL members agree to attend and complete work for MATTC courses each quarter in pursuit of a Master's degree and California state teaching credential through Santa Clara University's (SCU) School of Education and Counseling Psychology. Furthermore, ExCEL members agree to abide by all expectations of graduate students for the MATTC program, including meeting required minimum GPA and attaining minimum marks for each course. ExCEL members acknowledge that fulfillment of a California state teaching credential requires them to complete at least one additional year of full-time teaching at a Catholic school, either before or after the two-year commitment to ExCEL.

9. ExCEL members agree to meet with their advisor (director of ExCEL) at least once per quarter and to register for courses prior to the designated deadline each quarter. Should there be any issues in registration, ExCEL members agree to notify their advisor in advance.
10. By the time they graduate, ExCEL members are strongly encouraged to take and pass all examinations required by the State of California's teacher credentialing policies, including (but not limited to): the CBEST, all sections of the designated CSET, the RICA, the Constitution exam, and the First Aid Certification exam.

### **Community and Spirituality Expectations**

11. ExCEL members agree to work together to develop a viable community with spirituality at the center.
12. SCU is responsible for making arrangements for basic housing, necessary furnishings, and utilities, including internet.
13. ExCEL members shall use available technology in a responsible and ethical manner. Examples of violations of device usage include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - viewing, creating or distributing inappropriate or offensive material;
  - viewing, creating or distributing defamatory, abusive, or threatening material;
  - viewing, creating or distributing obscene or pornographic material;
  - libeling, harassing, intimidating, or threatening;
  - any posting of materials on Brightspace, electronic bulletin boards, social media, or other outside forums that violate existing federal, state, or local laws;
  - any illicit or illegal purpose.
14. No animals/pets are allowed in ExCEL residences unless an ExCEL member obtains written permission from SCU for the maintenance of an emotional support animal.
15. Use and/or possession of illegal drugs, substances, or firearms by ExCEL members is strictly prohibited.
16. In the spirit of building and maintaining a viable, successful, and optimal community, ExCEL members are expected to be full-time residents of the communities, weekends as well as weekdays. ExCEL members are welcome to visit family and friends but should see their community as their current home.
17. ExCEL members are assigned an apartment-mate and their own bedroom within each residence. ExCEL members must confine their belongings to their own room and may not use a common area for their personal overflow. Most communities will equitably distribute shared storage space (e.g., closets, cabinets) per community member.
18. Within their apartments, ExCEL members agree to establish and adhere to a consensually developed list of living expectations, which include responsibilities for: maintenance of common areas (living room, kitchen, bathroom, etc.), noise restrictions during designated work or sleep times, the allowance for daytime or overnight guests, care of service or comfort animals, etc. Community members agree to revisit this list of living expectations

throughout the year, make consensually developed revisions, work out occasional shortcomings of a member's adherence to this list, and communicate with the director around repeated or major violations to these living expectations.

19. ExCEL members commit to building community by meeting at least four times per month: (a) to help sustain members' spiritual development, ExCEL teachers commit to attending Mass and spirituality dialogues each once per month; (b) to live out their commitment to social justice teaching, ExCEL members commit to meeting for a workshop on anti-racist teaching once per month; (c) to find joy and explore new experiences with one another, ExCEL members commit to attending one "Day of Diversion" each month; and (d) ExCEL members commit to meeting at least once per month (if not weekly) over dinner to revisit their expectations for, share challenges of, and evaluate community life. If a member chooses not to attend one of these events, the director will support the member to identify a way for the member to make up for the time and relationship-building that they missed out on. For example, if a member were to miss a community meal, he/she/they might cook for the community on a school night and invite all to join them as a way for making amends.

I agree to support and follow the ExCEL member policies outlined herein and understand that I must adhere to these policies as a condition of membership in ExCEL.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print name

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Cohort: \_\_\_\_\_ Academic Year: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Community Covenant

**Function:** Community Covenants serve the following functions: To articulate a general vision for what community will look like in the next year; to set forth a list of events/activities in which folks from a given community would like to participate; and to establish procedures for organizing (and holding members accountable to) plans for gathering together.

**Form:** A Community Covenant consists of a document created and agreed upon by all members. This document has three parts:

- A vision statement, which describes the goals or ideals that members have for their community;
- A list of events (and possible dates) that meet community members' needs and interests; and
- A plan for organizing these events, reporting on them, and holding members accountable to attending them.

To complete your Community Covenant, please answer the questions for each section below and present the completed Covenant to the ExCEL director:

### *Section 1: Vision for Community*

What do you want gatherings to look like in your community?

What do you hope happens among the members of your group by participating in these gatherings? That is, what kind of relationships do you hope to foster through this community?

### *Section 2: Community Events*

Each community is expected to meet at least once a month (if not weekly) to share a meal and to discuss the state of life in their community. What day each week (e.g., Sundays) do you expect to meet? Or do you plan on arranging these meetings on a week-by-week basis? If the latter, how will you ensure that community events are planned at least one week in advance?

Each community is expected to hold a community-building event once per month. What day in the month (e.g., first Tuesday/ last Friday of each month) do you expect to meet? Or do you plan on arranging community events on a month-by-month basis? If the latter, how will you ensure that community events are planned at least one month in advance? What kind of events/activities would members like to do together? (It is suggested that each individual offer a good-sized list of potential activities. Then members should compare their lists and try to identify that events/activities that (a) everyone would enjoy or (b) no one would object to. Later, match these events to particular months so that you have two identified for each month. Please try to keep these events/activities simple in terms of costs so that full participation is not limited by finance.) Will you incorporate Mass into this event? If not, when will the community share a Mass each month?

It is expected that community members meet each month for some kind of spiritual development. What events/activities might you hold to pursue this spiritual development?

### *Section 3: Plan for Organization, Storytelling, and Accountability*

Please identify a community member who will organize the details of and send out reminders to everyone about each event. Who is an organized person who could carry that load for your community?

It is expected that, for every community event, one picture from and a short blurb describing the event will be shared with the director. Not only will this inform the director of attendance, but more importantly these pictures and blurbs will be posted to ExCEL's social media sites so that we can more effectively share our stories to our families, future ExCEL applicants, and potential donors. Please identify one person in your community who will be responsible for taking pictures at each event, writing a short (2-3 sentence) blurb describing each event, and emailing this information to the director. Who is an organized and creative member who could carry that load for your community?

At times members may feel tempted or pressured to miss a community event. Please consider community events as you would any class meeting for an SCU course: Missing one event each trimester is disappointing but understandable; missing more than one event raises questions about the individual's commitment to community. How do you propose that a group hold members accountable for coming to each event?

## Appendix C: Apartment Agreement

**Function:** Apartment agreements serve several functions that together contribute to the peace, solidarity, and interdependence of a strong community: To create an opportunity for co-habitants to dialogue about their visions for living together, to present a list of clear expectations for community and simple living in shared housing, and to proactively (and perhaps preemptively) address potential areas of conflict.

**Form:** An apartment agreement should clearly spell out expectations for the mundane facets of shared housing and community in a series or list of statements that address most if not all of the following areas:

- Sharing meals/food
  - Do you plan on eating meals together during the week? If so, when/ how often? Will the food be shared or prepared individually? If shared, who will prepare it and what dietary restrictions do cohabitants have? Who will clean up afterwards?
  - Will you pool money to buy shared food? If so, what types of food and how much money will you each contribute every week? How will you apportion food equally? Are guests allowed to eat this food? If so, how do you address equality of access between roommates?
- Food preparation and consumption
  - Who will clean after food preparation and consumption? How quickly should they clean after preparation and consumption?
  - Where may or may not food be consumed? Where may or may not dishes be left?
  - Are there types of food that may not be prepared (because of allergy or personal opposition)?
  - May alcohol be consumed? If so, when and where?
- Shared spaces (living rooms, kitchens, bathrooms, stairs, entry ways, etc.)
  - How will you use shared spaces: for study/work, entertainment, eating, hosting guests, etc.? When/ at what times will shared spaces be used for quiet activities versus more social/ louder activities?
  - How will shared spaces be cleaned? Who will clean them and when/ how often? Who will clean after guests?
  - Who will empty and replace garbage bags? How often?
- Guests
  - How often may drop-ins (day guests) be allowed to visit? Where are they expected to gather? Who will clean up after them?
  - Will overnight guests be allowed? If so, where will they sleep, and how long may they stay? Who will clean up after them?
  - Will overnight romantic partners be allowed? If so, how long may they stay, and what precautions will be taken to not disturb or offend cohabitants? Who will clean up after them?
- Décor and Furniture

- Who will care for décor and furniture in shared spaces? What does ‘caring’ for décor and furniture entail or mean for you?
- What décor or furniture may be added to shared spaces in the future? Or, how will decisions regarding the addition of décor or furniture to shared spaces? Who will pay for these additions?
- Dress/ Clothing
  - What are the minimal expectations for dress in shared spaces?
  - Are clothes allowed to be left in shared spaces? If so, what types of clothing are allowed, and what types are not? How long may clothes be left out?
- Personal hygiene
  - How often do cohabitants agree to bathe, use odor controlling devices, wash clothes, etc.?
  - When/ at what times will you be needing the bathroom to get ready on typical teaching days? Does that work with your cohabitant?
- Internal environment
  - At what times are louder activities (hosting guests in shared spaces, watching TV, gaming, listening to music) allowed in shared spaces? When are they not tolerated?
  - What temperatures do cohabitants agree to keep the shared spaces and at what times and seasons?
- Sustainability
  - Do cohabitants have any agreements regarding the use of utilities (water/ electricity/ natural gas) for efficient ways of living?
- Personal Preferences
  - What annoyances do cohabitants experience that they would like to avoid in shared living?
  - What modes of communication do cohabitants prefer?
  - When do cohabitants need alone time? Where will they seek this time apart?
- When/ how often will cohabitants agree to meet to discuss any issues or how things are going in shared living?

## Appendix D: Standard Housing Provisions

- Dishes
- Glasses
- Cutlery
- Kitchen knives
- Mixing bowls – 1 set
- Paper towel rack
- Measuring spoons/cups
- Bakeware set
- Kitchen tool set
- Can opener
- Pots & pans
- Blender
- Toaster
- Coffee maker
- Hand mixer
- Printer (not ink)
- Desk lamp
- First Aid Kit
- Swiffer/broom/dust pan