

The only board member to comment about it was Sonya Mays, who chairs the board's finance committee. She said she wanted to commend Superintendent Nikolai Vitti for the partnership "because I know it was not an easy get."

"I'm really excited that we're doing something innovative at this new school," Mays said.

Chrystal Wilson, spokeswoman for the Detroit school district, said "if this goes the way that it has been planned ... what I can say is that it will be a state-of-the-art program and partnership and it will be one of a kind nationwide."

Wilson said the partnership that ties the three entities has been in the works for about a year. She said "community engagement" sessions will begin in October to seek input.

"Once we get input from the community, then we'll be able to move forward in understanding how many students will be enrolled, and the resources we'll need at that point," Wilson said.

This partnership may breathe new life into Marygrove College, which announced a year ago that it would cease offering undergraduate programs. That move was made in part because of steep declines in students. Enrollment for graduate and undergraduate programs peaked at 1,850 in 2013, but had dropped to 966 in 2016.

Kresge has invested heavily in the northwest Detroit neighborhoods around Marygrove and has become deeply involved with the college.

The Free Press reported earlier this year that while faculty now teach most classes online, the college's physical campus has been deeded to a new conservancy — one influenced by the values of the nuns of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which founded the college in 1927 — and funded by Kresge.

Also in the board agenda materials, the district previewed what it hopes will come out of the partnership.

"As the District continues to improve enrollment, innovative and unique schools/programs are necessary to recruit and retain students and families," the materials say. "This innovative school offers Detroit families with a unique traditional public school experience while addressing its human capital needs."

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