

2015-2016 Ransome Prize Winner Concepcion R. Alvar

Concepcion Alvar began her career as an educator at international schools in Asia and the Middle East. In 1988, she came to New York to pursue her Masters in Special Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. She served as a classroom teacher at Marymount School of New York before she became the Director of Admissions. In 2004, Mrs. Alvar was appointed to be the first lay Headmistress of Marymount School.

Mrs. Alvar has built a culture of curiosity and “a wave of intentional and highly successful innovation” at Marymount. She chose to invest in maker education during its infancy as a movement by creating the first Fab Lab in a K-12 independent school. Focused on student-centered experiential learning, this Fabrication Lab became the anchor for Marymount’s newest campus. As engagement and initiative soared, Mrs. Alvar also created a Tinker Space, an IDEA Lab, and a STEAM center at Marymount’s other two campuses.

A leader in making and digital learning, Marymount was eager to share its expertise with the local and national community. Sponsored in part by a grant from the Edward E. Ford Foundation, Mrs. Alvar established the “Making and Learning Institute,” a professional development community serving over 200 teachers from 75 different schools in 11 states. The Institute promotes a culture of making in schools and offers immersions into innovative teaching practices, maker culture, design thinking, and digital learning.

To maintain a high level of engagement among Marymount’s faculty members, Mrs. Alvar implemented a “shared leadership” model, empowering curriculum leaders from all divisions to oversee the school’s broader approach to dynamic teaching and learning. These inspired teams began to re-imagine curriculum, schedules, divisions, and assessments as the school started planning for its “school of the future.”

Service projects, philanthropic initiatives, entrepreneurship, and a global exchange program have expanded under her leadership. Mrs. Alvar has presented at many conferences on girls’ education, creative space planning, innovative teaching and learning, and entrepreneurship. She currently serves as a trustee on the board of the New York State Association of Independent Schools (NYSAIS), Marymount High School in Los Angeles, and the RSHM International Network of Schools. She is also a member of the Headmistresses Association of the East, the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), and the Online Education Symposium for Independent Schools. In the past, she has served on the boards of the National Coalition of Girls’ Schools (NCGS) and the Guild of Independent Schools.

