



Progress Report to the Board of Trustees February 2024

Our five-year strategic plan, *St. Thomas 2025*, was approved by the Board of Trustees in February 2021 and is in its final two years of implementation. We continue to track our progress through several metrics and by providing narrative progress updates such as the one below. Our next plan will look to the subsequent five years and will begin to take shape in the fall of 2024. We will assess our full plate of ongoing priorities to determine what will continue as well as focus on pressing priorities. The strategic plan process will include community conversations with key campus stakeholders. We will also tap into expertise from our alumni and partner communities. We will seek input from the Board of Trustees at the fall 2024 retreat. The board will also review the *St. Thomas 2030* plan at the November 2025 meeting.

Lead in STEAM Education

On February 5, we officially opened the doors to the Schoenecker Center, thereby achieving a major milestone towards our goal of leading in STEAM Education. The Schoenecker Center features marquee learning spaces for STEM and arts education, including an engineering high bay, a 150-seat music performance hall, science laboratories, emerging media studios and an art gallery.

Classes on the first day showcased the exciting connections among STEAM fields. Nursing students took their first chemistry lab. Physics and engineering majors began experimenting in Electromagnetic Fields. Science and communication majors sat side-by-side in the interdisciplinary course, "Science, Media and Social Impact."

The five-level, 130,000-square-foot complex is poised to help St. Thomas become a national model for interdisciplinary learning and has received a significant amount of both earned and owned media.

U.S. Representative Betty McCollum visited the Schoenecker Center in January to see how federal partnerships that improve sustainable energy sources and fill important workforce skills gaps are coming to life. McCollum, who served as the chair of the U.S. House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee from 2021-23 and is now the ranking member, is championing several St. Thomas initiatives and is helping to secure significant federal investments. Her support, along with our targeted efforts to increase our federal grant activity, have increased federal funding to St. Thomas significantly in the last four years. St. Thomas will have received a total of \$36 million in Congressional appropriations once the

current appropriations bill is signed into law. In addition, we have increased grant activity by about \$2 million annually and are working to further that activity.

Grow the Morrison Family College of Health

Dr. Annette Hines was hired as Executive Director of the School of Nursing and began her role on January 1, 2024. The admitted inaugural cohort in fall of 2023 was 52 BSN students and the total number of students this year in the School of Nursing is 144. Overall enrollment in the Morrison Family College of Health (MFCOH) is up 9.2% from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023. We expect a formal letter granting initial accreditation from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) in early May 2024.

We are seeing growth in all undergraduate programs within the college, particularly in Exercise Science (EXSC). The growth of EXSC is due, at least in part, to the partnership between MFCOH and Athletics to support the Sport Science Institute (SSI), a program that allows undergrads to work directly with Division I athletes to address issues of performance, strength, and conditioning.

While the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program continues to grow, enrollment is short of projected enrollment, with smaller application pools than anticipated. A proposal to move to direct admissions to the nursing program for prospective St. Thomas students is now under consideration by the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and will make our BSN program more competitive in the current market.

The Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) program has seen an increase in their application pool's quality and quantity. We anticipate another strong MSN cohort (cohort #3) at maximum capacity. Programs in the Graduate School of Professional Psychology (GSPP) also continue to grow, more quickly than anticipated.

We are currently evaluating the Doctor of Social Work (DSW) program in light of an emerging, highly competitive market. In recent years we have seen the applicant pool for this program shrink in terms of both quality and quantity.

The MFCOH is currently exploring opportunities to build new, mission-oriented programs that meet workforce and community needs in healthcare. Consultants have been secured to assist us with envisioning Physician's Assistant and Physical Therapy programs in the MFCOH. Additionally, a Bachelor of Science in Nutrition program will begin in Fall 2024.

Meet Ever-Changing Needs of Students, Alumni and Employers

Dr. Eddy Rojas, Executive Vice President and Provost has led our efforts to develop flexible degrees and programs, redesigning our offerings for relevance and affordability, and fostering collaboration across disciplines. By reimagining traditional degree structures, we have introduced a novel business model that emphasizes variable costs, enabling us to offer lower tuition rates without sacrificing quality and better aligns with the demands of the future workforce.

The creation of the multidisciplinary SPEED (Strategic Program Evaluation, Execution, and Development) Team has reduced the time to market for new graduate degrees by half. Our team has facilitated the development of programs that are not only timely but also deeply connected to the needs of our community and the wider workforce.

Key achievements include:

- Expansion of our program offerings, including St. Thomas Online for distance education, and new graduate programs in Nursing, Special Education, Artificial Intelligence, and Management.
- The launch of the Master of Arts in Diversity Leadership (MADL) program, offering a dynamic and flexible learning environment that caters to part-time students through an online, asynchronous delivery model.
- Collaboration among eight departments from three different colleges (Arts and Sciences, Business, Education) to deliver the MADL program, showcasing our ability to break down organizational barriers and foster interdisciplinary integration.
- Co-development of curricula with industry partners, ensuring our programs remain relevant and responsive to employer needs.

As we move forward, our goal is to continue to innovate and adapt our educational offerings to meet the needs of our students and the demands of the evolving job market. We are committed to becoming a leading institution for values-based graduate education and a sought-after partner for professional development.

Foster Belonging and Dismantle Racism

Our campuswide climate survey, conducted in 2023, received over 3,000 responses and showed an improved sense of belonging across all groups. Disparities persist among some groups indicating that there is still progress to be made. The survey findings were shared with the campus community through a community forum, with a dedicated session specifically tailored for students and facilitated by student interns.

We continue to cultivate the cultural competency skills of our community, using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). Trained administrators allow us to offer this assessment to more units, including Campus Ministry, the Center for Common Good, and University Advancement. Additionally, Kha Yang, our Associate Vice President for Inclusive Excellence, provided training to the Brooklyn Center Police Department.

The Truth Racial Healing and Transformation Center (TRHT) was established with support from the GHR Foundation to enhance St. Thomas's internal racial equity efforts. The objective is to foster dialogue across differences and learn how to repair harm. Campus-wide training sessions are scheduled for the spring of 2024. A collaboration with the School of Law has fostered the development of training on restorative justice circles.

Prepare Students for Work and Career

The Alumni, Corporate and Careers (ACC) unit continues to engage with students to help them understand, plan and network for careers. The number of students engaged through career appointments and events increased by over 90% (from 1,444 to 2,749) in the first five months of FY24 compared to the same period in FY23.

Providing access to career experiences and employers to maintain the career outcomes and career success of our students remains a top priority. The number of companies at the 2023 fall fair increased by 58% (from 64 to 101) and we are poised to experience a similar increase for the spring fair taking place on Feb. 14, 2024. Additionally, the number of

internships available to students through our Handshake platform increased 30% (from 9,028 to 11,746) during the first six months of FY24 versus the same period in FY23. Lastly, we launched a 12-member Employer Advisory Board to build relationships and exchange ideas with organizations representing the diverse industries and fields of interest to our graduates.

Building National Awareness and Advancing Priorities through Athletics

National media coverage of athletics this year has included ESPN Family Networks, Big Ten Network, FS1, Bally Sports, FOX 9+, PAC12 Network, Yahoo sports, Sports Illustrated, Washington Post, NY Times, Twin Cities Business Magazine, Seattle Times, San Diego Union-Tribune, Charlotte Observer, and USA Today.

A few highlights:

- Our regionally broadcast women's hockey game vs. UMD on Bally Sports was distributed to more than 2 million homes.
- We increased digital content by 8x over FY22, leading to an increase of more than 10,000 followers on Twitter and almost an additional 10,000 in Instagram.
- Saw an average of 23% increase in overall attendance in ticketed sports for FY23.
- Average men's basketball student attendance increased over 60% and men's hockey increased over 50% from our first to second year.
- Managed a group of 15 students to produce 120+ live stream broadcasts and 70+ scoreboard shows.
- Developed a strategic plan to upgrade broadcast equipment and technology to improve the fan experience.
- Hosted the University of Minnesota in men's and women's hockey with an attendance of over 11,000.
- Football competed at Harvard, drawing more than 1,000 Tommie fans to Boston.
- Men's basketball played on national TV vs. UC-Berkeley (Cal) and Marquette.
- Women's basketball hosted both Iowa State and Wisconsin in Schoenecker Arena.
- Launched first-ever linear/broadcast television partnership with Fox 9.
- Men's hockey, men's basketball and women's basketball have all spent time in first place of their respective conferences in FY24.

Promote and Leverage Our Comprehensive Academic Excellence

Year-over-year we have seen significant gains to elevate our experts in the media. Since July 1, we have landed 45 interviews; achieving 55 top-tier placements, a 57% increase year over year. We have placed 250 national media stories, a 39% increase year over year. Outlets include NPR, CNN, and TechTarget. University Business published a full-length feature on President Vischer which focused on St. Thomas' goals, mission, and ways of dealing with challenging headwinds. The estimated ad equivalency of all placements is estimated at \$130.3 million.

Retaining and Attracting World-Class Talent

Despite several headwinds impacting employee morale, we continue to make progress toward increasing employee sense of belonging and improving retention. We completed a Total Rewards Survey and realigned the focus of our benefits. We have leveraged this survey to draft an Employee Value Proposition. We have also completed a deep dive analysis into exit survey data for faculty departures, kicked-off a compensation redesign

project and pay equity analysis, and established an HR DEI strategy. We continue to make progress toward modernizing and aligning our outdated human resources systems. Our new service center model is in place and has proven successful.

Prepare Educators to Dismantle Disparities

Maxfield Elementary School serves as the center of our strategic initiative to prepare educators to dismantle disparities. Our robust Maxfield 2030 strategic plan offers a bold commitment to moving the needle on K-12 student achievement and preparing educators and leaders to be forces for justice and change. We are prepared to actualize movement toward our core goals by crafting a program of work, including research, that will guide the coming five years and beyond. The focus of our work at Maxfield Elementary School will be threefold: (1) Improve learning outcomes, including academic outcomes, for students of color, students living in poverty, and/or students with special needs; (2) Enhance teacher preparation, pedagogical content knowledge, and self-efficacy to improve performance, satisfaction, and retention; and (3) Develop and improve frameworks for understanding school performance.

In conjunction with our collaborative learning school, teacher residency programs in the School of Education are leading the way in preparing educators to dismantle disparities. Current partnerships with St. Paul Public Schools, Minneapolis Public Schools, and a charter school consortium have been fortunate to leverage the strong district-university relationships built through the award-winning and innovative St. Paul Urban Teacher Residency (SUTR) program. Since 2016 SUTR has recruited and prepared over 350 students in 18 cohorts by removing barriers, preparing, and retaining teachers, a large percentage of which (65%) are teachers of color. In St. Paul, 81% of SUTR graduates are still teaching in-district, compared to the district average of 62% retention, and 91% of all graduates are still teaching in the state.

Expanding Pathways through the Dougherty Family College

The Dougherty Family College has attracted media attention for its work to provide a pathway for underrepresented students. The Star Tribune featured DFC in a September 2023 feature. In *Inside Higher Ed*, Dean Buffy Smith, said the college's diversity reflects its close, carefully forged ties with community organizations, including boys' and girls' clubs, mosques, churches, synagogues, and cultural centers.

The article highlighted that the college's average two-year graduation rate is 56 percent, and 80 percent of DFC graduates transfer to a four-year institution. Three-fourths of associate degree graduates are currently in or have graduated from a bachelor's degree program. Since the college's founding, 313 students earned associate degrees, and 86 students have graduated with four-year degrees, most of them from the University of St. Thomas.

Nationally, a little over 31 percent of community college students transfer, and of those who transfer, slightly fewer than half complete a bachelor's degree within six years, according to a 2022 report from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

Illuminate Our Mission and Charism

To further embed the importance of our mission to our internal community, the Office of Mission has expanded mission formation programs to units across campus, including to

Student Affairs staff. We are now in conversation with the Morrison College of Health for a similarly tailored experience for their faculty and staff. Outreach to the community has expanded through very well-attended Sacred Arts concerts in the chapel and exhibitions that feature our collection of sacred arts.

We are implementing a new initiative to provide mission assessment to outside entities. This will begin with Christus Health, a Catholic hospital network based in Texas. St. Thomas faculty and staff will assess their internal mission work and offer guidance.

Close Student Financial Gaps

We have a renewed focus on the importance of retention. Our goals are to: (1) improve the overall first to second year (fall-to-fall) overall retention rate from 87 percent to 90 percent by 2025; and (2) continually work to reduce the gap in retention rates for students of color, first-generation, out-of-state, low-income and commuter students through targeted intervention and by ensuring the participation of all students in high-impact retention practices.

We experienced a nearly 1 percentage point increase in overall fall-fall retention rates for the Fall 2022 cohort compared to the Fall 2021 cohort. Given the cohort's size, this resulted in nearly 150 more students being retained than the previous one. (Fall 2021 Cohort Fall-Fall Retention: 85.6%; Fall 2022 Cohort Fall-Fall Retention: 86.4%)

As we continue to work to identify ways to better support our St. Thomas students, it is critical that we understand who our students are. St. Thomas is currently completing its final year of the Student Success Academy through the Higher Learning Commission in which we have spent three years engaging in institutional inventories to understand our students and where our areas of opportunity are in terms of improving support. Our data inventory has revealed the upward trend of enrollment of first-generation, BIPOC and low-income students and the retention and graduation gaps that exist.

In January of 2023, a mapping exercise was conducted to determine the number of first-gen students served by existing programs, initiatives and resources. Efforts were implemented to increase the number of first-gen students served through our existing programs. In fall of 2023, 72% of our first-gen students were served with an existing program or high impact practice. This has resulted in a nearly 40 percentage point increase of intentionally supported first-gen students for the Fall 2023 cohort compared to the Fall 2022 cohort.

Expand our Pipeline of Students

VP of Enrollment Management Omar Correa continues to implement enrollment strategies to both maintain our strong market share in the Minnesota market and expand strategically to targeted markets.

To spur more growth in our transfer population, we have developed university-wide policies and procedures to address undergraduate transfer students who have accomplished any of the following: (a) earned an associate's degree from an accredited institution; (b) fulfilled the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum; or (c) satisfactorily completed college credits at another accredited institution. For a and b, two transfer block agreements were approved by the Faculty Senate and President. Part c was fulfilled by revising a variety

of transfer course policies and processes (also approved by the Faculty Senate and President).

St. Thomas is also in the process of establishing major-specific pathways for transfer students (as one of our goals from our Quality Initiative). Thus far, we have pathways for the Psychology and Biology majors with seven different community colleges: Anoka-Ramsey, Century, Inver Hills, MCTC, Normandale, North Hennepin, and Saint Paul College. We will be adding additional major-specific pathways in the coming years.

Create a Robust Residency Culture

We have made great gains towards our goal of creating a robust residency culture for students on the St. Thomas campus. We have raised \$7.5M towards housing grants and have met 96% of our goal of ensuring a supportive environment on campus.

We conducted a survey of first-year students in fall 2023 to measure satisfaction across the resident student experience. The scores range from 1 (low) to 7 (high) with the national/industry benchmarking Goal of 5.25-5.5. Our findings demonstrate the last two years have seen the highest satisfaction ratings over the last 10+ years. Among the highlights are the following scores: Positively Contributed to Learning: 5.58; Overall Satisfaction: 5.62; and Sense of Community: 5.7. The sense of community in the residence halls score for students of color is at the goal level and is similar to that of white students.

We have also met 100% of our goal of increasing opportunities for students to participate in Living Learning and Theme-Based Learning Communities. We have achieved a 32% increase in first-year students living in the 14 Living Learning Communities (LLCs) with 725 first-year students choosing to live in an LLC in Fall 2023. Two new LLCs have been established: Science Discovery Scholars and Study of Sport, which connects to the newly announced Sport Studies minor and combines courses from the College of Arts and Sciences and the Morrison Family College of Health.

LLC student sense of connection increased by 5% in Fall 2023 compared to Fall 2022 according to Residence Life survey data. This increase can be contributed to utilizing fall 2022 survey results where students said they wanted connection opportunities beyond the approximately 150 faculty and/or course related activities/events. For Fall 2023, four LLC Student Coordinators were hired and in addition to supporting the course-related activities, they created 35 more connection/social-based activities/events.

We have seen a 250% increase in Second Year Living Learning Communities (SYLLC) participation from 30 students in Fall 2022 to 76 students in Fall 2023. These SYLLCs partner with the Office of Sustainability Initiatives, Aquinas Scholars Honors Program, College of Business, and Common Good Scholars (Theology). LLC Student Coordinators and Faculty/Academic Units provided opportunities for connection and engagement, including off-campus excursions, campus sustainability events, academic unit activities, and in-hall socialization.

Living and Working Sustainably

St. Thomas just received a gold STARS rating as measured by the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). Our performance improved from the 2021 STARS report in all areas.

We are also well on our way towards obtaining a minimum LEED silver certification for new buildings over 25,000 square feet, Schoenecker Center is 95% to goal; Lee & Penny Anderson Arena is 10% to goal. The Schoenecker Center received positive feedback from US Green Building Council (USGBC) review of the LEED Gold design submittal. Final construction submittal will be sent to USGBC in February, with confirmation of achieving LEED certification anticipated in Summer 2024.

We have also met our goal of reducing annual carbon emissions. Compared to our baseline, in 2023, we saw a 66% reduction in the rate of annual carbon emissions. The University continues to improve heating distribution and control systems, air handling systems, lighting systems, and energy management controls as we work towards our goal of carbon neutrality by 2035.

We are 80% to our goal of including sustainability components within at least 20% of undergraduate courses. We offered 213 sections of undergraduate courses that were sustainability-designated in 2023, 79% of academic departments offer at least one sustainability course, all First-Year Experience students complete an introductory sustainability module, and we launched the Graduate Certificate in Sustainability in the School of Engineering.

Engaging all Tommies as Changemakers

The Center for the Common Good (CCG) prioritizes equity and sustainable partnerships in our community engagement initiatives. During the 2022-2023 academic year, the Center designated 101 Common Good Community-Engaged courses, taught by 55 faculty members across various colleges/schools and disciplines. 1,610 students invested 37,528 hours, collaborating with over 65 unique community partner organizations.

Including volunteer hours from programs like Shelter Crew, Tommie Shelf, Tutor-Mentor, and student clubs, our overall commitment reaches 107,000 hours with involvement from more than 300 community partners. A total of 3,491 Tommies (3,064 undergrads) contributed to our community through engagement courses and volunteering in the 2022-2023. academic year.

In November, the Center for the Common Good secured a grant from Uniservitate, a global organization promoting excellence in community engagement at Catholic institutions. The funding will benefit students participating in the Shelter Crew Program and Catholic Charities. The Shelter Crew program is experiencing increased student participation, with expectations of a more than 20% rise by the end of the current academic year.

In August 2023, CCG assumed oversight of the VISION program, a cultural immersion experience for students. In January 2024, 10 students visited McAllen, Texas to collaborate with Sister Norma Pimentel and the Catholic Charities program.