



## PROGRESS REPORT September 2021

The following updates recently provided to the Board of Trustees illustrate progress on many of the strategic priorities outlined in *St. Thomas 2025*.

### Lead in STEAM Education

With the design of the STEAM complex complete, we are on track to break ground on construction of the new complex this Spring.

One additional goal related to leading in STEAM education is to increase federal funding awards to the level awarded to the top 10 Catholic universities. Many faculty and staff across campus are working hard to spur federal grant activity. We are also exploring other Congressional funding opportunities. We have already secured some exciting early wins.

- Our Center for Microgrid Research at the School of Engineering has led the way in pursuing state and federal sources of funding. The Center was awarded a \$5.4 million multi-year grant from the State Legislature this spring to support the acquisition of world- class equipment that will garner national research partners.
- We are working with U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum’s office to create a new microgrid and renewable energy research partnership with the U.S. Army Research Labs.
- Through a National Science Foundation grant awarded to the School of Engineering called S-STEM, we **will fund 31 transfer students who are pursuing bachelor’s degrees in** civil, computer, electrical, or mechanical engineering. The \$1.5 million grant will leverage our new partnerships with five local community colleges, and will help us provide mentoring practices, a new summer bridge course, monthly seminars to boost skills, and faculty, peer, and industry mentoring.
- The School of Education and Morrison Family College of Health recently learned that they secured \$1.2 million from a joint effort to fund scholarships and programs for students in early childhood special education and social work.
- And, earlier this semester, the Morrison Family College of Health secured a behavioral health grant of \$1.9 million over four years from the federal agency called HRSA.

These are exciting developments, and this activity is an indication that St. Thomas is attracting national recognition for its academic excellence.

### Grow the Morrison Family College of Health

Over the summer, Dean MayKao Hang, Dr. Martha Scheckel and the rest of the nursing team worked incredibly hard to gain the necessary approvals to begin recruiting nursing students who will start at St. Thomas in fall 2022! On Aug. 5, the Minnesota Board of Nursing voted to approve the **School of Nursing's proposed pre-licensure Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Nursing**. We had an extensive visit on Sept. 20-21 from the Higher Learning Commission, our regional accreditation body, and are awaiting their decision. This is the last approval needed before student recruitment can begin. In the coming months, School of Nursing faculty and staff will begin preparing for Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education accreditation, which will facilitate full operationalization of the programs, while also preparing for the CCNE site visit in the fall of 2023.

### Build National Awareness and Advance Priorities through Athletics

The launch of D-I Athletics has brought tremendous excitement to campus. In our first official D-I contest, women's soccer tied the **University of Northern Iowa 0-0** in double overtime. So far, our women's soccer, volleyball and football teams have each recorded their first D-I wins. Our first home football game was a victory against Butler!

Intercollegiate Athletics has hired experienced coaches and administrative staff from around the country who will continue to forge our exciting transition. The team has gone from 10% to 29% women, and from 4% to 19% employees of color.

Tommie Athletics has established an exclusive multimedia rights holder, Tommie Sports Properties, and launched a new relationship with KSTP-AM 1500/SKOR North. Tommie fans can now listen live to football, men's basketball and men's hockey games, plus various women's contests. **We are excited to partner with Ginny Morris' team at KSTP to broadcast our exciting Division 1 activity to alumni and the entire Twin Cities.**

Our first men's hockey D-I competition was played on Sunday, Oct. 3, against national runner-up St. Cloud State University at the Xcel Center. **On the women's hockey side, new head coach Joel Johnson is also head coach of the 2021 U.S. Women's National Hockey Team.** He recently coached at the World Cup!

### Promote and Leverage Our Comprehensive Academic Excellence

On September 13, 2021, US News & World Report announced their 2022 rankings. St. Thomas maintained its overall position, reflecting the momentum and hard work of the university to focus on important outcomes like graduation and retention rates and student excellence, while sustaining improvements in our national undergraduate academic reputation.

Highlights of St. Thomas performance in the rankings are:

- We are a top 20 national Catholic university with opportunity to advance within this group. We are now at #19 in a tie with Catholic University of America and ahead of Duquesne University. We are just one ranking below DePaul, Seattle, Seton Hall and University of Dayton (4-way tie at #15).

- We are ranked in the top third of all national universities. Our overall rank is #136, holding steady with the 2021 ranking of #133 and the 2020 ranking of #139. This year we had our highest ever 6-year graduation rate and improved our Pell-grant recipient graduation rate. We remain 5 ranking spots (due to ties) away from the top 100.
- We maintained our peer reputation score, sustaining improvements from the previous two years. U.S. News surveys presidents, provosts and admissions deans who rank universities on a 1-5 scale. Our peer assessment this year (which accounts for 20 percent of the overall ranking) is 2.6, which is consistent with last year, and up from 2.4 three years ago.
- We are ranked #67 for Best Value Schools. This is our highest ranking in this category in the last four years and puts us in the top 12 for national Catholic Universities and first in **Minnesota. This ranking is an assessment of a school's academic quality compared to the net cost of attendance.**
- We are ranked #82 for Best Colleges for Veterans. This is our third year ranked in the top 100 and up from a ranking of #93 last year. We are a top 5 national Catholic university. This ranking recognizes schools that participate in federal initiatives helping veterans and active-duty service members pay for their degrees.
- School of Engineering ranked in the top 50 for the eighth year in a row and a top 5 national Catholic university. This year, we were ranked #39 among engineering schools where doctorate degrees are not offered. We are a top 5 national Catholic University, tied with Loyola University. This ranking is 100% determined by peer reputation surveys.
- Opus College of Business is ranked in the top third of national universities and a top 20 national Catholic university. This year, Opus was ranked #166, and is the second ranked school in Minnesota, behind the University of Minnesota. We are a top 20 national Catholic university, tied with University of Dayton. This ranking is also 100% determined by peer reputation survey. Opus has been ranked nationally every year since the school achieved AACSB accreditation status in 2010.
- St. Thomas is second in overall ranking among Summit League colleges and universities ranked in the national category. Only the University of Denver ranked higher than St. Thomas at #93.

### Expand Pathways through the Dougherty Family College

Interim Dean Buffy Smith has launched a new messaging campaign to build greater community awareness about Dougherty Family College and increase enrollment. The campaign includes a [video](#) and brochures for use by community leaders. All St. Thomas faculty and staff can be champions for Dougherty Family College!

### Close Financial Gaps for Students



I am pleased to share that the Ciresi Walburn Foundation voted on Sept. 21 to fund a very exciting leadership and mentorship program for African American men. The Ciresi Walburn Leadership Fellows will be an annual cohort of 10 incoming students beginning next fall. Along with a scholarship, the program will provide holistic supports and mentorship to the men to help them persist, graduate and launch their careers.

### Create a Robust Residency Culture



We were able to quickly implement a generous gift from Dan and Ruth Haggerty to move about 50 students on campus who previously had received housing exemptions based on financial need. **Thanks to Karen Lange's team, we contacted individual students one by one** to tell them about this opportunity. It was a great example of intentionally ensuring that we are providing an equitable experience to all students.

### Living and Working Sustainably



St. Thomas has joined the **Laudato Si' Action Platform**, a new initiative of the Vatican to engage people around the world in caring for our common home. We commit to joining other universities and communities throughout the world to answer Pope Francis' call to creating a more sustainable world.

Earlier this month, *Sierra* magazine published its [15<sup>th</sup> annual Cool Schools ranking](#). St. Thomas made its first appearance on the list in 2019 with a ranking among the bottom 33% of schools nationwide over the past two years. This year, St. Thomas made a big leap to #81 among 328 colleges and universities. This now places us among the top 25% nationwide in *Sierra's* higher education sustainability ranking, 3<sup>rd</sup> highest ranked in the state of Minnesota, among the top 10 institutions in the upper Midwest, and among the top 10 national Catholic universities. This is a reflection of the collaborative work of many students, faculty and staff across campus to live and work more sustainably at St. Thomas.

### *Update on the Continuous Work to Embed Our Strategic Plan*

We are keeping our strategic plan front and center and embedding it into the work of the university. Each leader responsible for individual strategic priorities has evaluated progress **metrics with their teams**. We added “milestones” to our metrics and developed an internal system that will track and report on progress on each of our 90 metrics.