



## LEADERSHIP SOCIETY MARCH UPDATE

You are receiving this letter because you are a member of Saint Mary's Leadership Society, a family of givers who generously contribute \$1,000 or more annually to the university.

Greetings!

It is a time of profound optimism for Saint Mary's. I am privileged to gratefully celebrate a \$25 million gift commitment — the largest gift in our university's 111-year-history — from an alumnus and his family. This gift, made in response to the vision of university president Father James P. Burns, IVD, Ph.D., is a celebration of all of us who are formed by, contribute to, and love Saint Mary's. Because of you and supporters like you, this gift joins the countless contributions of time, talent, and treasure that built our great Lasallian tradition. This gift challenges each of us to continue and deepen our commitment.

In 1996 I arrived at Saint Mary's for my first job as a fundraiser. Like so many of our students, I had no idea how Saint Mary's would impact me. Through the leadership of Brother Louis DeThomasis, FSC, Ph.D., and among this community of faculty, students, and alumni, I learned the heart of giving — deep meaningful relationships, built in trust and grounded in faith, that are committed to our mission. While working for Saint Mary's, I became an alumnus of the M.A. in Philanthropy and Development program and experienced first hand the transformational impact of a Saint Mary's education. With all Saint Mary's taught me, I had the opportunity to serve as vice president of advancement at three universities and, in 2021, at the invitation of Father Burns, I returned home to Saint Mary's.

Being back has been a tremendous blessing. Among the many amazing Saint Mary's stories that have been shared with me over the years, I am beyond excited to share with you a little about the anonymous alumnus and his family who made this \$25 million commitment and challenge to Saint Mary's. They felt compelled to invest! Their gift is directed to the university's endowment for annual operating support to cement the vision recently laid out by the president to ensure a strong and successful future. The benefactors' primary goal is to generate new and increased philanthropic investment and grow our endowment from \$70 million to nearly \$100 million. To further position the university for the future, the anonymous benefactor hopes this gift inspires others — benefactors, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, and students. The generous family sees Saint Mary's as one of the few institutions that has a clear, achievable plan to steer through the turbulent waters facing all of higher education today. To support this plan, they challenged the university to:

- raise an additional \$100 million in new gift commitments of \$50,000 or more between June 1, 2022 and May 31, 2024
- set an expectation that the university will make significant progress toward 900 students enrolled at the undergraduate Winona College by August 2025

We did not accept this challenge lightly. At our February meeting of the Board of Trustees, the Board unanimously approved a resolution to “gratefully accept this extraordinary and transformational gift” and is “firmly committed to fulfilling the conditions.” The Board of Trustees expressed its profound gratitude and deepest respect for this graduate and his family for their commitment to the Lasallian Catholic mission of Saint Mary's which has guided our institution for more than a century. I am proud that our enrollment team has also accepted this challenge.

To celebrate this historic moment, we shared the news widely. Since the announcement was made on Thursday, Feb. 16, this gift and challenge received widespread press coverage including the online sites Forbes.com and Yahoo News, newspapers like Winona Daily News, Winona Post, La Crosse Tribune, Rochester Post Bulletin and Minneapolis Star Tribune, as well as television stations in Rochester, La Crosse, and the Twin Cities. I was inspired to see all the informal and social networks that shared the news as well.

The efforts to meet this gift's challenge are underway. Our advancement team has connected with hundreds of benefactors since the announcement, and I am hearing three main themes: Congrats, Caution, and Commitment.

The first response is most often celebration. Father Burns and I have received emails and phone calls full of hope and joy. A Winona business leader wrote, "Congratulations on the wonderful announcement. What an amazing act of love for the SMU family." One alumnus shared, "I am really proud!" and another alumna offered that the \$25 million commitment renews her faith that her donations make a difference. A graduate alumna called the challenge a goal for our whole community to rally around.

After congratulations, there is often a pause and a big breath. Some benefactors have expressed thoughtful caution: Are we ready? Is this the time? I heard phrases like "Let me think about this" and "That is a lot of work to do." These responses are incredibly valuable, and I know Father Burns and the Board asked the same questions before accepting this gift.

The next question has often been "How can I help?" and many commitments have been made to be part of this challenge. Benefactors have made multi-million dollar estate commitments, and several families are considering seven and eight figure gifts. Others made their first \$50,000 gift through a five-year pledge of \$10,000 a year. An alumnus from the 1960s connected his grandson to our admission office. A Saint Mary's alumnus and priest has committed to pray for our success.

There are many ways to help Saint Mary's meet this challenge, and it will take community participation. If you have any questions, please contact me at **507-457-1489** or **gklein@smumn.edu**, and we will follow up with you.

As vice president of advancement for our university, I often reflect that I have the best job in the world. I have the privilege of working with people like you, who are incredibly generous and visionary, who invest in a mission and purpose far greater than yourselves. Because of you, I am inspired every day — by your commitment, your gifts, and your partnership in making Saint Mary's the very best it can possibly be. We are truly blessed.

Live Jesus in our Hearts, Forever!



Gary Klein  
Vice President of Advancement

P.S. I hope to see you at our signature event on Saint Mary's Minneapolis Campus, the 2023 Hendrickson Institute for Ethical Leadership Forum: *Navigating the Road to Character*, on Tuesday, April 18, at 11 a.m. Nationally recognized commentator David Brooks will join us as keynote speaker, inviting our university community to consider character, morality, and leadership in today's world. We are also privileged to recognize Minnesota Supreme Court Justice (Retired) Alan Page, a leader in law, philanthropy, athletics, and education as this year's Hendrickson Institute Medal for Ethical Leadership honoree.

The event will be held at the Minneapolis Campus Event Center at 2540 Park Ave. More information is at **[smumn.edu/hendricksonforum](https://smumn.edu/hendricksonforum)**.