



LEADERSHIP SOCIETY MAY 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!

Commencement is a great celebration for our students and for the university. It is a time for reflection on how our bright graduates represent hope for the future. As a Lasallian Catholic university, Saint Mary's expects our graduates to be beacons of light — bringing about positive change in the world and offering their leadership and service.

As I see our graduates embark on their careers, I am reminded of both the opportunities and challenges that they will face. It brings to mind the words of our recently departed Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI: “Set against personal struggles, moral confusion and fragmentation of knowledge, the noble goals of scholarship and education, founded on the unity of truth and in service of the person and the community, become an especially powerful instrument of hope.”

Our graduates, both in word and deed, represent this hope for their families, for their communities, and for the world.

I see this hope — the mission of Saint Mary's brought to life — as our graduates walk across the stage in Minneapolis and in Winona. I see it in undergraduate Christa Ingabire, a Computer Science major and Business Analytics minor. At Saint Mary's, Ms. Ingabire was not only a dedicated student but a leader dedicated to serve the university community. She led her peers as president of the Merging Intercultural Experiences (MIX) club, as a peer tutor, and as a resident assistant for three years.

I see our mission in another undergraduate, Guy Cardinal, a Management and Business Intelligence and Analytics double major who is minoring in Public Relations. At Saint Mary's, Mr. Cardinal enriched campus life by serving as an orientation leader, as a peer minister, and through his work in the admission office. Both students, like so many at Saint Mary's, enriched our university through deep participation in campus service, culture, and activities.

The wider world needs the light of our graduates, and I am grateful to the faculty and staff, both new and long serving, who supported them. Our faculty and staff truly believe in our students. This February, we welcomed Max Bonilla, SSL, STD, to lead our academic operations as provost and dean of faculties. Dr. Bonilla's role is in support of those who teach our students.

Dr. Bonilla's leadership will build on the good work of the past several years, further advancing our commitment to practical real-world preparation complemented by our strong liberal arts education core. Grounded in the Catholic intellectual tradition, Saint Mary's provides the critical “human skills” needed for excellent careers and meaningful lives of service and ethical leadership. Our applied education focuses on programs that students like Christa Ingabire and Guy Cardinal have found so helpful.

Ensuring that the many students we recruit will be able to benefit from a Saint Mary's education, we welcomed Dr. Michael McMahon to Saint Mary's as the vice president of enrollment management last fall. His work has already met early success, laying a strong foundation for our future. In our graduate programs, Dr. McMahon brings new energy and optimism to help us recover from successive years of recruitment challenges. Overall, new student recruitment for Graduate and Professional Programs (SGPP) was up by 15% year over year. At the undergraduate level, compared to 2022, there has been a 34% increase in deposits and a 27% increase in submitted applications for first-year students. Overall these efforts are showing very promising results. Please know that we are fully aware that all of these successful efforts begin with each of you who share your Saint Mary's story and encourage future Cardinal students to consider our university.

Another bright spot for our admissions area is our growing Bachelor of Science in Nursing program with 35 confirmed first year deposits, the largest class to date. Accepted students continue to reach out to Sister Agnes Mary Graves, RSM, nursing director, to confirm their interest and convey their excitement. Her dynamic approach has garnered positive attention and results while also helping us renew partnerships with those in the medical field.

Last month, we were honored to announce a new gift of \$4.5 million to complete fundraising efforts for the renovation of Aquinas Hall, the newly transformed state-of-the-art facility for business, science, psychology, and its new nursing program. The renovation, completed in 2021, is located on the Winona Campus. The most recent benefactors, who wish to remain anonymous, acknowledged the work Saint Mary's has undertaken in the last year to reduce spending, right size academic offerings, and set the path for long-term stability and success.

In February, a \$100 million challenge was announced, a response to a recent \$25 million gift commitment. As of May 1, Saint Mary has raised over \$18 million dollars or almost 20% of our challenge. This recent increase in financial support helps us face the future with courage as we are inspired in our work by this attainable yet bold challenge. Hope reveals itself through the support of benefactors like you. I am personally grateful for every friend of our university.

While we celebrate our newest graduates, we remain grateful for the supportive messages sent to us this past year from past grads. And like all of our alumni, we firmly embrace our vision with all the hard work, diligence, and energy it takes to realize the future we see for ourselves. It is not wishful thinking or naivete that fills our hearts with hope, but the knowledge of and commitment to a shared mission with the perseverance to make good on it, while trusting in the Lord's providence. Thank you all for your support in this.

Live Jesus in our Hearts, Forever!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James P. Burns, IVD, PhD". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

The Very Rev. James P. Burns, IVD, Ph.D.
President, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota

P.S. Speaking of our esteemed graduates, we hope to see you back on campus June 23-25 for Reunion Weekend 2023! For more information and to register, visit smumn.edu/reunion.