



## LEADERSHIP SOCIETY SEPTEMBER UPDATE

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

Greetings!

In Minneapolis and Rochester, graduate and professional programs have started their fall semester after a productive summer. In Winona, we were happy to welcome undergraduates to campus for the new academic year. First-year students are getting acclimated to their new home with a beautiful fall season upon us. Their initial exams are around the corner, and our faculty and staff remain devoted to student success.

While a new academic year is here, the semester does not begin with a blank slate. Rather, everything that happens here — and across our campuses — happens because of our community. Our students, past and present, each leave their indelible mark on Saint Mary's, often continuing to illuminate the university's future with confident vision and generous investment.

Darren Row, Ph.D., who received his undergraduate degree in mathematics from our university in 1999, represents this Saint Mary's community. Dr. Row cites the authentic and supportive relationships as the best part of his undergraduate experience, and the catalyst for his vocation: forming deep, life-changing relationships with students who continue to teach him nearly as much as he imparts in his lessons.

Due to a generous scholarship supported by the Jack and Mary Ann Remick family, Dr. Row completed his master's degree in teaching at Saint Mary's in 2000. In 2014, after teaching at Lourdes High School and completing graduate studies, Dr. Row returned as a member of our teaching faculty. Core mathematics concepts do not change much from year to year, but each semester a student asks a question in a way that pushes his own thinking. That's where the excitement is — when a student sparks inspiration for the entire classroom. With his expertise in education, a passion for scientific inquiry, and above all, his Lasallian conviction to serve our students, I knew Dr. Row was the right person, at the right time, to serve as the new Dean of the College and head of the John C. Parmer School of Sciences as well as Arts and Humanities here in Winona.

Mary Row, who is Dr. Row's youngest daughter, began as a first-year student at Saint Mary's this fall, the same year he began his tenure as Dean of the College. Dr. Row believes in Saint Mary's. He shares the courage and confidence I have in the future of our entire university. His Saint Mary's story represents the enduring strength of the relationships formed within our university. His service symbolizes the unwavering commitment with which our community faces the challenges of the day — ensuring our mission lives on for generations to come.

### OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

700 Terrace Heights #30 ■ Winona, MN 55987-1399 USA ■ Office 507-457-1503 ■ Email [president@smumn.edu](mailto:president@smumn.edu) ■ [SMUMN.EDU](http://SMUMN.EDU)

This summer, Saint Mary's has continued important and productive conversations about the recently announced consolidation of academic areas and a reduction in undergraduate majors to better position ourselves financially for long-term sustainability and success. Many have been impacted by the changes. I express my sincere empathy to all those directly impacted by this transition. I also want to express gratitude to the many alumni and benefactors who have shared confidence in our direction, in words and in action. A 1970 alumnus of the English program made a major investment to support faculty work groups this summer. Led in part by Dr. Row, these groups are coordinating an academic and co-curricular redesign that reflects both our new undergraduate direction and the Lasallian charism. Our trustees have also made significant personal donations to this work, ensuring we are prepared for the challenges ahead. Investments like these demonstrate our community's confidence and commitment to our mission.

Enrollment for both our graduate and undergraduate campuses remains a persistent challenge. Saint Mary's is certainly not alone in this regard. We will be sharing our final enrollment numbers for this semester next month, but be assured we are mirroring trends nationwide for similar schools. In this way, we are similar to our peer institutions. However, our Saint Mary's community sets us apart from our peers. Our admissions, marketing, and administrative teams continue to sharpen our enrollment pathways — including tailored communications to students here in southeastern Minnesota, as well as targeted engagement to Catholic audiences in Chicago and the Twin Cities. I remain confident in our future, not just because of our team, but because of our benefactor and alumni community. Last fall, a friend of the university — whose husband was a proud 1950 graduate — made a substantial gift to support recruitment at Catholic schools in Chicago. Inspired by benefactors such as these, and all of you, as well as our students, our faculty, and our Saint Mary's community, I am deeply confident in our future.

What does it mean to be confident? Certainly not to ignore the real, truly difficult challenges we face. In understanding the cardinal virtue of fortitude, or courage, Saint Thomas Aquinas quotes an ancient scholar: confidence is the “strength of a soul in the accomplishment of its purpose.” Aquinas links confidence explicitly to the cardinal virtue of courage, writing that confidence means to have hope in oneself, with the knowledge of God's divine support. To be confident means to believe in our ability, through vision, faith, and hard work, that we will accomplish our mission.

With the courage and confidence of our Saint Mary's community — including benefactors like you — I know that the brightest days of our university are yet to come. Thank you for reading this update. In the months ahead I have asked members of the cabinet to share their critical perspectives from their respective areas to keep you as up to date on Saint Mary's happenings as possible. I look forward to recapping the year in my own update to all of you at the end of the academic year. Until then, please know how much you mean to us, and thank you for your continued investment in your Saint Mary's.

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

PS: We hope you can join us for our annual Celebration of Philanthropy on Friday, Oct. 14, in Winona. Invitations have been sent, and I look forward to greeting you there!