



LEADERSHIP SOCIETY FEBRUARY 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!

For the past four and a half years, I have been blessed to serve as dean of the School of Business and Technology at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota. I sought out this opportunity because I was attracted by the Lasallian Catholic mission and the diverse mix of students and faculty who comprise the school.

I'm thrilled to share some exciting news and updates from the School of Business and Technology. And without a doubt, the success of my service here and the success of our students rests on the many gifts – time, talent, treasure, and testimony – that supporters like you have provided to Saint Mary's.

Our School of Business and Technology spans all three campuses (Winona, Rochester, and Minneapolis) as well as online. Our six undergraduate business majors are filled with strong students, and these majors are among the most popular on campus. We offer degrees at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels, as well as professional certifications and stackable credentials.

I enjoy helping our students in Winona network with successful business professionals. In September, we organized our second annual "Cardinal Connections" networking event in Aquinas Hall. With more than 100 people attending, our students mingled with local business professionals in a social setting, and our community members heard about all the great things our students are doing.

One local business leader at the event commented: "I was so impressed with your students and their eagerness to share their stories and want to learn ours."

Also this fall, I welcomed Rhoda Olsen, current board vice-chair and former CEO of Great Clips, Inc., and a former Saint Mary's trustee, to a Women's Leadership Dialogue and Luncheon on the Winona Campus. What an inspirational leader and a wonderful storyteller! The event was made possible through funding from our Kabara Institute for Entrepreneurial Studies.

I am a big believer in experiential education for our business students. For example, our students participate in a yearly business case competition with other Lasallian universities around the world. Last spring, our team earned first place!

The renovation of Aquinas Hall in 2022 resulted in the Anthony B'59 and Sandra Adducci Family Makerspace where students from across the university come to research and prototype business ideas. Students use a variety of materials – from yarn and Legos to glass, 3D printing, and wood-engraving. To celebrate Christmas and ease the stress of finals, we hosted a Santa's Workshop in the makerspace, where students could use their hands to make gifts for family and friends.

My focus on practical business skills, such as networking and experiential education, is informed by my professional experience. My career has been split between corporate sales/marketing and academics. I started in higher education in career development, and as an academic, my research focuses on studying career outcomes by gender and race. I have been featured in the mainstream press, including the Wall Street Journal and Bloomberg News. Recently, I was in conversation with the editor of the MSP Business Journal in front of a crowd of 300.

We are also very excited that Saint Mary's is launching the university's Center for Business Analytics, serving both our undergraduate and graduate students, with the support of a \$400,000 grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF). The Center for Business Analytics will focus on two main areas that are critically important to us and to the communities we serve: workforce development and strengthening the regional economy.

Michael Ratajczyk, program director for the M.S. and B.S. business intelligence and data analytics program, explains that "The Center will focus on providing workshops, seminars, and webinars from industry leaders and experts, and will also partner with regional businesses to provide vocational training opportunities for our students. We see this as a win-win for our students and the communities where our campuses are located."

Through this letter, I hope you can sense my great excitement for Saint Mary's future – our students, our faculty, our alumni, and our friends – and my deep gratitude for the role you play in shaping that future.

Live Jesus in our Hearts, Forever!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle Wieser".

Michelle Wieser, Ph.D.

Dean of Business and Technology

P.S. The Saint Mary's University Department of Athletics, in association with the Saint Mary's Alumni Association, will induct three members into the Saint Mary's Sports Hall of Fame on Saturday, March 23, 2024: Marc Weisenberger B'75, Jamie (Rattunde) Nelson B'05, and Jenny (Folgers) Baertsch B'05. You can join us for this ceremony at the annual Cardinal Excellence Fund Dinner. Find more details and register at connect.smumn.edu/CEFDinner.