



## LEADERSHIP SOCIETY MAY 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 to our esteemed Leadership Society members!

As I reflect on my seventh year as president of Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, it is both a privilege and a profound joy to share with you several highlights from the 2024-2025 academic year.

Spring on our Winona Campus is always poignant — a season of renewal that coincides with the culmination of another academic cycle. As I look out over the bluffs and trees lining the Mississippi River, I am filled with gratitude — for the beauty of this place, the vibrancy of our community, and the enduring mission we share.

I spoke about that very sense of gratitude during our Founders' Day Convocation this March. That occasion, as with so many others throughout the year, invited us to come together in unity and purpose — to celebrate both the founding and the foundations of this great university.

Our legacy continues to be shaped by the vision of Bishop Patrick Heffron and the enduring inspiration of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. Though separated by time and geography, they were united in their belief that education should do more than inform the mind — it should transform the whole person.

That conviction remains our guiding star. For 113 years, Saint Mary's has stood not merely as an institution of higher learning, but as a Catholic, Lasallian university committed to forming students of character, compassion, and competence — individuals prepared to serve, lead, and heal in a world that sorely needs them.

It is in that spirit that I am pleased to introduce our two Outstanding Seniors for 2025 — students who exemplify the mission and values of Saint Mary's.

**Maggie Newhouse**, of Owatonna, Minn., is majoring in health humanities and Spanish with a minor in healthcare management. A member of our women's basketball team and a three-year orientation leader, Maggie plans to pursue a Master of Public Health following graduation.

**Joel Tranel**, of Cuba City, Wis., is graduating with a double major in accounting and finance. His leadership in student government, involvement in intramural sports, and dedication to campus work opportunities are just a few examples of his impact on our community. Joel has accepted a position as a financial analyst with Organic Valley in La Farge, Wis.

Students like Maggie and Joel — and the many others who fill our classrooms and student organizations — are daily reminders of why our mission matters. They keep the sense of gratitude in my heart ever renewed.

This spring also brought an extraordinary gift — one that will have a lasting impact on our students and our campus. We are honored to announce a \$5.5 million commitment from **David Thies B'59** and his wife, **Marlys** that includes the largest contribution allocated to athletics in our university's history.

This transformational gift will support a comprehensive renovation of our campus gymnasium, which will be rededicated as the **David R. Thies B'59 Arena**. More than a facility upgrade, this gift is a tribute to David's legacy as a two-sport student-athlete and a lifelong champion of Saint Mary's.

In sharing his reasons for the gift, David recalled arriving on campus in the late 1950s and feeling immediately at home: "Saint Mary's felt like it was a warm place and the right place for me. I just felt a comfort at Saint Mary's, and I have ever since."

More than six decades later, that spirit of warmth endures — rooted in Christ and the spirit of Saint La Salle. It is alive in the hearts of our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends.

Indeed, we live in a moment marked by both profound challenges and remarkable opportunities. The world needs institutions like Saint Mary's — faithful, resilient, mission-driven — now more than ever. And we need the steadfast support of leaders like you, now more than ever.

Thank you for your generosity, your partnership, and your belief in our shared purpose. May God continue to bless you, and may God bless Saint Mary's University of Minnesota.

With sincere gratitude,

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, flowing style.

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