



STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2026 LIGHTING THE WAY

2024 ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT

The Board of Trustees at Thomas More University approved the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan – Lighting the Way after considerable input from our community, including alumni, faculty, staff, students, Board of Trustees, and members of the broader Greater Cincinnati region. The University has made significant progress. This report highlights some of the major accomplishments of the 2023-24 academic year, provides the metrics by which the University is measuring success within the Strategic Plan, and previews academic, administrative, and physical changes planned for the 2024-25 academic year.



VISION STATEMENT

As Thomas More University enters its second century, the University will propel itself forward through innovation and agility. Built on the themes of student success, academic excellence and innovation, and responsible stewardship, Thomas More University will be the premier regional Catholic University.

GOALS

Student Success

Central to the mission of the University and all academic and co-curricular activities is to ensure that every student (traditional, adult, graduate, and online) who joins the Thomas More community has the opportunity to pursue and complete a degree from Thomas More University.

Academic Excellence & Innovation

Thomas More provides a high-quality Catholic Liberal Arts education within a vibrant, intellectual community to ensure that every graduate has the knowledge and ability to contribute effectively to their place in the world and to fulfill their responsibility to others. The strength of a Thomas More education is built upon a diverse, intellectual, and teaching faculty who embrace their identity as teacher-scholars and are committed to the University's mission and the success of every student.

Responsible Stewardship

The overall success of the University requires strengthening the financial position through enrollment, endowment, and fundraising.

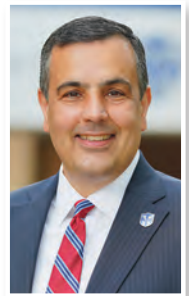


STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2026 LIGHTING THE WAY

“The Strategic Plan will require all of us to help make Thomas More its best self. Together, we can make an even more promising future for the University as its second century approaches. Thomas More University will define its future rather than reacting to it.”

President Joseph L. Chillo, LP.D.

It is amazing to see the progress that has been made since the Strategic Plan – Lighting the Way began to guide our journey to accomplishing goals toward student success, academic excellence and innovation, and responsible stewardship. It is an ambitious plan, and with the incredible financial support created by the Second Century Campaign – It's time for More, we are seeing goals accomplished as we are now past the halfway mark of our five-year commitment. I specifically want to give credit and thanks to the faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners who work diligently to make a Thomas More experience the foundation of successful lives and careers.



It's easy to see the physical changes on campus that are tangible evidence of our commitment to student success. This year alone, the upgraded softball complex came online in spring 2024; construction is complete on the new Academic Center with classes held in that space this fall; and enhancements to Seiler Commons have improved functionality and opened the space as we promote a better dining experience for everyone. Those changes are certainly exciting, but there is also the work recently completed by the leadership team as we wrapped up participation in the Governing Board Equity in Student Success (through the Gardner Institute), which was a Commonwealth-wide project. Participation provided evidence-based data that we are using to develop and implement strategies to improve retention at Thomas More and bolster completion of a degree for all students. Many of those strategies are also being used to make the University more student ready, as we double-down on being the premier Catholic, private, liberal-arts institution in this region.

There is plenty of evidence that the education students receive at this University prepares them for success in their careers and their lives. We are honored to be ranked among the top 500 colleges/universities in the U.S. by the Wall Street Journal/College Pulse for both 2024 and 2025. Our overall ranking for 2025 is 251 among public and private institutions, which is best in the region and second highest in Kentucky; but we are especially proud to be ranked highest in the region in the subcategories of Best Salaries and Social Mobility. We are only able to receive these types of rankings because of the work that continues to be done promoting student success, academic innovation, and responsible stewardship.

As you look at the progress outlined in this report, keep in mind that this work does not stop in 2026. We are already looking forward to the next strategic plan as we continue to introduce new programs and initiatives that promote growth, and reinforce that all students are an integral part of the Thomas More community. Above and beyond academics, we anticipate great strides for Saints athletics as we enter the third and final year of provisional membership for NCAA Division II, and what that means for student athletes, and you and I as the Saints faithful.

What more can I say to emphasize that this is a great time to be at Thomas More. We continue to build on the solid foundation of those that established this institution, as we do our part to keep the Catholic Liberal Arts educational experience alive and well, and in high demand. Thank you for your help in this mission as we continue to challenge students of all faiths to examine the ultimate meaning of life, their place in the world, and their responsibility to others. God bless and go Saints!

President Joseph L. Chillo, LP.D.



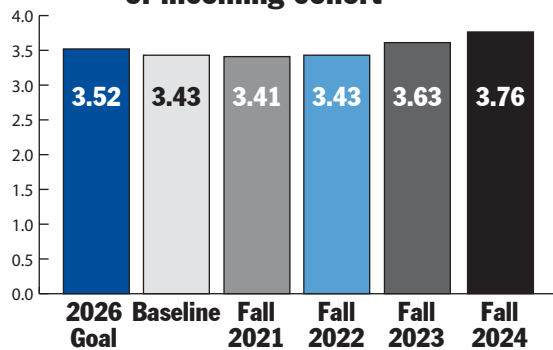
GOAL: Student Success

Central to the mission of the University and all academic and co-curricular activities is to ensure that every student (traditional, adult, graduate, and online) who joins the Thomas More community has the opportunity to pursue and complete a degree from Thomas More University.

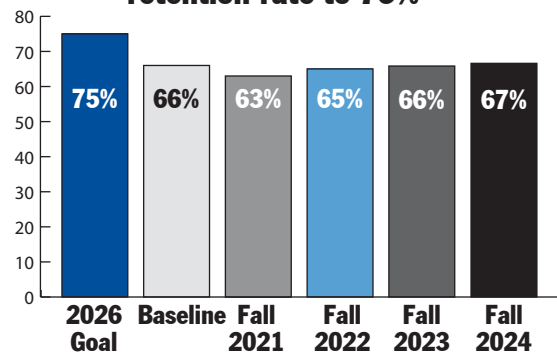
Key Strategies:

- strategically use the University's resources to attract, retain, and graduate an academically prepared and diverse student body
- improve the student experience for all students
- create a vibrant campus community with a wide range of cultural, intellectual, creative, spiritual, and social activities
- foster a diverse and inclusive environment
- strengthen the first-year and second-year experience to establish a firm foundation for success
- provide academic and student support services to ensure students can be successful

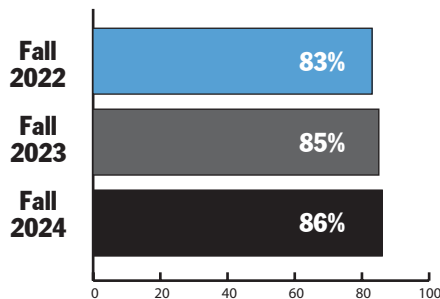
**Average high school GPA
of incoming cohort**



**Improve first-year
retention rate to 75%**



**Increase
in student
persistence**



97% of Thomas More graduates are employed or in graduate school after graduation

IN SUPPORT OF KEY STRATEGIES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS:



Own Your Year program launched to mentor first-year students through obstacles and engage University resources

Established **Career Closet** to help students build their professional wardrobe

Creation of new **Academic and Student Success** division to align academic and student affairs functions in order to remove barriers and build a sense of belonging in and out of the classroom

Secured new student scholarships in collaboration with the **Esperanza Latino Center** and joined the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Renovations to the Commons dining hall to enhance functionality, provide additional food options, and improve the dining experience

Almost Midnight Pancake Breakfast tradition began again with a late-night feast and relaxing fun before finals week

Completed **Governing Board Equity in Student Success Project** to develop an evidence-based equity-focused retention plan with the following strategies:

- Build culture focused on equitable student success, becoming a student-ready University, and improving retention and completion numbers for all students
- Develop comprehensive first year experience program
- Ensure curriculum is student-ready, engaging, supportive, and enables timely progress toward completion
- Continue strengthening advising and academic literacy through full implementation of the Quality Enhancement Plan
- Evaluate financial aid program and develop a financial literacy program

Bishop Roger J. Foys Ministry and Service Scholarship, focused on enhancing leadership skills, strengthening spirituality, and promoting Catholic identity on campus, recruited 45 first-year students who were paired with a student mentor and attended a student retreat to build a sense of community and belonging

Home opener of the Saint's **newly renovated softball complex** with a turf outfield and 3,000 square foot facility



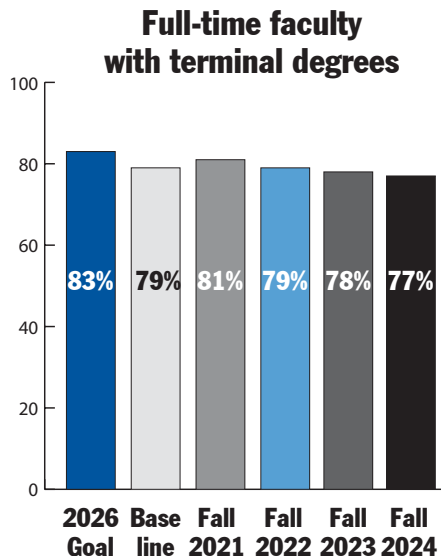
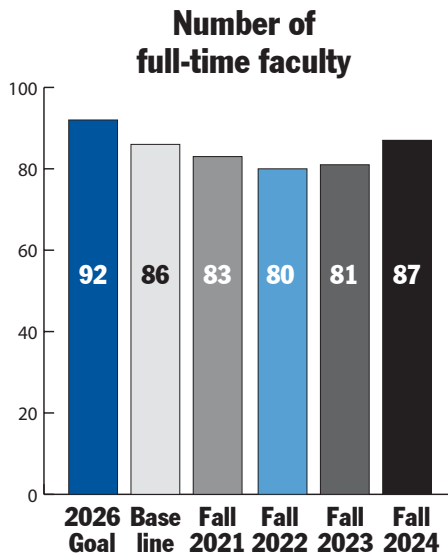
NCAA approved the University for year three of provisional membership in the Great Midwest Athletic Conference (G-MAC). Student-athletes continued their success on and off the field with 25 athletes named All-Conference, 38 student-athletes named to College Sports Communicators Academic All-District, and 180 named G-MAC Academic All-Conference. Wrestling captured the G-MAC Championship in the 185lb weight class, 10 wrestlers qualified for the NCWA Championship with two bringing home the titles, and six earned All-American status. Women's and men's soccer, women's and men's basketball, and women's lacrosse earned spots in the G-MAC tournament with men's basketball earning tournament runner-up. Five Saints were named G-MAC Freshmen of the Year.

GOAL: Academic Excellence & Innovation

Thomas More provides a high-quality Catholic Liberal Arts education within a vibrant, intellectual community to ensure that every graduate has the knowledge and ability to contribute effectively to their place in the world and to fulfill their responsibility to others. The strength of a Thomas More education is built upon a diverse, intellectual, and teaching faculty who embrace their identity as teacher-scholars and are committed to the University's mission and the success of every student.

Key Strategies:

- expand and strengthen the regional academic reputation and reach of Thomas More
- enhance efforts to attract and retain highly qualified faculty dedicated to their teaching, scholarship, and service to the University and our students
- infuse diverse and global perspectives in curricular and co-curricular education
- integrate high impact experiences into the curricular and co-curricular experience of every student's learning program
- support the professional development of the faculty
- enhance the positioning and reputation of the Robert W. Plaster College of Business
- revise general education requirements to reflect the values of a Catholic liberal arts education
- increase and enhance quality online undergraduate and graduate programming
- intentionally infuse our mission and values into all aspects of the teaching and learning experience



10 NEW FACULTY
in the fields of:

Data Analytics	Physics
Economics	Physical Chemistry
Exercise Science	Political Science
Marketing	Public Health
Philosophy	Psychology

IN SUPPORT OF KEY STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE & INNOVATION:

Education VILLA launched to remove barriers and address current need for highly qualified K-12 teachers. VILLA stands for: Visualizing educators of excellence through Innovative methods promoting Leadership and Learning in an Atmosphere of growth, critical thinking, and research.

- Renovated classrooms are now equipped with state-of-the-art technology and upgraded furniture
- The Dyslexia Institute was initiated to serve as a community resource and train teachers to identify and intervene
- Education programs received full seven-year accreditation from the Association for Advancing Quality Educator Preparation (AAQEP)



Zembrodt Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation

- Several alumni speakers shared their stories with students throughout the year as they spoke to the need for an entrepreneurial mindset in today's business, medical, and non-profit environments
- Hosted the 2023 Roebling Capital Saints Shark Challenge, a pitch competition to showcase students' innovative business ideas
- Fifth Third Bank Fast Pitch Competition awarded students with seed funding to help get their ideas off the ground
- The More Co. student club relaunched to cultivate and elevate business and entrepreneurial experiences on campus and in the community
- Entrepreneurial Mindset course launched in fall to teach students from all majors how to view problems as opportunities and create innovative solutions
- Panel participation in regional session for StartUpCincy Week titled "From Dorm Room to Boardroom: How Top Universities are Incubating Top Talent"
- Students participated and advanced to the final rounds of the state-wide Governor's School for Entrepreneurs (GSE) Intercollegiate Pitch Competition
- Team of students competed in The Econ Games, hosted by the University of Kentucky's Gatton College of Business and Economics
- Hosted the Kentucky Governor's School for Entrepreneurs Summer Startup program, bringing high school students to campus for a three-week residential experience to equip them with the skills and opportunities necessary to build business plans and develop product and service prototypes

New academic programs

- **Master of Education Leadership (MEDL)** and **Education Specialist (Ed.S.)** in Educational Leadership will meet the needs of K-12 teachers seeking educational advancement to pursue principal licensure
- **Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management** is focused on hands-on learning to equip students with dynamic skills needed to take on leadership positions in the hospitality industry. Partnerships with Columbia Sussex and St. Elizabeth Healthcare (The Ormsby) provide the support necessary to ensure real-world experience in the hospitality industry.
- **Bachelor of Science in Management** provides a more comprehensive and deeper study of management skills, techniques and best practices, and requires an experiential learning component
- **Master of Science in Information Technology Management** will prepare students with the skills and experience needed to become leaders in the information technology field
- **Bachelor of Arts** in philosophy, politics, and economics designed to empower students with the values, knowledge, and skills to analyze and address some of the most pressing issues of our time
- **Eight new minors** designed to empower students with the values, knowledge, and skills to analyze and address some of the most pressing issues of our time

Center for Faith, Mission, and Catholic Education - The mission of the Center is to cultivate an authentic Catholic culture throughout Thomas More University by serving as a catalyst for transformative faith experiences, intentional mission integration, and creative Catholic educational programs on campus and in the wider community.

- Selected inaugural director to pioneer new initiatives devoted to further integrating mission into academic programs and provide a resource to Catholic schools and partners within the region
- Hosted Only Wonder Comprehends with Dr. Massimo Roberto, branch lead of the Near-Infrared Camera (NIR-Cam) of the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) at the Space Telescope Science Institute to discuss findings of the telescope and the relationship between faith and reason
- Book club reading of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* on integral ecology and care for our common home
- Collaborated with the University community and representatives from the University's three founding orders, Benedictine Sisters, Sisters of Notre Dame, and Congregation of Divine Providence, to understand and infuse their unique charisms into the University's behaviors and values



High-impact Practices provide students with active learning experiences that promote student engagement and deep learning

- Students participated in a variety of international study programs including French Art in Paris and Culture in Japan
- Service learning programs provided students with opportunities to serve at the southern border in experiences rooted in Catholic social teaching
- Student clubs led civic engagement activities through voter registration drives, film viewings, and Constitution Day events
- Student research presented at the University's annual Student Research Forum and through discipline-specific conferences in which several students received special recognition
- A learning community of students from sociology and art courses collaborated to learn about the impacts of poverty and create pottery which was donated to the Empty Bowls Fundraiser

Robert W. Plaster College of Business received full re-accreditation from the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Program and was recognized as a top MBA program by OnlineMastersDegrees.org

- Monsignor Cleves University Honors Program launched in fall 2023 with 24 students focused on “empowering minds, enriching lives” by building community, life-long learning, and leadership through curricular and co-curricular experiences

Theatre program debuted original Christmas play, “Christmas Carol Untold”



Poet Laureate Emeritus of Cincinnati joined Thomas More as writer-in-residence, offering students an opportunity to work with a world-renowned poet

Ohio River Biology Field Station

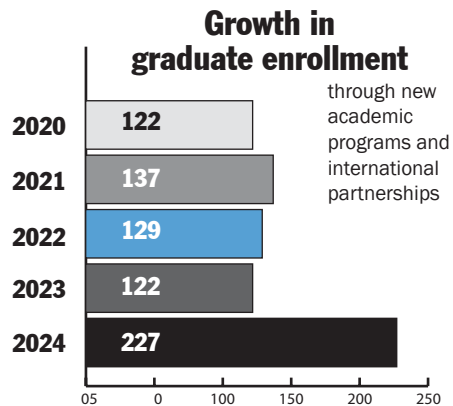
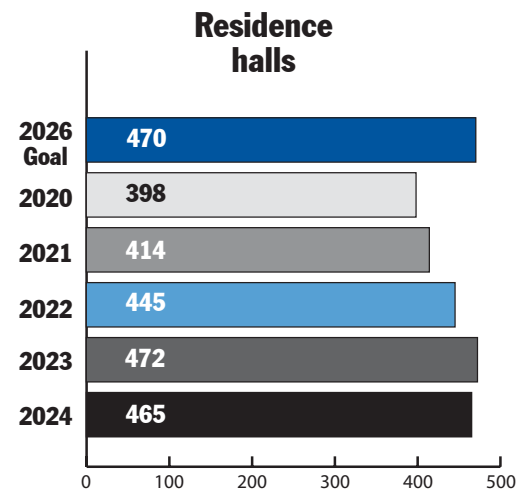
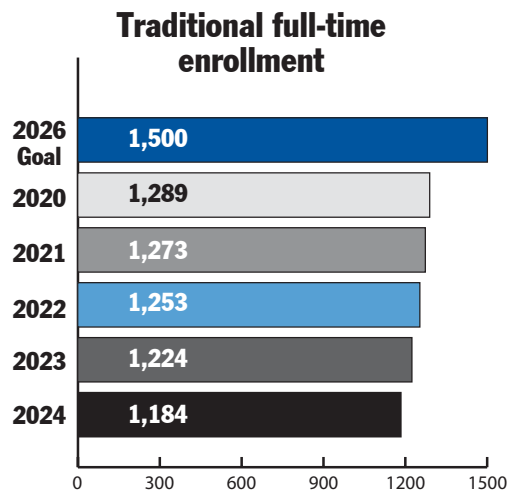
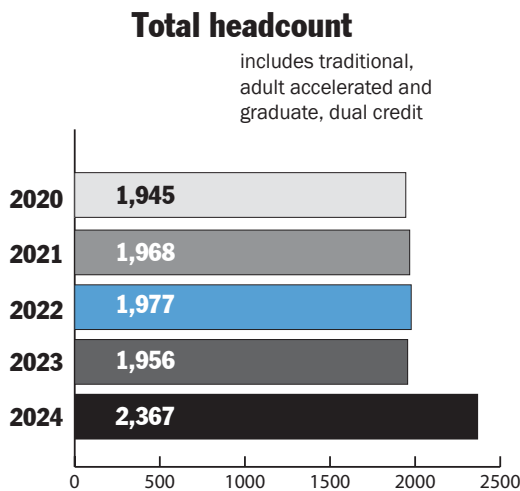
- In collaboration with several other universities, received funding from the U.S. National Science Foundation to combat climate change in Kentucky
- Housed freshwater mussels from Kentucky Fish and Wildlife's renowned Center for Mollusk Conservation to be used for undergraduate research and outreach programs
- Two students presented their research on bats and fish-host identification as part of the Ohio River Basin Alliance Ohio River Discussion Series
- Hosted community outreach programs with regional Girl Scout troops, high schools, Greater Cincinnati Environmental Educators, Ohio River Foundation, and various others
- Installed new equipment in partnership with Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission, Greater Cincinnati Water Works, and Northern Kentucky Water District to monitor the Ohio River for volatile organic compounds to keep community water safe
- Presented STEM Professional Development workshop for Elementary Teachers
- Provided summer seminar series to explore a diverse range of topics of importance to environmental conservation, education, stewardship efforts, and careers in natural resources
- Held Ecology, Conservation, and Outreach STEM Camp to high school students interested in conservation and environmental science

GOAL: Responsible Stewardship

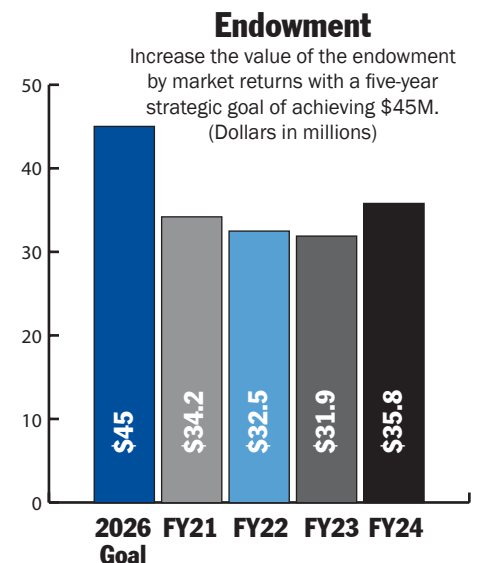
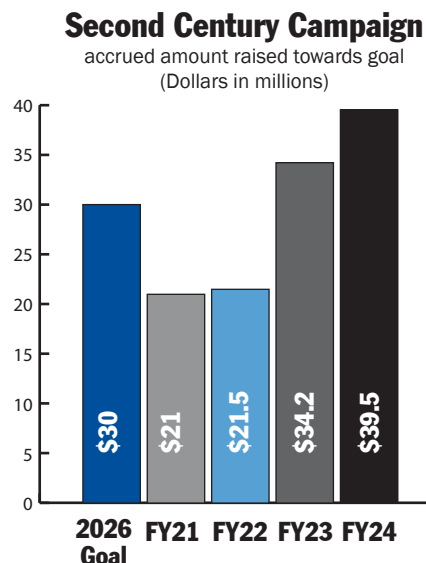
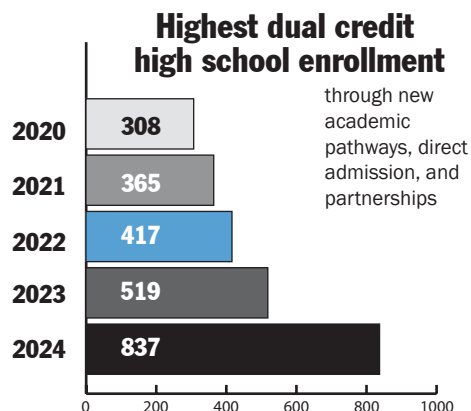
The overall success of the University requires strengthening the financial position through enrollment, endowment, and fundraising.

Key Strategies:

- grow enrollment through strategic enrollment management
- add additional graduate and professional programs
- assess existing undergraduate programs to ensure that they are mission-effective, contribute to the financial and enrollment objectives, and fulfill learning outcomes
- grow the endowment through increased contributions, planned giving, strategic investment of funds, and appropriate fiscal policies
- strengthen the institution's financial position
- build external connections to lead and positively impact our regional community
- foster a strong sense of community and engagement for our alumni and donors
- launch the Second Century Campaign - It's time for More



Top five majors:
Biology | Business Administration | Education
Exercise Science | Nursing



IN SUPPORT OF KEY STRATEGIES FOR RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP:

Raisin' Hellbenders inaugural concert to raise support for the **Biology Field Station's** work in conservation, education, and outreach programs along the Ohio River

New partnership with **Atlanta Consulting Group** to grow the University's endowment funds to support scholarships and academic and student support programs



New marketing division established to lead marketing and branding strategies to enhance the regional and national reach and reputation of the University, strategically grow and diversify enrollment leads, and promote the transformational impact of the University



Joining regional partners in new **OneNKY Center** in Covington to support economic development, innovation, alumni connections, academic programming, and community partnerships

Completion of the new **Academic Center** housing advanced technology and innovative learning environments





Chalk Talk speaker series hosted by the All Saints Club brought baseball legends and alumni back to Thomas More Stadium for a panel discussion with students and the community

Winter Wonderland event led by student clubs and organizations treated children and their families from around the community to an array of holiday crafts and activities

Third annual **Saints Serve** day involved over 1,100 students, faculty, staff, and Board of Trustee members completing 70 projects with 45 organizations across the region resulting in more than 3,000 hours of service performed in support of our community

Hosted third annual **Women's Conference**, bringing together over 100 attendees to celebrate and honor the achievements of women across the region



Second Century Campaign:
It's time for More
\$39.5M total commitments
as of May 31, 2024

\$15.4M

towards construction of the new academic center

\$7.3M

additional funds committed to the University's endowment

\$4.3M

towards the Fund for Thomas More University

39

endowed scholarships established or increased via major gift

25

naming opportunities have been established

152

donors (households, companies, or foundations) have contributed +\$9,605 to the campaign

\$3.5M

in support from the active Board of Trustees





WHAT'S NEXT IN 2024-25

Complete provisional membership with the NCAA Division II to become full members eligible for national championships

Expand regional partnerships with the opening of the OneNKY Center

Grow enrollment through direct entry pathways for qualified high school students

Launch Artificial Intelligence Committee to explore and integrate the ethical use of AI technologies within academic and administrative areas

Academic innovation

- Prepare the University's first doctoral program for SASCOC accreditation approval
- Acquire additional grant funding to support academic programs and services
- Growth in MBA 4+1 program through additional academic pathways

Support student success

- Collaboration with the Alumni Association to provide mentoring and speaking opportunities for the first-year experience course
- Enhanced orientation and welcome week programming to build community, promote engagement, and familiarize students with the University mission and resources
- Launch of CARE Team to support the personal, physical, and emotional well-being of students
- Cross-departmental collaboration to develop a Resource and Support Coalition that will aid students, address needs insecurities on campus, educate the community, and build connections with external agencies

Develop the Center for Faith, Mission, and Catholic Education

- Tapping into the Mission community discussions on what it means to be a Catholic University and to rediscover our mission informed by the Catholic Intellectual Tradition
- Development of three-year strategic plan for mission integration
- Monthly book clubs on various theological areas of interest from sustainability to literature
- Monthly formation meetings to engage faculty and staff in discussions surrounding the mission and identity of Thomas More
- Building on the annual Saints Serve day of service to create an Institute for Service-Learning
- Continued interdisciplinary and culture events



THOMAS MORE
UNIVERSITY
Make It **More.**

For additional information
on these initiatives
or goals please contact
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