

The College of Arts & Sciences 2025+ Strategic Plan

Background of the College

Since the founding of the College of St. Thomas, the arts & sciences have been the foundation of undergraduate education at St. Thomas, providing a distinctive liberal arts core curriculum for all graduates. As St. Thomas evolved into a comprehensive university, the College of Arts & Sciences has carried the responsibility for providing that liberal arts core for its own majors as well as for those of the professional colleges and schools. That core curriculum has, as its essence and heart, the University's mission: *Inspired by Catholic intellectual tradition, the University of St. Thomas educates students to be morally responsible leaders who think critically, act wisely, and work skillfully to advance the common good.*

The breadth of the core curriculum at St. Thomas has led to a large and diverse College, that is often defined by its large number of departments and programs, the vast range of majors and minors, and a robust faculty who exemplify the teacher-scholar model. In its strategic plan, the College of Arts & Sciences strives to define what unites this diverse assembly of programs, curricula, and faculty and how we aim to prove the relevance and need for a liberal arts education to meet that challenges our students will face in the next 50 years.

The Past Five Years

The past five years have seen unprecedented change in the College of Arts & Sciences, as would be expected with recent developments in the University itself. These changes include:

- A **new core curriculum** that is more integrated and prepares students for the future after graduation. New 100-level courses in Theology and Philosophy, along with changes in high-demand courses in English and Art History, set a new foundation for student learning beginning in 2020-21. Revisions to other courses in all core areas will create new and more integrated and interdisciplinary core experiences. New requirements such as Integrations in the Humanities, flagged courses in global perspective (GP) and diversity, inclusion, and social justice (DISJ), and signature work, will strengthen the curriculum's contribution to diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts as well as interdisciplinary efforts.
- **New majors and minors** that respond to changes in society, culture, the world, and the environment. New and growing majors and minors include Biology of Global Health, Communication Studies, Data Analytics, Digital Media Arts, Justice & Peace Studies, Environmental Science, Environmental Studies, Sustainability, Music Business, Professional Writing, Strategic Communication, Neuroscience, and

Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. New or revised programs like Peace Engineering, Liberal Arts & Business, and Risk Management leverage the liberal arts with professional programs in partnerships across schools and colleges.

- An increased **focus on research**, including major national grants from governmental agencies and foundations (NSF, Fulbright, Templeton, Arthur Vining Davis).
- A greater external focus through **community-based research** and engagement. The SOLV projects included partnerships with the YWCA, MetroTransit, Ready-to-Run.
- New **organizational strategies** to preserve a diversity of programs to meet the needs of students while achieving greater administrative efficiencies. New departments like Emerging Media; Earth, Environment, & Society; and Justice & Society Studies bring diverse programs together to create synergy for curriculum development and new student programs.
- New **joint appointments** to support interdisciplinary and other programs, including Neuroscience and Environmental Science.
- New **DEI efforts** to increase the diversity of faculty in the college through revised hiring practices and growing the number of DISJ courses in the curriculum.
- The development of a signature semester study abroad program, **Rome Empower**, at our Bernardi campus that features organic chemistry for science majors and an integrated set of courses in the core curriculum.

With these changes, the primary challenge for CAS 2025+ is to continue to remove barriers to interdisciplinary collaboration and to renew our focus on the teacher-scholar model by engaging our students both in the classroom through courses and beyond the classroom through **collaborative, project-based research and community engagement**.

Our Vision

In The College of Art & Sciences, the academic heart of the university, **students and faculty engage in experiential, intersectional, and interdisciplinary** learning to face and address questions both timely & timeless.

Putting the liberal arts into **action in our community**, in our society, in our environment, and across the globe in accordance with our Catholic identity and emphasis on the inclusion of all human beings, will be the clearest demonstration of the impact of our education.

The key to success in the coming decade is to develop a holistic education across the College that puts **classroom learning into practice** before and after students graduate from The College of Arts & Sciences.

Global engagement in curriculum, programs, and experiences are essential for engaging in meaningful relationships and collaboration with all people and are an important dimension of diversity and inclusion.

Our Four Principles

Catholic Intellectual Tradition: Our teaching and scholarship is rooted in the long tradition of inquiry and questioning based on both faith and reason, a belief in the dignity of all people, and the promotion of social justice.

Faculty & Student Excellence: The College embodies the model of the teacher-scholar, as can be seen in the overwhelming proportion of College faculty who have been awarded the John Ireland Presidential Award for Outstanding Achievement as a Teacher-Scholar and have been recipients of the Undergraduate Research Award. Our faculty collaborate in interdisciplinary research across the university and with colleagues through the country and world. Our excellence as teacher-scholars emerges through our collaboration with students as partners in research and investigation, bringing scholarship not just to the classroom, but engaging with students on real problems and questions of concern to the world.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. We must find and nurture the future problem solvers of the world to make the College a vibrant hub, engaging prospective students through outreach to make a college education accessible, mentoring students as they enter the College through the arches, and developing the next generation of faculty who will reflect the diversity of our culture and society.

Externality and Globalization. Effective engagement with the external community and the world applies the skills and research of our faculty beyond our walls and arches to work in support of a broad spectrum of community partners. This raises the awareness and impact of our priorities while preparing students for continued engagement after graduation. Distinctive study abroad programs will prepare students to be effective employees who can engage with diverse cultures and environments in their work.

Continuing Priorities

DEI Practices and Programming. The College has drafted a DEI plan that recommends several initiatives to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion. It recommends changes in hiring practices of both full-time and adjunct faculty and staff to increase the diversity of search pools and for ensuring that candidates from underrepresented groups are included at each stage of the process. The pilot adoption of these practices in 2019-2020 resulted in the most diverse pool of new faculty hires in the College's history. The report also recommends building on programming in departments and centers that focus on DEI themes, greater infusion of diversity in the curriculum and extracurricular activities, and greater outreach to faculty and staff from underrepresented groups.

Development of **New Programs and the Core Curriculum**. The College will continue to promote new courses that realize the promise and innovation of the new core curriculum, focusing particularly on courses meeting the requirements for Integrations in the Humanities, DISJ, Global Perspective, and Signature Work. The College will also seek to develop programs, like Risk Management, Peace Engineering, the Liberal Arts & Business minor, the co-majors in Strategic and Business Communication, and a proposed Masters in Management, that collaborate with other colleges and schools.

Support for **Interdisciplinary Programs**. Through administrative and budgetary support, the College will provide more support for the growth of current programs and the development of new programs.

Support for **Faculty Research**. The College looks to expand its support of impactful faculty research and publication through increased internal funding to develop projects and external grant applications, develop research agendas for new faculty, and undertake collaborative and interdisciplinary research that involve students in original research and professional presentation.

New Strategic Priorities and Impact

Our strategic priorities for the next five years focus on our students. Building on the foundation of innovative curriculum and active engagement in the classroom, the College of Arts & Sciences will demonstrate the power and creativity of a liberal arts education by putting theory into practice and engaging students as collaborators engaging in real-world research and mentoring.

Hands-on Education & Enhanced Student Experience

Active learning, whether carrying out experiments in a laboratory, analyzing a data set, performing in an ensemble, producing a podcast, or publishing a journal, is the key for putting theory into practice. All students in the College should have the opportunity for extra-curricular, hands-on learning that prepares them to apply their education in the world and future employment. We will provide students with internal and externally engaged opportunities that would otherwise have to wait until graduate school or post-graduate internships to make substantive contributions to research, discovery, and to present these in professional venues.

Collaboration

Collaborative research is the key to solving complex problems in our world. Effective solutions require true collaboration among faculty and students, blending the diverse identity, experience, and talents of individuals in a common enterprise. Group work in the classroom must develop into true collaboration beyond the classroom.

Mentoring

The College needs to move beyond teaching and advising to attend to students' full development. The key to preparing students for the world beyond the arches is the personal engagement of students with faculty and each other, and with the external community. Faculty are called to be teachers and mentors to prepare our students for the challenges of the decades ahead. We also seek to develop mentoring relationships of students with our advisory board, alumni, and community partners to help students articulate the knowledge, experiences, and skills that they have acquired as they begin to find their career paths.

Building the Network of Knowledge

The complexities of the world also require working knowledge from a variety of disciplines if innovation is to consider the ethical, cultural, social, and environmental impact of an initiative. Successful innovations will require the application and integration of knowledge that is the essence of a liberal arts education. Further, it is the blending, indeed the collision of disciplines that creates new knowledge and solutions needed to tackle new problems.

Goals and Impact

- Provide every student with the opportunity to work with faculty/students in a **collaborative research project** (75% in five years)
- Provide every student with the opportunity to engage with **the community or external partners** in applying knowledge and skills (75% in five years)
- Improve **faculty/student excellence** through the teacher-scholar model applied to collaborative interdisciplinary & collaborative research (20 more projects per year)
- Increase **diversity** of faculty (25% of faculty BIPOC; 50% women in five years) to align with student recruitment goals
- Provide more opportunity for students to **study abroad** in a distinctively Arts & Sciences program (100 per year)
- Transform existing College buildings to create within each **flexible collaborative spaces** that focus on enabling activity – faculty-faculty; faculty-student; college-community. We need hubs and crossroads that bring together individuals to research, collaborate, and nurture each other.
- Develop **new curricular programs** and associated extra-curricular application of classroom learning into practice through applied, interdisciplinary, collaborative research or community-based learning. Development of distinctive study-abroad programs like Rome Empower will provide a global application to our curriculum.

Campaign Priorities

Our campaign priorities focus on the new initiatives in our strategic plan and seek to create spaces for collaborative, interdisciplinary experiences that will make our students ready to engage in careers and communities. We will continue to find resources for our on-going priorities such as research, curriculum, and diversity, equity, and inclusion through internal and grant funds.

STEAM

This building is key to putting our principles of innovative curriculum, hands-on learning, and collaboration into practice. Programming in this building brings together music ensemble halls, electronic media production suites, science teaching and research labs, and an art gallery, giving students the experiences and skills that they will need. The building will also house our two of our innovative departments, Emerging Media and Earth, Environment, and Society, that bring into practice the development of intersecting, interdisciplinary curricula. STEAM will be truly learning and collaboration on display.

Enhanced Student Experience: Research in Action

We seek \$17.5 million to fund collaborative, interdisciplinary, faculty-student research projects that engage the community. An endowment of \$10,000,000 will support about 20 projects per year involving about 60 faculty and 200 students annually. In order to enable student research, an endowment of \$7,500,000 will provide research assistantships in place of work/study funding to enable full student participation in research and contribute to their financial aid.

Dean's and Empower Scholarships

We seek a total of \$5,000,000 for scholarships. The Dean's scholarship (\$4million) will supplement existing disciplinary scholarships to provide financial aid for students in our growing interdisciplinary programs, which will enable their majors to have an impact on society. The Empower Scholarship (\$1million) will provide financial aid to cover the gap for participation in our signature Empower Study Abroad programs in Rome, Limerick, and Cordoba.

New Space for New Work

STEAM is the first large step for creating a new collaborative learning environment. Our existing buildings perpetuate silos and isolation, and it is essential to apply the lessons learned from the design of STEAM to recreate portions of existing buildings. We seek to create architecturally innovative hubs in each building to put hands-on learning and collaborative research into action and on display. We seek \$2,500,000 for reimagining learning and research in the arts and sciences.

Student Access

The departments of the College are the foundation of the history of St. Thomas, its evolution into a comprehensive university, and its liberal arts curriculum. To provide more opportunities for students to prepare for careers and life, we seek to raise additional funds for existing scholarships directed at distinctive and excellent departments such as Catholic Studies, Music, Economics, Journalism, the Sciences, and more.