

THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE

SPRING 2025

Volume 53, Issue 2

Bearing Witness

Students Work to Win
Hearts and Minds for Life





Lincoln on Life and Liberty

Recalling that a Wrong Can Never be a Right

While recently reading the Lincoln–Douglas Debates, I was struck, yet again, by the enduring wisdom of Abraham Lincoln — and how much we all can gain from studying our civilization’s great works.

At the last debate in 1858, Stephen Douglas outlined the position of his party regarding slavery. Foreshadowing the “pro-choice” rhetoric of today, he insisted that each state ought to determine for itself whether to permit the buying and selling of human beings. In response, Lincoln argued that no legislature can make that which is wrong become right, let alone *a right*. So, while a defender of legalized slavery may contend “that whatever community wants slaves has a right to have them,” that would be true only if slavery “is not a wrong. But if it is a wrong, he cannot say people have a right to do wrong.”

Presciently, Lincoln observed that the moral divide separating him and his opponent would persist long past the controversies of their day. “Right and wrong ... are the two principles that have stood face to face from the beginning of time, and will ever continue to struggle,” he said, “That is the issue that will continue in this country when these poor tongues of Judge Douglas and myself shall be silent.”

Sadly, few students are likely to encounter these words at most of America’s elite colleges, where the Lincoln–Douglas Debates rarely make the syllabi, to say nothing of Plato, Aristotle, or St. Thomas. But the students at Thomas Aquinas College study closely the works of these great authors and many more, and the difference speaks for itself.

Our California students, who traveled nearly 400 miles for this year’s Walk for Life West Coast in San Francisco, report that, once again, Thomas Aquinas College brought the single largest organized delegation to the event, despite the presence of several much bigger, prestigious universities in the area. Our New England students who trekked to the March for Life in Washington, D.C., witnessed a comparably anemic turnout from their peers in the Ivy League.

I don’t mean to infer too much from these events, but they are part of a larger trend and, I suspect, emblematic of a greater phenomenon. When it comes to intellectual and moral formation, the country’s elite universities have failed their students, who tend to default to a worldview more closely resembling that of Douglas than that of Lincoln, holding that a wrong can, indeed, be a “right.”

Fortified by a curriculum and pedagogy that promote critical analysis, reasoned debate, and sound judgment, our students offer a hopeful alternative. They persevere in the good work of the faithful everywhere, and, if what they saw at this year’s rallies is any indication, such efforts seem to be bearing fruit.

Just as history eventually came to see the scandal of slavery, we can hope and pray that, at long last, we are coming to that point on abortion. □



“The country’s elite universities have failed their students, who tend to default to a worldview more closely resembling that of Douglas than that of Lincoln, holding that a wrong can, indeed, be a ‘right.’”

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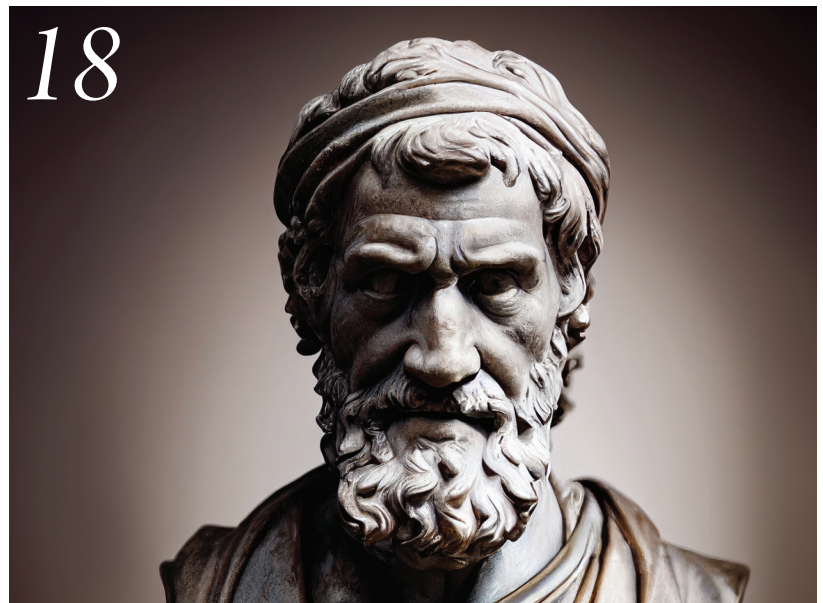
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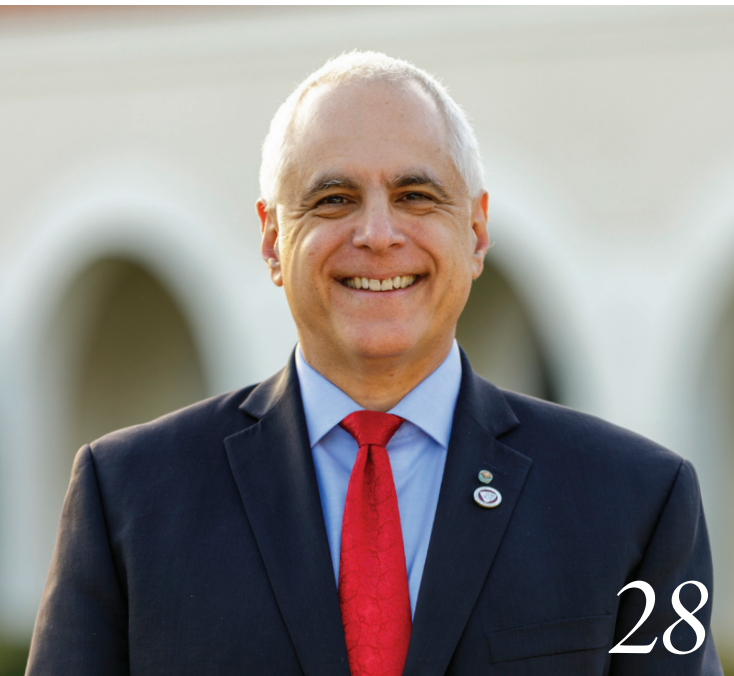
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Prayers, Sacrifice & Witness

**Students Work to Win
Hearts and Minds
for Life**



“There were so many,” says alumna Jordan Brittain (’14), recalling the protesters who lobbed taunts and shouted profanities at Thomas Aquinas College students at the annual Walk for Life West Coast some 10-15 years ago. Now the western regional manager for Students for Life, Miss Brittain remembers the angry throngs that lined the city’s streets, trying to disrupt their peaceful, prayerful rallies. “They blared music, dressed provocatively, and even tried to get past the security detail and confront us directly. It was alarming.”

For 20 years, the College’s students endured the insults — as well as the 12-hour round-trip bus ride, the short night’s sleep on a gymnasium floor, and the exhaustion that followed — as a small sacrifice to make in defense of the unborn. But at this year’s Walk, the experience was different.

“There are always a few groups that gather to hold their own anti-Walk rallies and shout hateful things,” explains Charlinda Gerrard (CA’26). “This year, though, those groups were very small. There also weren’t any people yelling at us from windows or screaming from the sidewalks. It feels like we’re making progress.”

Students from the New England campus

noted a similar lack of vitriol when they made their 400-mile pilgrimage for January’s March for Life in Washington, D.C. “This year was one of the most peaceful I have ever seen,” says Brendan Seeley (NE’27). “There were almost no protesters at all,” adds Gerard Behe (NE’25). “At previous Marches, it felt like we were in enemy territory. This time, it felt like a Catholic takeover of D.C.”



There are many possible explanations for the diminished opposition at these two of the country’s largest pro-life rallies — abortion proponents may feel deflated in the wake of the 2024 elections, or they have turned their attention toward the states — but that may not be all. Perhaps it

may also be that decades of prayer, sacrifice, and witness on the part of TAC students, alumni, and countless others are starting to bear fruit.

Leading the Charge

For at least 15 years, Thomas Aquinas College students have carried the banner at the front of the Walk for Life West Coast, leading thousands of pro-lifers through San Francisco. “It’s important for people to see this unified group of joyful young people, both men and women, who are alive with the light of Christ and want to spread it to others,” says Gianna Huckins (CA’26). “The College’s presence at these big pro-life events shows that we want to make an impact in the world and are serious about doing our part.”

This presence is not limited to high-profile rallies, but also includes many quiet hours spent in prayer outside local abortion clinics. The New England pro-life group brings a busload of students to pray the Rosary at a Planned Parenthood every Tuesday, rain or shine. In California, students joined the 40 Days for Life prayer vigil this Lent, praying outside an abortion facility in shifts of eight consecutive hours each Thursday.

For many, attending the annual pro-life events helps give form to otherwise abstract classroom concepts. “I get to reflect on how the more general truths I learn about in theology and philosophy can be applied to real life,” observes Michael Rivera (CA’26). “I am able to take action based on the principles I have been learning at the College.”

Many graduates, in turn, have become leaders within the pro-life movement. Attorney Katie (Wynne ’80) Short is vice president of legal affairs at the Life Legal Defense Foundation, which she helped found more than 30 years ago. Michele (Grimm ’81) Loughman serves as executive director of the Life Centers of Ventura County, which provides women with free

*“I am able to take action
based on the principles
I have been learning
at the College.”*

pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, education, and material assistance. Another attorney, Justin Alvarez (’97), is chairman of the Board of Directors of Obria Medical Clinics, which supports expectant mothers around the country. Many other alumni testify to the Culture of Life as parents, volunteers, and sidewalk counselors.

Over the years, the College has also gained two intercessors for the unborn. Angela Baird (’00), who organized prayer vigils at a local abortion clinic, died after a tragic hiking accident her sophomore year, but not before praying one final Rosary “for the aborted babies.” And Andrew “Kent” Moore (’14) was struck and killed by an oncoming vehicle while participating in a Crossroads pro-life walk across America in 2012. Both of their legacies continue to inspire students and alumni to this day.

“We put their names on the back of the sweatshirts we wear to the Walk,” says Patrick Daly (CA’26). “I told their stories on the bus ride to San Francisco, so that everyone would be encouraged by their example.”

A Changing World

Given the dedicated participation of the Church Militant, Suffering, and Triumphant, it should come as little surprise if, indeed, a change of heart is under way. Clearly, there is still much work to be done, as evidenced by the losses that pro-lifers have sustained in statewide ballot measures since the passage of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* in 2022. Yet there are some encouraging signs as well — most importantly, an overall decline in the number of abortions since 1990, which, despite an uptick beginning in 2020, appears to be tapering off as of the end of last year.

Attitudes appear to be shifting, especially among younger Americans. A 2025 study from the Demetree Institute indicates that support for unrestricted legal abortion is declining rapidly in the 18-35 demographic, while 6 in 10 of the study’s participants acknowledged that human rights begin in the womb. “I think we’re seeing a reversion to the mean,” says Richard Goforth (CA’26). “Things can only get so unnatural in one direction before the pendulum swings back to a more normal, median view.”

While natural and scientific truths certainly play a role in changing minds and hearts, the value of the faithful’s many entreaties and God’s providential reply cannot

be overstated. “Last year, the College took part in a nationwide nine-month novena consecrating the country to Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patroness of the unborn,” says Nicholas Zepeda (CA’28). “I think we are starting to see the result of all our prayers as grace is being poured out and changing people’s hearts.”

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to see this unified group
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Whether in good times or bad, Thomas Aquinas College students, alumni, and their families will continue to advocate for life. “We all stand in visible support for the unborn, in both our prayers and our actions,” adds Nicholas. “We will be the ones standing by the most defenseless and innocent members of our society until they are protected.” □






One Program Two Coasts

RECENT EVENTS AND HAPPENINGS

Former Solicitor General Paul Clement Lectures on Framers, Administrative State

 In observance of Presidents' Day, Thomas Aquinas College welcomed Paul Clement, attorney and former U.S. Solicitor General, to its California campus to present a lecture entitled, "The Framers' Vision and the Modern Administrative State."

Widely considered a potential Supreme Court nominee, Mr. Clement has argued more than 100 cases before the High Court, more than any other litigator this century. These cases include some of the most controversial and important to go before the Court, including legal battles in defense of religious freedom and the sanctity of marriage. Ten years ago, he took the lead in representing the College and others in the fight against the Obama Administration's HHS Mandate, which sought to force Catholic institutions to furnish coverage that violated the Church's teachings.

"The modern administrative state is not what the framers had in mind. But I do think the Supreme Court is moving things in the right direction."

Mr. Clement received his bachelor's degree from Georgetown University, a master's in economics from Cambridge, and his *juris doctor* from Harvard. After finishing law school, he clerked for Judge Laurence Silberman of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit and later for Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia. From 2001 to 2008, he served as deputy solicitor general and solicitor general under President George W. Bush. Mr. Clement is a founding partner of Clement & Murphy and a distinguished lecturer in law at Georgetown University.

In his lecture, Mr. Clement looked to the Declaration of Inde-



pendence and the Constitution to determine what the men who structured the American government would think of the massive bureaucratic infrastructure that predominates today. "As that title may suggest, there may be a little disconnect between what the framers had in mind and what we've arrived upon in 2025," he told his audience.

Mr. Clement illustrated the vision of the framers by highlighting several of the grievances listed against the British monarchy in the Declaration of Independence and pointing out some of the

provisions of power built into the Constitution. He contended that the administrative state has produced some of the same abuses that the founders originally sought to guard against. "They didn't think that the federal government would handle all manner of local issues, but they did think that the federal government would have a distinct role in stitching together the Republic," he said.


Despite his emphasis on the corruption of the country's founding ideals, Mr. Clement ended his lecture on an optimistic note, sharing his hope of returning closer to the original vision of government outlined in the Constitution. "I do think we are, today, pretty far removed

from the framers' vision," he observed. "The modern administrative state is not what the framers had in mind. But I do think the Supreme Court is moving things in the right direction." □



Mr. Clement with President Paul J. O'Reilly

Fourth Thomistic Summer Conference


 By the close of the Second Vatican Council, many claimed that Pope St. John XXIII's call for *aggiornamento* entailed a turn away from Thomistic philosophy and theology in Catholic higher education. In response, Dr. Ralph McInerny wrote *Thomism in an Age of Renewal*, "out of the conviction that the Church has been right all along in directing us to St. Thomas, and She continues to be right." He granted (with mordant wit) the inadequacy of Thomism taken as a pat "system" to be learned by rote from manuals, but insisted that St. Thomas himself, encountered in his own writings and philosophical spirit, ought to remain "the model and mentor of the intellectual life of Catholics" — including the very work of *aggiornamento*.

For many years Dr. McInerny was himself a model and mentor for new generations of Thomists. In honor of the 15th anniversary of his death, the fourth Thomistic Summer Conference at Thomas Aquinas College (a series inspired by Dr. McInerny's own summer conferences at Notre Dame), is taking on the name of his classic work as its theme: "*Thomism in an Age of Renewal*."

"The Church has been right all along in directing us to St. Thomas, and She continues to be right."




Held June 5-8 on the California campus, the conference will consider the question: "What, in our age, is the role of Thomas Aquinas?" with lectures that contemplate the works of St. Thomas as theologian and philosopher as well as those examining the substantive content of his thought. Featured speakers include Dr. Thomas Hibbs of Baylor University, Dr. John O'Callaghan of the University of Notre Dame, Dr. Christopher Kaczor of Loyola Marymount University, and Thomas Aquinas College's own Dr. Anthony Andres and Dr. Patrick M. Gardner.

Care to spend three days engaging in lectures and lively conversations that explore the thought of St. Thomas? See the conference's website, thomasaquinas.edu/tsc. 



Junior Lucy Tittmann ('26) Stars in Hemingway Short Film


 In the months during her summer break, TAC junior Lucy Tittmann (CA'26) traveled some 6,000 miles to Spain for a one-of-a-kind summer job: performing the lead female role in a forthcoming movie based on a short story by Ernest Hemingway.

The opportunity came about when, while acting in her high school's production of *The Sound of Music*, Lucy caught the attention of actress and producer Jennifer Cadena. Some time thereafter, Ms. Cadena contacted Lucy and asked her to audition for her production debut, a short film adaptation of one of Ernest Hemingway's most famous stories.

"I was memorizing lines and filming audition takes in my room between Augustine readings in my sophomore year," Lucy recalls. Thanks to all her hard work, she was cast as the film's female lead and spent many more hours memorizing the script and practicing her part. Last summer, she flew out to Spain for filming.


The film, *Hills Like White Elephants*, is a project of Movie to Movement, a production company dedicated to cultivating a culture of life and beauty through its work, best known for its first feature, *Bella*. This latest project aims to appeal to a wider, mainstream audience. "Hemingway's writing doesn't tell you what to do, since the story is mostly dialogue," Lucy says. "It's ambiguous enough that it allows you to think for yourself and is accessible to anyone. We interpreted the story to emphasize the pro-life message, but we did so in a subtle, natural way that doesn't interfere with Hemingway's original text."

Hemingway's story follows the conversation of a couple seated at a Spanish bar as they have an indirect argument about an "operation" — implied to be an abortion — that the man urges the woman to undertake, while the woman argues against him. This diametrically opposed couple does not find a clear resolution by the end of the story, as each party remains firm in his or her stance, leaving the ending up to interpretation.

Movie to Movement plans to show the film in a few festivals this year and hopes to submit it for consideration at Cannes and Sundance, as well as the Oscars. 




Jubilee Mass and Devotions

 The New England campus welcomed pilgrims with open arms to Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel on February 22 for a Mass and devotions in honor of the 2025 Jubilee Year.


Students, faculty, and members of the faithful from throughout the Diocese of Springfield flocked to the Chapel, which the Most Rev. William D. Byrne has designated a pilgrimage site. The Jubilee celebration began with Eucharistic Adoration, after which Head Chaplain Rev. Greg Markey offered Holy Mass. Confession was available throughout Adoration and the Mass, so pilgrims could fulfill the conditions needed to obtain a plenary indulgence.

“We are so happy to welcome you on this day to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and to receive God’s mercy and pardon during this time,” said Fr. Markey in his homily. “It is fortuitous that we celebrate this Jubilee on this day, the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter.

Today, we celebrate the authority granted to the Church by Christ, to the Pope, to bind and loose, and also to open the treasures of mercy, so that when the Pope says this particular act is an indulgence, we can receive the complete remission of all of our sins, for ourselves or someone else.”

Mass concluded with the recitation of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy led by Fr. Markey. “This Jubilee Year, this time of mercy, we should all have great confidence in God’s pardon,” he said. 

Alumni Gifts Surge 44 Percent for Day of Giving

 “We began this year’s Alumni Day of Giving with a goal that we knew was probably too ambitious — \$500,000, up from last year’s record day of \$315,000,” admits Dr. John J. Goyette, vice president for advancement. “But we thought it good to set the bar high, and TAC alumni rose to the occasion.” At this year’s annual

“We thought it good to set the bar high, and TAC alumni rose to the occasion.”

event — held on March 7, the Feast of St. Thomas — TAC alumni contributed a total of \$454,341. “That’s 91 percent of the way toward our goal and a 44 percent increase from last year.”

Leading the way were two anonymous alumni couples who each made matching gifts of \$100,000. “That was a powerful motivator,” says Dr. Goyette. “Their generosity inspired us all.” Hundreds of gifts soon followed, with the Class of 1987 leading the way, breaking the Class of 2014’s three-year streak as the class with

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL Lecture and Concert Series Highlights from the Last Semester*



CALIFORNIA

January Lecture

Dr. Stephen Shivone
Thomas Aquinas
College, New England
“The Extremity of Love:
On Homer’s Achilles”



St. Thomas Day Lecture

Rev. Sebastian Walshe,
O.Praem. ('94)
“The Wisdom of the
Teaching of Christ as a
Sign of the Truth of the
Christian Religion”



Spring All-College Seminar

Gunnar’s Daughter, by Sigrid Undset

Presidents’ Day Lecture

Paul Clement

Former U.S. Solicitor General
“The Framers’ Vision and the
Modern Administrative State”



March Lecture

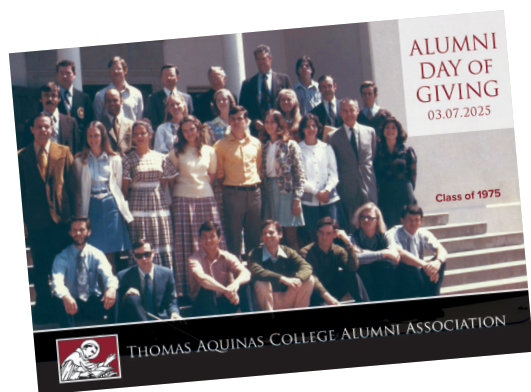
Dr. Zena Hitz
St. John’s College,
Annapolis
“What is the Life
of the Mind?”



Spring Concert

The Thomas Aquinas College Choir
Gilbert & Sullivan’s *Mikado*

**Text and/or audio from select lectures is available at
thomasaquinas.edu*



the highest rate of giving. As such, the Class of 1987 will be commemorated on the Alumni Day of Giving plaques

that hang in the dining commons on both campuses.

“We are so grateful to our fellow alumni for making this year’s Alumni Day of Giving the greatest yet!” says Andrea (Sassman ’96) Loop, president of the TAC Alumni Association. “By banding together each year, we are ensuring that the education that we treasure continues to be available to students seeking to cultivate their minds for the sake of the truth.” □

Corporate Ethicist Dr. Pia de Solenni (’93) Shares Career Insights with TAC Students



Dr. Pia de Solenni (’93), director of corporate engagement for IWP Capital, visited her alma mater last month to speak with students about how her Thomas Aquinas College education has served her professionally.

In her work at IWP, a Catholic investment screening company, Dr. de Solenni relies on her formation as an ethicist and theologian to advocate for Catholic values in secular corporations. Her talk, “Don’t Hide Your Light Under a Bushel,” emphasized the power of Catholics in the workforce to promote the common good and be witnesses to Christ. “We are all the Church, we are all the body of Christ, and our job is to be the body of Christ in the world,” she told students. “We are supposed to be the leaven, we are supposed to be the salt.”

Dr. de Solenni shared her experience of working to promote pro-life values and Christian morality in the various roles she has worked throughout her career — including onetime chancellor of the Diocese of Orange, California — and the value of her time at the College in preparing her for that mission. “The reason I talk about not hiding your light under a bushel is because I think that the education you have been given is exceptional,” she told students. “What you have been given here is incredible, and I would just encourage you to think about all the places where you can use it.”

Additionally, she reminded students not to underestimate themselves and the influence that they have to bring about change in a largely secular society. “You have a tremendous opportunity to impact the world,” she said. “In your relationships, if you are blessed with children, religious life, single life, whatever it may be, if you do it intentionally, you will impact the world, probably in ways that you will never know until, God willing, you are in Heaven. I encourage you not to underestimate how much you have been given, and to see it as a gift.” □



Endowed by Barbara and Paul Henkels



NEW ENGLAND

Winter Concert

Peter Blanchette
Classical Guitarist
Selections from Bach
and Dowland



Spring All-College Seminar

Question 16 of the Prima
Pars of the *Summa Theologiae*,
by St. Thomas Aquinas



March Lecture

Dr. Carol Day
Tutor Emerita, Thomas
Aquinas College
“Space and Time in
Modern Cosmology”



St. Thomas Day Lecture

**Rev. Romanus
Cessario, O.P.**
Ave Maria University
“Why Study Aquinas
Today?”



Presidents’ Day Lecture


Dr. Daniel Mahoney
Assumption University
“Washington and Lincoln:
When Magnanimity Meets
Tough-Minded Moderation”

Spring Concert

The Thomas Aquinas College Choir
Selections from Schubert



Bishop Byrne Offers Mass on Solemnity of Chapel Dedication

 Three years after the Dedication of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel at Thomas Aquinas College, New England, the Most Rev. William D. Byrne, Bishop of Springfield, returned to campus for the Solemnity commemorating that blessed occasion.

On March 7, 2022, His Excellency dedicated the formerly Russell Sage Chapel, which the College had renovated after acquiring the campus, to make it a fitting place for Catholic worship. Although the Bishop has visited many times since then, he was especially delighted to do so this time, celebrating both the anniversary of the Chapel's dedication and its designation as an official pilgrimage site for the 2025 Jubilee Year.


"I want to make Thomas Aquinas a pilgrimage site. I want people to be able to see not only this great campus, but also this magnificent chapel."

"It's wonderful that we are in this chapel during this Jubilee Year of Hope, when, in fact, I, through the gift of the Holy Father, had the privilege to be able to designate pilgrimage sites within the Diocese, which with it attached a plenary indulgence for those who fulfilled the requirements," Bishop Byrne said in his homily. "And so — perhaps with a bit of hubris and maybe holy pride — I said, 'I want to make Thomas Aquinas a pilgrimage site. I want people to be able to see not only this great campus, but also this magnificent chapel,' because I wanted everyone to see that I was blessed enough to have you be part of my flock."

His Excellency also spoke on the theme of the Jubilee Year, "Pilgrims of Hope," touching on topics of reconciliation and pilgrimage. "The Catechism tells us that hope is the theological

virtue by which we desire the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal life as our happiness." His Excellency said. "It is the vision of nothing else but Heaven itself." □

Members of the Class of 2025 Complete Their Senior Theses!

 In March, members of the Class of 2025 passed a major milestone on their journey to earning their diplomas by turning in the final copies of their Senior Theses.

Throughout the academic year, seniors spend many hours researching and writing these extensive papers, which propose and answer questions on topics from across the curriculum — including, but not limited to, philosophy, theology, natural science, mathematics, music, literature, history, and politics. The thesis represents its author's effort to apply his or her education to a matter of scholarly and personal importance.

"The sense of accomplishment we all feel really unites us."

Serving as a capstone to students' studies at Thomas Aquinas College, the Senior Thesis is a yearlong labor of love, and meeting its final deadline is a cause for celebration. On both campuses, the thesis turn-in ceremony took place late on a Saturday night, where seniors presented their finished product to their campus's registrar, then took turns ringing a ceremonial "thesis bell" in California and a "thesis gong" in New England to mark the occasion. They cheered for each other, hugging and offering congratulations, then stayed to celebrate after the last of their classmates turned in his project.

The occasion was one full of emotions, from relief and excitement to the bittersweet feelings of the beginning of the end. "It feels so surreal, and so joyful," said Julia Nicely (CA'25). "I've seen so many seniors before us turn in their theses and can't believe that it's us now. The sense of accomplishment we all feel really unites us." □




2025 Commencement Speakers

California Thanks Dr. Michael F. McLean, New England Welcomes Dr. Kevin D. Roberts

For its 2025 Commencement exercises, Thomas Aquinas College will welcome two speakers with a lifelong commitment to the restoration of American education and, in particular, a devotion to Catholic liberal education: Dr. Michael F. McLean, the College's fourth president, and Dr. Kevin D. Roberts, president of the Heritage Foundation and Heritage Action for America.

California: May 17

 Dr. McLean, who will serve as the 51st Commencement Speaker at the California campus, joined the teaching faculty of Thomas Aquinas College in 1978. In addition to teaching throughout that time, he has also served myriad administrative roles: assistant dean for student affairs, vice president for development, dean, and, from 2010 to 2022, president. A graduate of Saint Mary's College of California, where he studied under Thomas Aquinas College's founding president, Dr. Ronald P. McArthur, he holds a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Notre Dame.




Dr. Michael F. McLean

"We see this year's California Commencement as a way to thank Mike publicly for his nearly five decades of service to and leadership of the College," says President Paul J. O'Reilly. "He holds a special place in the hearts of our soon-to-be graduates, as he has taught two sections of Senior Theology this year. We have no doubt that the seniors will lead us all in showing our extraordinary gratitude for his commitment to the College, to its students, and to its mission."

"We see this year's California Commencement as a way to thank Mike publicly for his nearly five decades of service to and leadership of the College."

Joining Dr. McLean for Commencement will be Rev. Sebastian Walshe, O.Praem ('94), who will offer the morning's Baccalaureate Mass of the Holy Spirit in Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. Fr. Walshe is a professor of philosophy at St. Michael's Abbey in Silverado, California.

New England: May 24

 One week later, Dr. Roberts will serve as the 4th Commencement Speaker on the College's New England campus. Dr. Roberts earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, a master's in history from Virginia Tech, and a Ph.D. in American history from the University of Texas at Austin before becoming an assistant professor of history at New Mexico State University. He went on to found John Paul the Great Academy in Lafayette, Louisiana, then served for three years as president of Wyoming Catholic College. Before joining the Heritage Foundation in 2021, he was CEO of the Texas Public Policy Foundation. He is the author of several books, including, most recently, *Dawn's Early Light: Taking Back Washington to Save America*.



Dr. Kevin D. Roberts

"Kevin has become one of the preeminent voices in American public policy and leads the country's most prominent and influential think tank."

"Kevin is a longtime friend of the College, dating back to his days at Wyoming Catholic, and his wife, Michelle, is also well known within our community, as she serves as an educational consultant for Mother of Divine Grace School, founded by our own Laura Berquist ('75)," says Dr. O'Reilly. "Following a distinguished career in education, Kevin has become one of the preeminent voices in American public policy and leads the country's most prominent and influential think tank. We are eager to welcome him for the first time to our New England campus, and we look forward to hearing the words of wisdom he will share with our graduates and their families."

Rev. Gerald E. Murray, J.C.D., a canon lawyer and the pastor of St. Joseph's Church in New York City, will serve as the principal celebrant and homilist at the Baccalaureate Mass of the Holy Spirit in Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel, immediately preceding the Commencement ceremony. □

To Read or Not to Read?

TAC Juniors Contemplate Shakespeare



To read or not to read Shakespeare, that is the question. And for the students of Thomas Aquinas College, the answer is “Yes, and lots of it!”

In Junior Seminar — a course packed with authors who have shaped the development of modern thought — Shakespeare is rightly included with major philosophers, theologians, political thinkers, and historians. Students delve into nine of his plays and several sonnets alongside works about skepticism, empiricism, the natural state of man, and the proper role of government. They read the historical works *Julius Caesar*, *King Richard II*, and *King Henry IV: Part I* between works by Machiavelli and Luther; the tragedies of *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear* in the midst of Descartes, Pascal, and Hobbes; and *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest* beside Spinoza and Kant.

The placement of the Bard of Avon’s plays among these writings is no accident, as students quickly discover. “Shakespeare puts many of the philosophers we read for Junior Seminar into a situation where we can see what actually follows from what they believe,” says Rose Grimm (CA’26). “It’s very easy to

“He writes his plays for the sake of holding a ‘mirror up to nature,’ so we can see ourselves for what we are.”

get pulled into some of the teachings of, say, Machiavelli, and Shakespeare shows the reader what a follower of those beliefs actually does.” Whether delving into the amoral philosophy of King Lear’s Edmund in light of Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, or scrutinizing *Hamlet* through the lens of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, students are able to put the theories proposed by the authors in the Junior Year curriculum to the test, evaluating how they play out in Shakespeare’s stories.


Juniors also come to appreciate the genius of Shakespeare in his own right, not only because of his mastery of the English lan-

guage in both poetry and prose, but also because of his ability to portray the complexity of human nature. As his characters contemplate their most evil inclinations, blur the lines between sanity and madness, or rage against the injustices that befall them, Shakespeare paints vivid portraits of the human experience.

“Shakespeare reveals his hand to us in *Hamlet*, Act III, Scene 2, when Hamlet says: ‘For anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold, as t’were, the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure,’” observes Max Alvarez (CA’26). “He writes his plays for the sake of holding a ‘mirror up to nature,’ so we can see ourselves for what we are, showing the virtuous as beautiful and the vicious as revolting. His stories are not two-dimensional, but are rich with real human ideas, problems, desires, risks, consequences, and characters.”

This insight into human nature is illuminative for TAC students, especially in contrast to many of the Enlightenment-era authors, who veer ever closer toward a total denial of the beauty and meaning of human life. In their study of Shakespeare, juniors see that, even in his darkest tragedies, meaningless suffering and despair are not the end of the story. “In many Shakespeare plays, the readers do not, at least in my experience, get what they want or expect,” reflects Marianna Favarato (CA’26). “But, if one takes the time to read carefully and attentively, there is always a redemptive hope to be found in Shakespeare’s works.”

Inspired by their work in the classroom, students at Thomas Aquinas College often come together to produce live performances of Shakespearean plays. In the fall semester on the California campus, they directed and performed *King Lear*. This spring, the California campus staged *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and the New England campus produced *The Winter’s Tale*, allowing students on both coasts to experience Shakespearean plays that are not part of the curriculum. □



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A Path to True Excellence

By Marcel Pryor (CA'25)

Topeka, Kansas

During my final two years at my diocesan high school, I was determined to go to college at the United States Naval Academy, study political science, and learn to be a naval officer.

My singular focus was on account of the opportunity that I saw to fulfill three desires that were of fundamental importance to me at the time. First, I saw a path to excellence. The Navy was a great place to achieve position, title, and the merits of worldly office. I saw, secondly, a way to be part of something beyond myself through military service for my country. Third, I had hoped to find a wholesome enough institution to facilitate my great, albeit immature, love of the intellectual life.

I spent eight months going through the application process and three more waiting for an answer. I wrote what I thought were great essays, performed well on my admission tests, and received Congressional endorsements. But in the

“True excellence comes not from the name of your rank or position but from the quality of the virtues habituated in your soul.”

end, I came up short. Fortunately, my mother found a website for this small liberal arts college in California and, thankfully, I was admitted.

It took about a week after my enrollment for me to begin to realize how happy I truly was concerning not just my denial from USNA, but also being providentially turned away from my juvenile way of thinking itself. Here at Thomas

Aquinas, I have grown to see the truth underlying the three imperfect desires that could have led me away from this college.

Over these last four years, I have come to realize that true excellence comes not from the name of your rank or position but from the quality of the virtues habituated in your soul. At TAC, we are constantly exposed to the vapid reality of worldly titles in our readings about men throughout history who pad their chests with medals and their walls with awards, neither of which reflect the character of their souls, which should be the true indication of greatness.

Thomas Aquinas College has not just informed us of what great virtue is *per se*, or told us stories of the men who have it, it has furnished us with a guide toward developing the virtues ourselves.

I have also learned, with respect to my second desire, that the goods that ought to be served for their own sake

far exceed the genuine but lesser goods of the security of the state: God Himself should be served by men of understanding speaking well of Him. The Col-

lege has furnished me with the greatest access to the sacraments and orthodox preaching and instruction. To leave TAC without a great devotion to prayer and a reverence for the wisdom of God that we receive in the classroom seems to me altogether impossible.

As regards my vocation, the woman from back home who agreed to marry me this past summer will no doubt be



thankful for the presence of the unshakable fraternity I have encountered here. What I have learned about becoming a true man over the past four years has been almost entirely due to the men of this campus striving for virtue and faith in community with one another.

Finally, Thomas Aquinas College has shown me the intelligible beauty of the highest of the sciences. On several occasions, while reading theology, I have come close to tears at the sheer brilliance of the teaching of some of the great men of our faith: the profoundly romantic and sacred prayer of Tobias and his wife before God; the breathtaking articulation of the Resurrection by St. John Damascene; St. Thomas's fifth way, which proves that God exists through His very care for us, His creation.

Over the course of my time here, I can remember saying the following phrase several times: “There’s just no other life.” There’s nothing to compare with the joy of studying these truths for themselves. For that reason, I plan to study philosophy further at graduate school next year.

Had I attended the Academy, I could have grown in some very positive ways and achieved some great feats. However, I would have been left destitute of a few fundamental notions about these very desires for excellence, service, and knowledge that would have left me greatly lacking later in life.

I could not have found this opportunity anywhere else, and I am profoundly grateful for it. □

The Education I Had Unknowingly Longed For

By Elena Diaz-Bonilla (CA'25)

Vienna, Virginia

Although I visited Thomas Aquinas College when I was 8 years old, I didn't really think about it until much later, when my sister — who was one year ahead of me in high school — decided to attend. At that time, TAC wasn't in my plans. I had played on a travel soccer team for over a decade, and I wanted to use sports to get into a prestigious college, because obviously a prestigious college means a good job after graduation, and a good job means good money, a good life, and so on ...

"I was much smaller than I had thought, but the world was much richer than I had ever dared to believe."

Little did I know, that despite my plan, I already was searching for TAC.

During my high school years, I was attracted both to STEM and the humanities. While most people fall into one group or the other, I loved both and wondered whether they could ever overlap. Then, during my sophomore year, I fell in love with chemistry. It seemed to give an account for the order of the universe through the laws of God. It gave me a glimpse of a potential connection between science, philosophy, and theology. Still, I didn't even think about pursuing an education based on the unity of academic subjects.

My dream of playing soccer in college began to fade, however, after I tore my ACL toward the end of high school. Instead of taking a gap year to recover,

as I had intended, I followed the advice of wiser people and enrolled at TAC for my freshman year, with plans to transfer to another school and play soccer the next year.

But I didn't know what I was stepping into. All my plans were doomed after my first class, theology with Mr. Strader. I was not going anywhere. I quickly realized that TAC offered the integrated education I had unknowingly longed for, one that could answer old questions and inspire new ones.

Even though I was committed to remaining, there were still growing pains. For example, I initially was confused at the end of classes when the opening question was far from answered. But we were not memorizing facts; we were refining our questions, developing our view of the world, and seeking the truth through the integration of the academic disciplines.

After my first-semester freshman examinations, I experienced the world in a completely different way. I was much smaller than I had thought, but the world was much richer than I had ever dared to believe. To come to that realization, though, I had to leave the world behind for a while.

I grew up right outside of Washington, D.C., where both domestic and international politics were very much a part of my day-to-day life. At the College, I stepped out of that world to focus on truth. It is important to be set apart from the world over four years to reflect and focus on the truth, gleaned from books and discussions of questions that are timeless. Some things are more important than keeping up with the latest



TikTok trend.

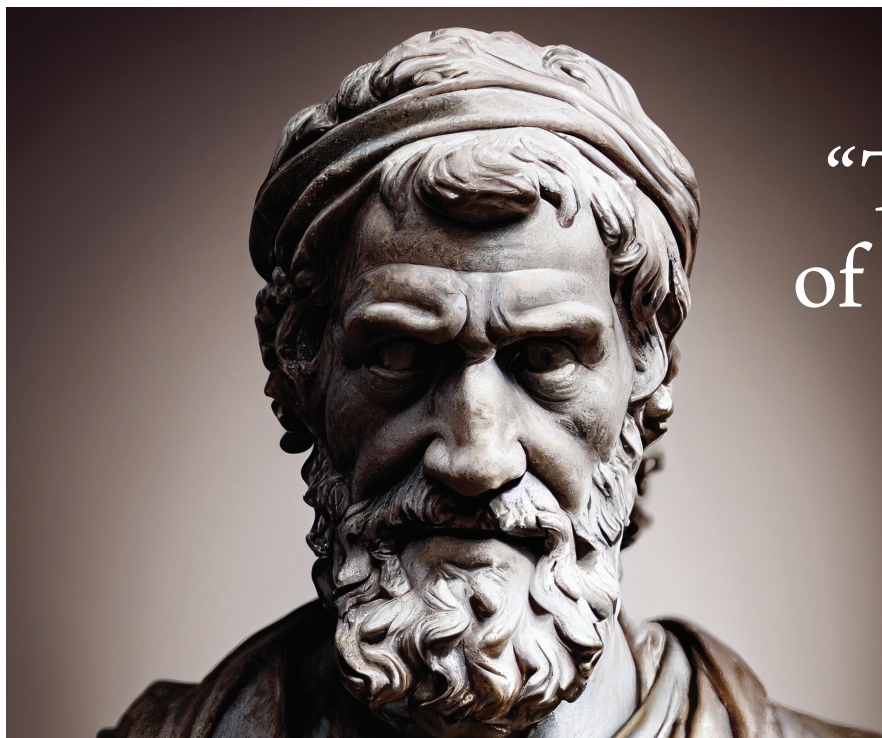
The most exciting and heartbreaking aspect of the College, though, will be leaving. Leaving is exciting because it is the next step of continuing the TAC education, going out and reading more, discussing more, living more. It is heartbreaking because I will be leaving an environment and community perfectly suited to the study of truth. Even though it will be hard to continue this education in the outside world, that is the next challenge: Every graduating senior has the responsibility to share what we have received.

Over the past few summers, I have worked at an embassy in Washington, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, the Witherspoon Institute at Princeton University, and other organizations with no connection to the College. When-

"TAC offered the integrated education I had unknowingly longed for, one that could answer old questions and inspire new ones."

ever I explain my classes to these outsiders, I receive different reactions, such as wonder, confusion, and, yes, jealousy.

Yet sharing about the College isn't enough. We also have a responsibility to use this education to build up the world. I am currently applying to work in the Trump Administration next year and, God willing, attend law school after that. □



“The Philosopher of Common Sense”

Why We Read Aristotle at Thomas Aquinas College

by Dr. Glen Coughlin, Ph.D.

One of the more obvious differences between Thomas Aquinas College and other colleges, including the orthodox Catholic ones, is the inclusion, not only of four full years of philosophy, but of four years of Aristotelian philosophy. While we do include in our Freshman Philosophy course six Platonic dialogues (Plato, after all, was Aristotle’s teacher for 18 years), by far the greater part of Freshman Philosophy and virtually the entirety of all the other philosophy courses consist of a very close reading of the original texts of Aristotle. We might well wonder why this is so.

One could refer to Aristotle’s outsized impact on later thought. There is not a field of study about which he did not write, at least in embryonic form. His treatises on logic, his discussions of rhetoric and poetics, his natural philosophy, his discussions of the soul, his ethics and politics, and his metaphysics are all lodestones for later thinkers. Ancient philosophers took him most seriously, the medievals relied on no one so much as him, while Renaissance and the modern thinkers took their bearings from him both in agreeing and in disagreeing with him. Among philosophers, Aristotle is the heaviest of heavyweights.

Not only does the custom of the philosophers affirm his centrality, but so too

does the authority of the Church. In giving guidance to her sons and daughters, the Church takes the time to recommend certain thinkers as “doctors of the Church,” which, as you probably know, means literally “teachers of the Church.” Among these authoritative teachers, no one has been more often or more forcefully commended to our diligent attention than our patron, St. Thomas Aquinas.

“Ancient philosophers took him most seriously, the medievals relied on no one so much as him, while Renaissance and the modern thinkers took their bearings from him both in agreeing and in disagreeing with him.”

To cite but one out of scores, perhaps hundreds, of examples, listen to what St. John Paul II said in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*: “More than a century [after the publication of *Aeterni Patris*], many of the insights of his (Leo XIII’s) encyclical letter

have lost none of their interest from either a practical or pedagogical point of view — most particularly, his insistence upon the incomparable value of the philosophy of St. Thomas. A renewed insistence upon the teaching of the Angelic Doctor seemed to Pope Leo XIII the best way to recover the practice of a philosophy consonant with the demands of faith” (*Fides et Ratio*, #57).

The recommendation of the Church that we learn at the feet of St. Thomas points immediately to a natural consequence, that we learn at the feet of Aristotle. St. Thomas himself was formed philosophically by the study of Aristotle and used the principles and doctrine of Aristotle throughout his many works, even in discussing the sublime mysteries of the Incarnation and the Trinity, truths infinitely beyond the grasp of unaided human reason and so utterly unknown to Aristotle. The Church’s commendations of St. Thomas redound to the credit of Aristotle.

Still, there must be something about Aristotle’s philosophy that gives it such enduring value and makes it suitable for the elaboration of Catholic theology. The obvious thing to say is that it is, by and large and on the most important points, true. How could a false philosophy serve as the handmaiden to the truths of the Faith? Nothing but distortion and error would result. St.

John Paul II famously compared faith and reason to two wings on which the human spirit rises to contemplation of the truth — if one of those wings is not healthy and strong, that spirit is going to be in trouble.

We can trace the superiority of Aristotle's philosophy to his peculiar approach to every one of the questions that he confronted. Aristotle, it is said, is "the philosopher of common sense." But what does that mean?

It is a general principle, one which almost everyone accepts, that when we learn, we depend on prior knowledge. This is clear from examples. If you are thinking of taking a particular job, you decide the case by looking to your past experience, to your knowledge of your goals and aspirations, to your knowledge of your abilities and of other opportunities, and so on. You do not come to a conclusion in a vacuum, but in the light of the many circumstances which bear on the question and about which you already know something.

The same sort of thing is true in the more abstruse world of philosophy. If you wonder whether virtue is a kind of teachable knowledge, something you could get from listening to lectures, say, you might ask yourself what you already know about knowledge and about virtue. You might then notice, as Socrates did, that virtuous men sometimes have unvirtuous children, whom they would have taught to be virtuous if that were possible — they probably gave them many lectures, at any rate! You might then conclude that virtue is not a kind of teachable knowledge. You look to what you already know for insight into what you do not yet know.

Now, here's the rub: Even the philosopher has to start with something he already knows before he can reflect on things as a philosopher. Before he ever turns philosopher and wonders about deep questions, the philosopher is just a common man like everyone else, with no special insight. If he is going to get some knowledge which is out of the ordinary, he must necessarily start with the ordinary knowledge everyone has, from peasant to king, from fool to philosopher. He has no special status in terms of

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knowledge, though he might be unusual in his desire to know more. Aristotle knows that the basic knowledge that everyone has before they try to advance in wisdom must be the starting point of any true philosophy. Because he respects that beginning, he succeeds where others fail. It is in this regard that he is the philosopher of common sense.

We can see the consequences of failing to start at these common-sense beginnings by noting what has happened to our culture in the last few generations. Take same-sex marriage. When this was first debated, the vast majority of people recognized that same-sex marriage is against nature and bad for society. But very few people could articulate why this is so in terms of even more basic, more irrefutable truths, truths about the nature of man, of sex, of society, etc. The result was that the supporters of same-sex marriage could get away with accusing their opponents of irrationality and bigotry. And in the end, because so few people could articulate a solid, rational defense of heterosexual marriage, those who wanted to overturn common sense and morality won the day.

Some philosophers, too, ignore this humble beginning and try to make a new world out of whole cloth, as Descartes actually says he will do in his book, *Le Monde*. To paraphrase: "The world is too complex," he says; "I will just imagine another one and my philosophy will be about that. Later I will worry about how the real world is related to this imaginary one." Descartes is not looking to what he already knows to discover what he does not yet know; he is simply making things up. Others are not so brash

but still make the mistake of not starting with the most basic knowledge which we all already know. Instead, they start with some pet theory, as Kant starts with Hume's claim that we can learn nothing from experience.

Charles De Koninck, under whom most of the College's founders studied, used to say that such thinkers start in the middle of things. Aristotle is more circumspect: He starts at the beginning, making no pretense of knowing anything beyond what others know. He listens to, even bows before, the knowledge that every man has. If philosophy is to be a kind of knowledge and not a mere fantasy, if it is to be a wisdom and a handmaid of theology, it cannot start in any other way, for all learning is based on prior knowledge.

In every field, Aristotle proceeds from the better known to the less known, and that means starting with what everyone already knows before they begin philosophizing. This attention to the natural order of knowing is what sets Aristotle apart from all those who do not follow in his footsteps. Those who do, like St. Thomas, have a chance to become wise; those who do not are doomed to failure. We would prefer that our students succeed, and so we follow in the footsteps of St. Thomas and his master in philosophy, Aristotle. □



*Dr. Glen Coughlin, a tutor on the California campus since 1987, has published translations of Aristotle's *Physics* and *De Anima*. He presented these remarks to the Thomas Aquinas College Board of Governors at its February meeting.*

NATIONAL REVIEW

Struggling Harvard MBAs Show the Value of Liberal Education

Dennis McCarthy | February 9, 2025



There was a time when a degree from Harvard Business School (HBS), my alma mater, was a golden ticket to immediate and lucrative employment. No longer.

A *Wall Street Journal* article has set off alarms throughout corporate America — where I worked as an investment banker for 40 years — and academia, where I now ply my second career as a college CFO. The story reveals that nearly a quarter of last year’s HBS graduates were still looking for a job three months after their graduation.

That number marks a 20 percent increase from the prior year, raising serious questions about the diminishing value of a Harvard MBA. But the problem is hardly limited to Harvard. The *Journal*’s Lindsay Ellis reports similar findings at a half-dozen of the country’s top MBA programs.

“Time and again, I saw that liberally educated peers were no less, and sometimes more, prepared than us B-school types.”

Tuition at HBS currently runs at \$76,410 annually. Yet when it comes to landing a quality job, this pricey degree seems to have lost much of its cachet. “Going to Harvard is not going to be a differentiator,” one HBS official acknowledged to the *Journal*. “You have to have the skills.”

That’s an incredible admission, considering that the very purpose of business schools is to transmit “the skills” that lead to top jobs.

If Harvard Business School can’t teach those skills, then who can? And what about the hundreds of undergraduate programs across the country that crank out hundreds of thousands of bach-

elor’s degrees in business and related fields each

year: Is it realistic to expect them to do any better than HBS?

In our volatile economy — where we can’t even predict which jobs humans will still be working in 6 months, let alone in 10 or 25 years — building a college education around the momentary needs of an ever-shifting marketplace is a fool’s errand. Many professions that a college can train students for today will be obsolete tomorrow, and the typical business professor can no better predict the job of tomorrow than any of the rest of us can.

Nonetheless, the default approach at most American colleges nowadays is to offer increasingly specialized programs in narrow, siloed majors, with minimal — and often no — broader academic requirements. According to a survey from the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, less than 2 percent of four-year undergraduate institutions require students to take courses in seven major disciplines, and less than 30 percent require any study of literature, foreign language, or even basic economics.

It seems we’re going about this the wrong way. Perhaps the purpose of higher education, at least initially, shouldn’t be to pass on a fixed set of job skills, but to form the intellect, so that students are equipped to learn the skills for any job they seek.

Such an education would cover a wide range of disciplines, fostering versatility. It would be integrated, so that students could understand how the disciplines connect and build upon one another. And it wouldn’t rely on textbooks, which simplify complex ideas for their readers. Rather, it would feature primary texts — great, challenging, and timeless ones — thereby promoting critical thinking and comprehension, while engaging students in the foundational ideas that underpin every human enterprise.

Please see “McCarthy,” continued on page 22.

Why College Students Have Trouble Reading

John Goyette | February 11, 2025

A firestorm recently erupted in academic circles when *The Atlantic* published “The Elite College Students Who Can’t Read Books” — an impassioned critique about how the world has conspired to sap Ivy Leaguers and students at other top schools of their curiosity and attention spans.

These are bright students, mind you: kids who achieved the near-perfect SAT scores and top-of-the-class grade-point averages required for admission at the legacy schools. They know how to read; they just lack the will or focus to power through anything longer than a poem or an excerpt.

While the article deals with books of all kinds, it focuses on one kind in particular — “great books” — works by authors such as Tolstoy, Austen, and Homer. Not surprisingly, the longer or more difficult the text, the less willing or able these supposedly elite students are to finish it.

Author Rose Horowitch surveys some three dozen professors from top-tier schools who either shake their fists or throw up their hands at the problem. One, a veteran Berkeley literature professor lamenting the quality of her undergraduates, captures well her peers’ sense of despair: “It’s not like I can say, ‘OK, over the next three weeks, I expect you to read *The Iliad*,’ because they’re not going to do it.”

The academics posit a number of possible explanations for this sad state of affairs — the dismal condition of public education, the ubiquity of digital screens, grade inflation, and diminishing

educational standards — all real, and all deserving some share of the blame.

Yet utterly lacking is any sense of awareness on these scholars’ part that much of the problem lies with the legacy institutions themselves.

For most of the last century, American higher education, especially the Ivy League and other elite schools, has taken an increasingly disdainful approach to the Western canon, dismissing the great works as outdated at best, if not singularly responsible for every “-ism” — past, present, and yet to be identified — to besmirch the human condition. If you spend decades denouncing the entire edifice of Western civilization as oppressive and bigoted, don’t be surprised when your students show little interest in studying its architects.

During this same period, we have also seen American higher education shift away from the sort of learning that the Great Books promote — broadening the mind, sharpening the intellect — in favor of a hyperspecialized, career-focused approach. Core curricula have shrunk down to very little, and sometimes nothing at all, while course catalogs have exploded with a proliferation of ever-narrower majors, minors, and electives. The result is that the academy no longer holds out any books, let alone those of the Western canon, as being especially worthy of its students’ attention. And the students have taken that message to heart.

This messaging begins well before students even arrive on campus. If being able to read difficult and great books were a requirement for admission into the Ivy League, you can rest assured that very few top students would lack that ability. Armies of private tutors would spring up to make sure that every upper-middle-class teenager in America could breeze through *War and Peace*. But when it comes to admissions, most elite schools place much less value on reading than on test-taking, résumé padding, or hitting some diversity target — and their applicants know it.



Please see “Goyette,” continued on page 22.

“McCarthy,” from page 20

For 250 years, such learning, historically known as “liberal education,” was the norm at American colleges and universities, especially elite ones. But over the last century or so, the classical curriculum became unfashionable, and the specialized degree



“Goyette,” from page 21

They also know that, thanks to the grade inflation that’s rampant throughout most elite schools, you don’t need to complete long reading assignments to get good grades. As Horowitz’s article points out, at Harvard, nearly 80 percent of grades these days fall within the A range. Yet grade inflation is a self-inflicted — and correctable — problem. If students had to finish their readings to earn a top grade at the Ivies and the other legacy schools, far more of them would.

Likewise, students will only be as distracted by their phones as colleges allow them to be. Screens are addictive by design, as we all well know. Anyone who has spent time in a classroom can tell you how destructive they are to students’ ability to focus and learn. That’s why any school that’s serious about scholarship will no more tolerate them in the classroom, in the library, or even in the dining hall than they would jackhammers or bullfighting. But to visit a lecture hall at any legacy school today is to be set adrift in a sea of screens. Why? Because the schools permit it.

We have now reached the point in this article where someone, most likely one who either works for or sends his or her children to one of these legacy institutions, insists that I am naïve and unrealistic for suggesting it could ever be otherwise. As one Columbia professor who dumbed down his syllabus pitifully explained to Horowitz, “One has to adjust to the times.”

So they say. But for 23 years, I have taught at Thomas Aquinas College, which, to its great credit, has refused to “adjust to the times”

overtook it. Today, only a handful of schools still offer a truly liberal education, optimal for the innovation economy. (Full disclosure: Thomas Aquinas College, where I work, is one of them.)

I had the good fortune to go to Harvard Business School back in the golden-ticket days, graduating in 1978, when that ticket opened doors up and down Wall Street. My first job after graduating was in New York at E.F. Hutton, followed by a string of similar roles at firms such as Drexel and Prudential, where the first thing the bosses told us was: Forget everything you learned in business school.

Even then, I had to acknowledge that my HBS education, like the Georgetown bachelor’s degree in business that preceded it, was far more valuable for the prestige it conveyed than for the knowledge it conferred, however worthwhile. Time and again, I saw that liberally educated peers were no less, and sometimes more, prepared than us B-school types.

With the prestige of many specialized degrees — and the fleeting knowledge they impart — rapidly declining in value, students who are serious about succeeding would be wise to seek out a very different sort of education. □

Dennis McCarthy is the College’s vice president for finance.

while other elite schools have lost sight of their very purpose. At Thomas Aquinas, we teach a single, integrated Great Books curriculum, including four years of mathematics, natural science, literature, philosophy, and theology. Book-reading is a prerequisite for admission and indispensable for graduating. We place tight restrictions on phones and don’t even offer internet access in the residence halls.

“If you spend decades denouncing the entire edifice of Western civilization as oppressive and bigoted, don’t be surprised when your students show little interest in studying its architects.”

At a time when the number of college students nationwide is in decline, Thomas Aquinas is growing, having recently expanded from its California campus to a second one in Massachusetts. According to the Princeton Review, we also have some of the country’s happiest students. And they have no problem reading books — even hard ones, ancient ones, and vexing ones that challenge their assumptions and question their presuppositions.

Among those books is *The Iliad*, which the literature students at Berkeley refuse to read. At Thomas Aquinas College, our freshmen are expected to have it finished before they arrive for their first class. □

Dr. John J. Goyette is the College’s vice president and dean emeritus.

Faith in Action

News from TAC's Alumni

Tech Entrepreneurs for the Common Good

Technologically minded alumni duo Liam Collins ('13) and Thomas Doyle (NE'22) are venturing into the future with a new company, Human Centered Tech (HCT). Small but versatile, the company offers a fresh alternative to the big tech companies that innovate without regard for the good, true, or beautiful.

When he was in high school, Mr. Collins did not envision attending Thomas Aquinas College. He eschewed the liberal arts to pursue an undergraduate degree in physics. "I learned a lot of great things and met a lot of great people," he says. "But I realized that I wanted to study philosophy and think about what was at the heart of things. So, I joined the TAC Class of 2013."

After graduating from the College, he earned a degree in aerospace engineering from Wichita State University, then accepted what appeared to be a dream job as an engineer on a naval base for the U.S. Department of Defense. However, he soon found himself disappointed. "I was relatively unimpressed by the culture of innovation I found there," he acknowledges. "I knew I wasn't being challenged in the ways I had hoped."

When he met Mr. Doyle — who had just graduated as a member of the College's first class on its newly opened New England campus — the two connected over a shared love of technology. They quickly became aware of a gap in the industry, one that was excluding man from his own innovations just as quickly as he made them.

Together, the two founded Human Centered Tech, a technological development company aimed at building technology to help mankind thrive. "There's a need for people who can understand the technological landscape and the internet, but who also can think broadly and philosophically about it," Mr. Collins says. "As far as I know, there are no other companies at this time that are specifically focused on bridging that gap."

In working with HCT, Mr. Doyle finds himself relying on an oft-cited benefit of liberal education: the ability to pick up skills quickly in

any field. "I have often been asked in interviews, 'We can hire you or we can hire a computer science grad from MIT. Why should we pick you?'" he says. "My answer is that I probably know less about the technology that you use, but I can learn it faster than any MIT grad. The pitch TAC students can make is 'Look, I am really good at taking a huge text or system that I don't understand and breaking it down because I have to discuss it in class tomorrow.'"

Because of this focus on the ability to learn skills rather than simply maintain them, HCT is remarkably diverse in its services. The company has completed and consulted on a variety of projects since its inception, including commodities trading and



Thomas Doyle (NE'22)

"There's a need for people who can understand the technological landscape and the internet, but who also can think broadly and philosophically about it."

market-analysis platforms, as well as hardware engineering for pipe-repair robots. Currently, it is working on an offline data server and an AI-enabled high school football coach's assistant, in partnership with fellow alumnus Joshua Brittain ('15), among other projects. "I have learned how to do a lot of things on the job, and I have found that, if you commit to doing things often enough, you will find that you actually can do them," says Mr. Doyle.

Adds Mr. Collins, "We do electrical, we do software, we do mechanical. Our ultimate goal is to get ownership of technology back into the hands of the people who make and use it."

That can-do attitude has landed HCT numerous projects already, and the company is just getting started. "We aim to grow as fast as possible. We are planning to add several more engineers to our team soon," Mr. Collins says. "We want people to look at us and say, 'These guys are doing it the right way, and that's why we want to join their network.'" □



Liam Collins ('13)

Sharing Creativity through Composition

Although his music would eventually win him first place in a *Composers Today* contest and be played for audiences worldwide, Jonathan Peters ('00) discovered his love for music composition at just 12 years old, when he first began composing short pieces at the piano. His teacher noticed his talent and started teaching him composition alongside his regular lessons. "I was already in love with music, but after studying under this teacher, I knew I wanted to have a career in it," he says.

Rather than pursue a bachelor's degree in the subject, Mr. Peters opted to at-

his beloved childhood teacher had once done for him. He also began creating online courses to reach a wider audience.

"My first course, 'Music Composition 1,' was done on a whim," he says, "and I didn't think it would have much success." When the class quickly attracted a wide following, with reviewers praising its clarity and descriptive nature, Mr. Peters was pleasantly surprised. Today, over 30,000 students of all ages have taken his comprehensive online courses in music composition, music theory, orchestration, four-part writing, counterpoint, and more.

Over the years, he has also developed an impressive portfolio of over 50 compositions, including two full-length operas,

a symphony, orchestral works, chamber music, choral pieces, and works for solo piano. His music has been featured many times on NPR's Peabody award-winning show, *Performance Today*, and has been performed live by national and international orchestras.

Among his wealth of programmatic works, Mr. Peters has musically depicted colors, animals, mountains, stars, Greek myths, and even famous paintings. Noting

that many of these pieces were being performed at educational concerts for children, he came upon the idea of writing children's books to go along with three of his orchestral suites. Thus far, he has released *Meet the Orchestra*, which introduces children to different instruments through stories about constellations and Greek myths; *Painting with Music*, featuring pieces based on 12 famous works of art; and *A Day Among the Bugs* — his personal favorite — following a child's discovery of various tiny creatures to the tunes of his "Arthropod Suite."

Most recently, Mr. Peters released his latest programmatic composition, "Sonus

"I wanted a solid foundation from which to build upon, and I knew I would get that at TAC."

Colorum," a fascinating depiction of color through sound. "Composing is by far the most loved part of my work," he says. "I find trying to communicate a story or subject to the listener to be both an enjoyable challenge and very rewarding." □

Priest Publishes *Holy Name Devotional*

My devotion to the Holy Name began at Thomas Aquinas College," recalls Rev. Augustine Hilander, O.P. ('99). "A Dominican priest gave a homily about the name of Jesus and spoke about why we bow our heads at the name of Jesus, Mary, and the saint of the day. After that Mass, I started bowing my head at His Name, and that was the beginning of my devotion."

Twenty-five years after his graduation, Fr. Augustine has published his first book: *The Holy Name Daily Devotional*, a composition of devotional prayers and reflections on the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary.

Fr. Augustine joined the Dominican Order in 2000, one year after his graduation, and was ordained in 2008. In 2015, he became the Western Province promoter for the Dominicans' Holy Name Society, a confraternity devoted to honoring Jesus's name and bringing people together to pray in reparation for blasphemy. "The problem was, I didn't know what it meant to be a promoter for this society," he recalls. "Since there were very few Holy Name Societies on the West Coast, I had to turn to researching for myself."

Fr. Augustine began by learning about the Society's rich history, which dates back to the 1274 Council of Lyons. It became especially prominent in the U.S. around the 1900s, thanks to the



Jonathan Peters ('00) and family

tend Thomas Aquinas College, which he had learned about through various family friends. "I wanted a solid foundation from which to build upon," he says, "and I knew I would get that at TAC." After graduating in 2000, he pursued a master's degree in music composition at California State University, Northridge.

In 2005, the unthinkable occurred: a surgery irrevocably damaged the nerves in his arm, making it impossible to continue playing the piano. Although he could no longer perform, Mr. Peters — a husband and father of four — continued to provide for his family as a musician by teaching piano and composition, just as



Rev. Augustine Hilander, O.P. ('99)

work of the Very Rev. Charles McKenna, O.P. Soon after, Fr. Augustine discovered a wealth of quotes from saints, including all the Doctors of the Church, who had a devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus. “One of the most prominent works on this topic is a homily by St. Bernard of Clairvaux in his 15th sermon,” he says. “In reading the homily, I found



how the Holy Name is given to us for consolation and support. And the more accounts from saints I read, the more beauty and variety I found in this devotion.”

After almost 10 years of research and collecting quotes from over 210 holy men and women, Fr. Augustine published the *Holy Name Daily Devotional* last November. The devotional is structured in 12 parts, one per month. Each part focuses on a certain aspect or power of the Holy Name of Jesus or Mary and contains a quote from a saint or blessed for every day. Fr. Augustine recommends reading and reflecting on the daily quote, then reciting the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus, included in the back of the book.

“The spectrum of devotion is broad, and there is a lot to be received from it,” he says. “As we start to be devoted to Jesus’s name, we start to be devoted to Him.” □

Vinedresser & Scholar

Jane (Forsyth ’11) Pallares always envisioned a scholarly life, perhaps as a college professor. Yet after encountering a few providential turns in the road, she today finds herself still an academic, but also a wife, a businesswoman, and a farmer, proving that the versatility of liberal education bears much good fruit — both figurative and literal.

Mrs. Pallares, her husband, and his family are the owners and caretakers of Casa Carmen Wines, a vineyard and winery in West Grove, Pennsylvania. There, Mrs. Pallares has found a fitting balance in her active and intellectual lives. “There’s a kind of complementarity in reading poetry and drinking wine,” she jokes.

A granddaughter of John Schaeffer — one of the founding members of the College’s Board of Governors — Mrs. Pallares grew up in Santa Paula, near the California campus. Many of her family members have attended the College since its inception, and she was glad to follow in their footsteps. “I so wanted to go because the intellectual life and a love of books were always prioritized in our family and in our conversation,” she explains.

Following her graduation in 2011, she worked at a law firm for a year, then moved on to teach at a Catholic high school in California. Her love of literature next led her to the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., where Mrs. Pallares is pursuing a doctorate in English literature, which she aims to complete later this year.

During her time at CUA, she met her husband, Felipe, who owned a winery and vineyard, Casa Carmen, in Maryland with his brother and sister-in-law. She helped the brothers with winter pruning and, after falling in love with Felipe and the vineyard, got married in 2022.

“You can have an intellectual life along with a more active life, cultivating a natural desire to make things in conjunction with nature.”

Founded with a commitment to local agriculture, sustainable farming methods, and low-intervention wine making, Casa Carmen offers a carefully curated selection of wines and vermouth. The whole family contributes to the business, from wine production to maintaining the grounds; for her part, Mrs. Pallares manages marketing and the property



Jane (Forsyth ’11) Pallares (left), with her husband, Felipe, and fellow Casa Carmen Wines owners Laura and Enrique Pallares

ALUMNI UPDATES

gardens. “It’s such a gift to become part of a family like this,” she says. “You get to know each other very quickly and very intimately, and it feels natural because we share so much in our values and day-to-day enterprises.”

Mrs. Pallares’ days are a balance of the physical and the philosophical, and she credits her TAC education as part of what led her to her current state in life. “A vineyard feels like a very natural place to end up,” she says. “I think it speaks to the different kinds of human creativity that you can have an intellectual life along with a more active life, cultivating a natural desire to make things in conjunction with nature. In many ways, it puts into practice ideas and values fostered by what we learn at the College about the human person and the nature of happiness.” □

Father & Daughter Publish Children’s Book

Alumni duo Vincent Terreri, MS, LPC ('94), and his daughter Regina (CA'23) recently published their first children’s book, *Ginger Befriends Her Monster*, which aims to help readers, both young and old, learn to process their emotions in a positive, healthy way.

Mr. Terreri holds a master’s degree in counseling from Divine Mercy University and operates his own practice in Leesburg, Virginia. He specializes in helping children and families, encouraging parents to learn new skills to better help their children. “The family is the domestic church; it’s where all the important stuff happens,” he says. “Right now, we live in an unhealthy society. My goal is to help heal families so they can go out and inform society, since everything starts with them.” With *Ginger Befriends Her Monster*, he hopes to expand his reach.

To create the book’s illustrations, Mr. Terreri recruited his daughter, a self-



“The family is the domestic church; it’s where all the important stuff happens. Right now, we live in an unhealthy society. My goal is to help heal families so they can go out and inform society, since everything starts with them.”

taught artist, who now runs her own business, Terreri Photo and Art. Though she was at first unsure about taking on such a large project, she agreed, and happily threw herself into designing the

characters, storyboarding, then painting the final illustrations. “I love the illustration styles of the Beatrix Potter and *Frog and Toad* books and used them as inspiration,” she says. “We wanted the book to appeal to all ages and all times, so having a vintage, whimsical style and animal characters fit the book perfectly.”

Together, the father-daughter team produced *Ginger Befriends Her Monster*, which follows the titular young cat and her mother as they navigate Ginger’s feelings of anger and fear. Readers see Ginger interact with emotions that at first seem overwhelming, brought to life by Regina’s vibrant illustrations. “When we started to hear back from readers, we were happy to learn that the book was just as impactful for parents as for their children,” Regina shares. “As they read it to their children and worked through how Ginger was approaching her feelings, they found themselves relating to Ginger as well, realizing they had unresolved feelings about their own childhoods or life experiences.”

The Terreris’ next project is a sequel, *Ginger Heals Her Monster*, which continues Ginger’s journey to healing. They have two more books in the works, as well. □



Father and daughter: Vincent ('94) and Regina Terreri (CA'23)

Running, Writing & Praying for Life

“It’s not a surprise that I realized my vocation of becoming a full-time pro-life advocate while at TAC,” says Jordan Brittain (’13), western regional manager for Students for Life, children’s book author, and founder of the pro-life initiative Baby Steps. “TAC has been my home away from home my whole life, from childhood to first working at Students for Life.”

While a student at the College, she always helped lead the San Francisco Walk for Life, carrying the banner heading the peaceful protest. After she graduated, she spent a few years working at Holy Rosary Academy in Anchorage, Alaska, caregiving for relatives and friends, and serving as the assistant to then-TAC president Dr. Michael F. McLean. While working for the College, she brought students weekly to pray the Rosary across the street from a local Planned Parenthood. “I loved being on the sidewalk with the students and seeing hearts change in real time,” she reflects. “That was when I realized I wanted to do sidewalk advocacy full time.”

So, when a relative sent her an application to work for Students for Life in December 2020, she immediately applied — and was offered the job within three days. For the past four and a half years, she has overseen the organization’s southwestern U.S. branch, raising awareness about the pro-life issue and legislation surrounding it, praying outside abortion facilities, and training students to do the same. “Our goal is to mobilize students to the cause,” she says. “Ultimately, the students we train are the ones who are effectively changing the minds of other students and making a difference.”

Aside from her work for Students for Life, Miss Brittain has taken the pro-life message on the streets, quite literally. She has run nine marathons since 2015, wearing a pro-life T-shirt — the latest designed by TAC alumnus Patrick Cross (’14) — for the latter six. “I realized you



Jordan Brittain (’13) preaches the Gospel of Life with the Sisters of Life in Phoenix.

can be a voice for life just by being visible to people,” she says. “A lot of people go to these marathons, so they all get to see the message as I pass by. People always thank me for my witness; so, as long as this is effective, I plan to keep

“I want to be that loving face that helps people see that pro-lifers do love women — and men — all the way back to their first moments of life.”

running — it’s a great way to do two things I love at the same time!”

She often uses her time running to brainstorm and develop new ideas, including her first children’s book, *I Pick You, Little One*. With a rhyming poem and illustrations by two of Miss Brittain’s sisters, the book compares a baby’s growth in his mother’s womb to a plant’s growth from seed to flower, all as a part of God’s plan for life.

“I was inspired by the Mother Teresa quote, ‘How can there be too many

children? That is like saying there are too many flowers,’” she says. “I wanted to show that, just like a seed, a baby just needs nutrients and time to flower into the later stages of growth. We know a seed will become a flower, even though it doesn’t look like it at first. I wanted to translate that in regard to humans.”

Miss Brittain’s latest venture is Baby Steps, a brand-new sidewalk advocacy initiative built on offering support and charity to expectant mothers. She hopes to become a full-time sidewalk advocate, building teams of people to pray outside abortion facilities and convince potential patrons to choose life for their children.

“The name ‘Baby Steps’ comes from the idea of going one step, one conversation at a time,” she explains. “I think the best way to change the culture is to have conversations with the woman who is about to walk into an abortion clinic, to support her right there in that moment and show her that she doesn’t have to go in. I want to be that loving face that helps people see that pro-lifers do love women — and men — all the way back to their first moments of life.” □

A full-page photograph of a man and a woman standing outdoors. The man, on the left, is older with white hair, wearing a dark blue suit, a light blue shirt, and a red tie. He has his arm around the woman's shoulder. The woman, on the right, is Black with long dark hair, wearing a black button-down shirt and a patterned skirt. They are both smiling. The background shows a building with white arches and greenery.

“In These Students, I Can See the Future”

An Interview with R. Scott Turicchi,
Chairman of the TAC Board of Governors

Chairman of the Board of Governors R. Scott Turicchi is the CEO of Consensus, a cloud-solutions company. He first joined the College's Board in May 2007 and held the office of vice chairman before being elected as chairman in May 2014. In 2008, he and his wife, Lannette, were inducted into the Order of St. Albert for their exceptional generosity and dedication to the College. They have three daughters, the oldest of whom, Kristina, graduated from the California campus in 2023.

How did you first learn about Thomas Aquinas College?

I learned about TAC from my parents, my mother in particular. In 1980, it wasn't much of a campus. I went to visit, but it was primarily modular trailers at that point; I think there was only one actual building. I was 18 years old and didn't know what to make of TAC, having looked at other colleges and universities. I was fascinated by it, but I didn't know if it was going to exist in the future. It looked so fragile and unlike any other academic institution. So, I didn't even apply.

Even though I ended up going to Claremont McKenna College and became an investment banker, I always kept an eye on TAC. I was fascinated by the people it could attract to this little, almost nonexistent campus. But of course, over the years, you started to see those modulares disappear, and real buildings went up.

Why did you and your wife first get involved as benefactors?

My real connection to the College didn't begin until around 2005, when Tom Dillon, the president at the time, was out promoting the building of the Chapel on the California campus. And that made it real. I thought, OK, they've got real buildings. Now they're going to go for the Chapel. At the time, that was going to be by far the most expensive building to date. Tom Dillon made it very clear it would be the most beautiful building, the centerpiece of the campus.

My wife, Lannette, and I were married at that point, and we started to explore TAC together. We would go to presentations Tom would make about the Chapel, where he would talk about the various statues he wanted to get, the elements to be used. Our decision to become donors to the Chapel was solidified by a lunch that we had with Tom and his wife, Terri. We took a walk and talked about how the College didn't have enough money for the project, even though it had already begun construction. Lannette asked, "Why do you do this?" and Tom responded, "I am a beggar for the Lord." After that, she told me, "We have to give it to him." And that was really how it all started.

What do you think of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel, now that Dr. Dillon's dream has been realized?

It's beautiful, everything Tom hoped it would be and more. I think one of the greatest things about the Chapel is the awe that it inspires in everyone who sees it, not just the TAC community. What always amazes us are those people who are not Catholic: the

visitors, either driving by and seeing the bell tower and being curious about what's there, or friends of ours who had heard about this chapel. They came up and were awed by it.

The Chapel is a reversion to beauty, to showing that we give the best to God. I think it's one thing for a Catholic to recognize that beauty, but when other people who are of no faith, or of a Protestant denomination, are awe-inspired, then we hit the mark. Even though they don't fully understand the sacramentality of what's going on, and they only understand it at a more basic level, there's a connection being made.



"I think one of the greatest things about the Chapel is the awe that it inspires in everyone who sees it, not just the TAC community."

How did you come to join the Board of Governors?

After that first gift to the Chapel, we spent about a year visiting the College regularly, checking in on the Chapel's progress and meeting with Tom and Terri if they were around. One day, we met them for lunch, and just before we left, Tom asked — unexpectedly — if Lannette or I would be on the College's Board of Governors. Before either one of us could say anything, my wife turned to Tom and said, "It's him." So, I was nominated to be a Board member.



Chairman of the Board of Governors R. Scott Turicchi with President Paul J. O'Reilly and His Eminence James Cardinal Harvey during last year's TAC pilgrimage to Rome

What was your initial role on the Board?

I'm a numbers guy, so when I first started, they put me on the Finance Committee and the Development Committee. A couple of years after I joined, the Chapel was finally finished and dedicated. But, soon after, Tom was tragically killed in a car accident in Ireland. Because of the unusual circumstances which we suddenly faced with this issue of needing a new president, and the fact that we had

"The founders had a vision that the College would continue to grow, but they would do it by adding other campuses."

Board members scattered all over the United States, I got put on the presidential-nominating committee to deal with the selection of a new president. It was a very challenging time, having lost Tom, but still having to push through and choose his successor.

When did you become Chairman of the Board?

Shortly after we elected Mike McLean to succeed Tom in 2009, then-Chairman Maria Grant stepped down, Jim Wensley came on, and they asked me to be vice chairman. A little over 10 years ago now, Jim came to me and said, "I'm going to turn 80 soon, and I'm going to step down as chairman." I was surprised, but he insisted on nominating me as his successor. I was approved in May of 2014. Little did I know what an interesting time it would be!

That time includes the acquisition of the New England campus. What was your reaction when you first learned about it?

Historically, the focus has been the California campus. We were getting near the end of the master plan with the completion of the Chapel and St. Cecilia Hall. We were getting enough applicants each year to fill the incoming Freshman Class at 102 and maintain a stable student body. We still had to raise money every year, though, because tuition doesn't cover all the costs, but we had a good fund-raising department to do that. Life was good!

And then, out of left field, after a February Board meeting, Mike McLean said to me, "Oh, by the way, we might be given a second campus."

I laughed. I literally laughed! But he was completely serious. I thought, this is just sheer lunacy. First of all, who gives away a campus? And second, how can we possibly take it on? We're still building out California.

He told me more: There was an old boarding-school campus in Northfield, Massachusetts — a place I had never heard of — and the National Christian Foundation (NCF) wanted to give it away. At this point, I was thinking, there's no free gift in life. I said, "Look, let's not get crazy, we will put in the application, but don't expect much from it." We went through the process with the NCF; it looked like we were going to get it, and then we didn't get it. I figured we didn't have to worry about it anymore. But then it came back, like a boomerang, and they gave it to us. I was completely floored.

Were you not initially on board with the idea of a second campus? And if so, why not?

One of the first things I asked Mike McLean was, what does Peter DeLuca think? Because at that time, Jack Neumayr and Peter DeLuca were the only two founders still alive. I said, "Peter is probably going to think this is nuts." But Mike said, "Oh, no, Peter's all in. He thinks it's a brilliant idea." I knew I had to be missing something.

What I didn't know at that time was the founders' vision. I knew that, when the campus hit maturity, we were not going to add another section or any more buildings. California was going to be capped at 380 students, and that was that. What I didn't understand was that the founders had a vision that the College would continue to grow, but they would do it by adding other campuses. No one ever told me that,



probably because they thought it was such a far-fetched idea back when I first joined the Board. But, when the reality presented itself, they educated me on the plan, and I got on board.

What did you do to ensure the acquisition went as smoothly as possible?

Before we accepted the campus, we still had a lot of questions. How much money will it take to fix the buildings? Do we have enough tutors and qualified students? How do you govern two campuses in opposite parts of the country? I put together a committee of experts, both in terms of the College and the Board, which could address all these issues. Between our investigatory work as a committee and



dealing with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the NCF, deliberations took a solid year. But during that year, we were able to go through and address each question. At the end of the year, we had a big Board meeting and a unanimous vote to accept the gift.

What are some of your greatest accomplishments as chairman over the past 10 years?

First is the committee I formed for the acquisition of the New England campus and the process we came up with for doing so. For me, that process was very challenging but also very fruitful. At every point, we had to ensure that, in accepting the second campus, the mission of the College would only be enhanced and not put in jeopardy. That was the key: If we could only do the mission on one campus, then we should limit ourselves to one campus. If we were stretched too thin, either financially or tutor-wise or student-wise, then we should not take a second campus. But, as we tackled each issue, we found ways this second campus could actually support the College's mission. That's why the campus exists today.

The other thing, which has occurred more recently, is the process of updating the College's polity and bylaws. By having and operating a second campus, we now have positions and certain administrative functions that were not contemplated when we

"We had to ensure that, in accepting the second campus, the mission of the College would only be enhanced and not put in jeopardy."

accepted the gift. So, when we looked at the polity and bylaws, we found that they were out of date. We needed not only to update them because we do have two campuses now, but we also had to address things that have changed in the law over the last 5-20 years. That process took about a year.

You and your wife have been TAC benefactors for over two decades. How have you seen the fruits of your generosity take effect over the years?

The key catalyst for us was the building of the California chapel. You see concrete results when a building goes up, gets consecrated, and is available for you to enter and worship at any time. That's one element.

Now, a lot of the other giving goes into most of the fundraising the College does, which reverberates back to student financial aid through a work-study program or a reduction in tuition. There, you don't necessarily see the fruits directly. Every now and again, I will run into a student or hear a few speak to the Board at one of our meetings. And, in these students, I can see the future, not just in terms of the Church, but also for broader society. It's very easy to get discouraged with all the stuff that goes on in the world, to think that there's so much evil and craziness going on. But then I get a letter from a student, or hear a student speak, and think, OK, it's bad out there, but there's hope. I think that, over the next 50 years, we will see these students go on to impact their families or religious communities; their dioceses, workplaces, or cities; and finally, society as a whole.

How do you think the dynamics between the two campuses will continue to develop?

I know this from a business perspective, and there's always a debate, but the dynamism of your community changes as it grows in size. You can only maintain so many direct personal relationships.

The founders had this vision that a population of about 380 was the limit. I think they were right about that, because I have seen this effect in business, where something as simple as adding a second floor in the same office building changes the dynamic. I think that the founders correctly understood that the culture is integral to delivering what the College promises. It's not just about reading books. We can all read books and get a great group togeth-



er to discuss them. We can even get a great leader to guide us in that discussion. But that's only a fraction of what TAC is about. Thomas Aquinas College is an immersive environment with a very particular culture. You have to keep it to a certain size, or that will break down.

Do you think there will continue to be a need for the kind of education the College provides?

There are a lot of great organizations that people who have a philanthropic bent can give to or invest in. I think that TAC is right up there at the top in terms of bang for your buck. Because, at the end of the day, it's forming individuals. That formation of individuals

is always needed, but it's needed much more now, considering the shape that our culture is in.

If you look at the aggregate number of graduates now and the combined student body north of 500, the College, by sticking to its foundational principles and understanding who it is and what its goal is, has done an outstanding job. We have tangible evidence now that some of our graduates from the earlier eras have risen to levels of prominence within their various fields. I do think it is important that we have good people, holy people, great families, great religious. We need that. The Church needs it. The country needs it. But I also think it is important that we demonstrate that we have people in significant positions in nearly every major field of work and study; they are the ones who will bring about major change in our culture.

What do you see in the College's future? Is there any chance we could see it expand to include another campus someday?

At some point, I think there very well could be a third campus. It probably won't be in my tenure with the College. If you look at the United States, we obviously have a campus on each coast now, but there's still a big swath in the middle of the country, far from either coast. Someday, if all the right pieces fall into place, we could see another campus out there.

You can see where the program works and has merit. And so, if you have all the right elements, you can see how this could be replicated anywhere in the world. It would take a long time to do that, a hundred years, maybe. So, nobody get too excited! But it no longer seems crazy to me that we could end up with multiple campuses. I'm not saying it's a vision. But I've moved from "That's crazy," to "This is possible, and may even be likely, given enough time." □

IN MEMORIAM

Col. Robert G. Dilger
August 18, 2022
Benefactor

Victoria Sanfilippo
October 4, 2023
Benefactor

Capt. Timothy Scholl
January 5, 2025
Father of Bill ('94) and Deirdre (Lickona '95); grandfather of Therese Lickona (NE'28)

Ma'May Faucher Grimm
February 26, 2025
Daughter-in-law of Laura and Stephen Grimm ('75)

Kathyran Poon
March 25, 2025
Mother of Francis ('75); grandmother of John Marie St. Francis ('03), Fiona (Stevens '08) Six, Gabriel Smith ('09), Peter Stevens ('11), and Emily (Weber '19); Verity ('20), Thomas ('23), and Laura Poon ('24)

Merle Joseph Farrier Jr.
March 30, 2025
Father of Teresa (Waterbury '93), Monica (Savage '94), and Carter ('14); grandfather of John Farrier II ('10) and Peter Waterbury ('17)

Mary Kraychy
April 1, 2025
Mother of Kathy (Sauder '78); grandmother of Adrienne (Rivera '02), Margaret (Grimm '03), Bridget Zepeda ('08), Anne (Potts '09), John ('14), and Joseph Sauder ('17); great grandmother of Rose ('26), Magdalene ('27), and Elaine Grimm ('28)














Jen Danner ('98) DellaCrosse
April 9, 2025
Alumna



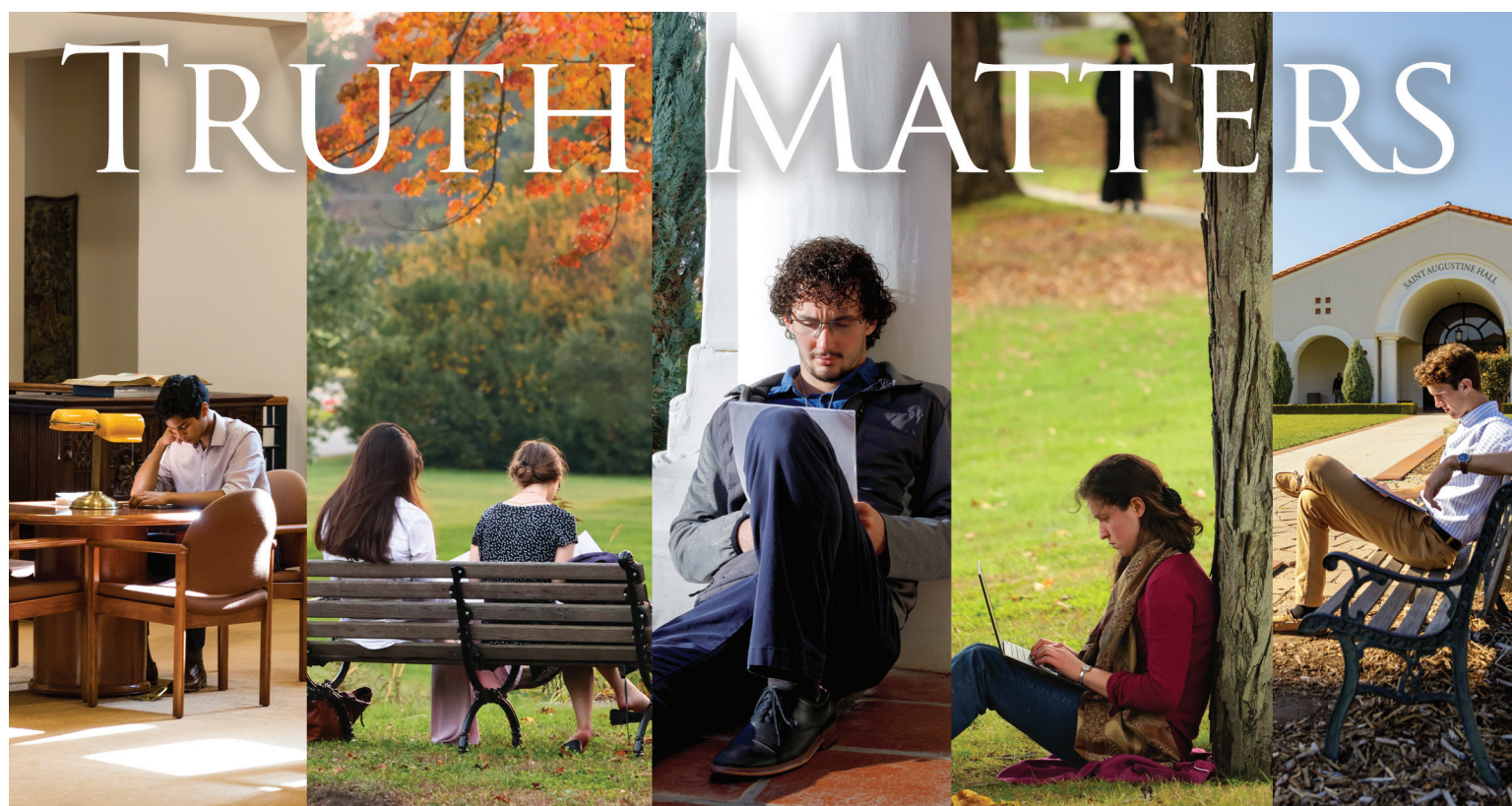
*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.
May the souls of all the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God, rest in peace.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

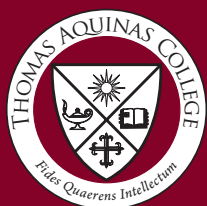
More events: thomasaquinas.edu/events

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|  51 st Annual Commencement..... May 17 |  Two-Week Summer Program for High School Students July 6-19 |
|  4 th Annual Commencement May 24 |  Two-Week Summer Program for High School Students July 13-26 |
|  Thomistic Summer Conference..... June 5-8
thomasaquinas.edu/tsc |  One-Week Summer Program for High School Students July 27-August 3 |
|  Eucharistic Congress Pilgrimage June 14-15
thomasaquinas.edu/congress |  Convocation Day August 23 |
|  West Coast Alumni Dinner June 21 |  Convocation Day August 26 |
|  Global Rosary Relay June 27
6:45 p.m. PDT / 9:45 p.m. EDT |  Alumni & Parent Day September 27 |
| |  Alumni & Parent Day October 18 |

Campus Mass schedules: thomasaquinas.edu/masstimes



Show Your Support this Friends Week of Giving!



June 24 - 30, 2025
Early-bird gifts are welcome!



tac.gives

STUDENT LIFE



1. A team of Enlightenment philosophers seeks universal knowledge at the annual game of Trivial-Quadrivial Pursuits. **2.** The Junior Class brings Venice to St. Cecilia Hall for the St. Valentine's Day Dance. **3.** Prior to the Presidents' Day Lecture, the community comes together for an All-College Dinner. **4.** An ensemble of Coffee Shop baristas delights the crowd at Open-Mic Night. **5.** Musicians share their talents at the Spring Schubertiade. **6.** Penitents receive their customary ashes on Ash Wednesday. **7.** At the semi-annual blood drive, students make their sanguinary donations.





- 1.** Musicians take to the stage for Spring Open Mic Night.
- 2.** Revelers don festive masks at the Mardi Gras dance.
- 3.** In honor of the women on campus, men stage the annual Rose Dinner and dance.
- 4.** Students perform The Winter's Tale at this spring's Shakespeare production.
- 5.** Eagles fans rejoice at the Super Bowl Party.
- 6.** Faculty children watch as students play Irish folk music for St. Patrick's Day.
- 7.** Assistant Dean Dr. Stephen Shivone and his student teammates celebrate their victory in the basketball championship.





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