

AQUINAS COLLEGE

AQ 2030: Vision and Strategic Plan





Aquinas College

AQ 2030: Vision and Strategic Plan

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INTRODUCTION

Aquinas College is called toward excellence in intersecting our Dominican and Catholic heritage with the educational needs of the students and communities we serve. The AQ 2030 Plan identifies the main strategic goals for the coming decade and specifies the student-focused and data-driven initiatives to be undertaken during 2020–2023 in support of that end. It is founded upon the fundamental principles that make an Aquinas College education valuable and distinctive and draws from the College’s identity and heritage. The plan recognizes existing official College statements of mission and values and the changing nature of the higher-education environment in which Aquinas College operates. It also invites collaboration and seeks to include voices from the campus community.

THE AQUINAS COLLEGE MISSION STATEMENT



Aquinas College, an inclusive educational community rooted in the Catholic and Dominican tradition, provides a liberal arts education with a global perspective, emphasizes career preparation focused on leadership and service to others, and fosters a commitment to lifelong learning dedicated to the pursuit of truth and the common good.

THE VISION FOR AQUINAS COLLEGE

Aquinas College will be regarded among the **premier Catholic colleges** in the Midwest, recognized for its **excellence** in **preparing the whole person** to lead a life of **purpose** and **success** in service to a **just and sustainable world.**

CONTEXT FOR THE AQ 2030 PLAN

AQUINAS COLLEGE'S EDUCATIONAL HERITAGE

Students have always been at the center of what we do at Aquinas College, and our main work is to prepare them through post-secondary higher education to lead meaningful and impactful lives. The education we offer is distinctive because it is informed by our Catholic identity and our Dominican heritage and is especially shaped by the values and history of the Dominican Sisters ~ Grand Rapids.

Early Dominican convents formed schools open to clerics and the public, and the Order of Preachers' first General Chapter in 1220 required that each new priory maintain a convent school. Soon thereafter, Dominicans became highly influential at the major medieval universities in Europe, including the University of Bologna and the University of Paris, where St. Thomas Aquinas did much of his work. The *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIXe Siècle* called St. Dominic "the first minister of public instruction in modern Europe." In his 1913 Catholic Encyclopedia entry, Piere Mandonnet, O.P., S.T.D, noted the Order of Preachers were the first instituted by the Church with an academic mission. Our educational mission and philosophies flow directly from this heritage, and we are proud to be a teaching and learning institution in this distinguished tradition.



THE DISTINCTIVE ELEMENTS OF AN AQUINAS COLLEGE EDUCATION

Aquinas College is dedicated to helping all those who participate in our higher-education community in search of improving their lives. The distinctive educational experience we offer is deliberately guided by four major principles:

EDUCATION OF THE WHOLE PERSON

The fullness of the human person is at the center of all the work we do at Aquinas College. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* calls for “the entire educative process (to) be directed towards the whole development of the person.” Moral, ethical and spiritual development is an inherent part of this work. We believe the best way to accomplish this is through broad liberal arts multidisciplinary preparation, drawing upon the humanities, the natural sciences and social sciences, even as one concentrates on a single academic discipline.

PURPOSE

The U.S. Conference of Bishops states in *The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers* that “work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God’s creation.” In light of that perspective, our students are invited to consider their lives’ journeys and work to have true purpose and meaning for themselves and for others. We believe that whatever one does professionally, however one’s talents are invested, should be understood in the context of the value that we bring to the communities in which we live.

SUCCESS

Our namesake, St. Thomas Aquinas, reminds us of the difference between enjoyment and true happiness; the former is about worldly satisfaction, but it is the latter that makes for a genuinely successful life. Aquinas College unabashedly prepares students to thrive in a world characterized by modern market economies, and we value the personal fulfillment, comfort and security that financial accomplishment can provide. We emphasize that leading a genuinely good life is not blind pursuit of increased personal consumption or acquisition of ever more wealth. We call our students to a deeper understanding that success cannot be defined solely by professional or economic attainment, but must also include continued spiritual and personal growth, commitment to lifelong learning and the joy of regular self-giving acts to and with others.

SERVICE

Aquinas College is a teaching and learning community in which all are called to seek Truth in pursuit of the common good. We exemplify and cultivate among our students respect for every human being and for all of God’s creation with emphasis on bringing one’s own gifts to bear on their behalf. Proactive service to others and to sustaining the health of all of creation is valued as an essential element of daily life. Service is one of the four pillars of Dominican life along with study, community and prayer.

PRIOR INSTITUTIONAL GUIDANCE INFLUENCING THE AQ 2030 PLAN

Several statements that have been previously promulgated by Aquinas College have been influential in the development of the AQ 2030 Plan and the 2020–2023 Action Plan and have been long posted on the College’s website:¹

INTEGRITY

Aquinas College is rooted in the Dominican traditions of prayer, study, community and service, combined with a deep respect for truth, honesty and integrity. In this spirit, we strive to create an environment in which integrity is prized and practiced. We expect all community members to uphold these values through honesty, fairness and respect for others.

DIVERSITY

Aquinas College is committed to equality. This statement of the College speaks to this commitment as do our history and heritage. We believe that diversity is a blessing, which brings a richness of perspectives to our intellectual, cultural, social and spiritual life. All members of our community – faculty, staff and students – will demonstrate respect for each other regardless of our differences. All of us will be sensitive in our actions, words and deeds. We will demonstrate these sensitivities in our classrooms, curricula, offices, meeting places and living environments. We will maintain the diversity of our Board of Trustees, faculty, student body and staff and appreciate the different gifts each brings to this community regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion or disability.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

It is the policy of Aquinas College that no person on the basis of race, color, religion, ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status or disability shall be discriminated against, excluded from participation or employment in, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity for which Aquinas College is responsible.

SUSTAINABILITY

Peter Wege’s principles of Economicology are intertwined with the mission and vision of Aquinas College. Creating a balance between our ecology and the economy is necessary to create a just and sustainable world for the common good. Aquinas College seeks to apply these core principles in a living-lab setting, developing students who are agents of change and setting a global standard of lasting educational change.

¹ <https://www.aquinas.edu/discover-aq/our-mission-vision>

MAJOR THEMES OF THE AQ 2030 PLAN

The AQ 2030 Plan features the following primary themes:

THE AQUINAS COLLEGE MISSION STATEMENT IS MULTIFACETED

Our Mission Statement calls us to harmonize a variety of seemingly conflicting elements by understanding that there is no inherent inconsistency among them. We are called to make a community that combines all elements of God's creation into an organic and coherent whole. We contend that a liberal arts education, a global perspective and lifelong learning are complementary to outstanding career preparation, and our commitment to a diverse and inclusive college community is fully consistent with our Dominican and Catholic identity.

THE EXPERIENCE OF AQUINAS COLLEGE STUDENTS IS CENTRAL TO OUR WORK

Our profound respect for the dignity of all humans, along with our emphasis on the education of the whole person, aligns with increasing marketplace attention to the quality of the student's higher-education experience. We do so to successfully attract and retain the students we need to flourish. Our goal is to ensure that all Aquinas College students are satisfied with the totality of their association with Aquinas College. In particular, we emphasize to all of our students the value to them personally of maintaining a primarily undergraduate residential campus as the core of our work.

THE SUCCESS OF AQUINAS COLLEGE CRITICALLY DEPENDS ON CREATING AND MAINTAINING A THRIVING EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION

Our students and their families make enormous sacrifices, financial and otherwise, to be a part of the Aquinas College community. We are deeply obligated to be the best stewards possible of the resources with which we are entrusted. This requires that the organization that is Aquinas College functions ethically and with integrity in accordance with efficient and collaborative operational practices. We are a mission-based not-for-profit entity, but we recognize that our ability to meet that mission depends upon good leadership and responsible decision making in the stewardship of our financial and other resources.

PRIMARY STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

The College will track and present in a dashboard model various key performance indicators in support of the strategic outcomes.

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

OUTCOME 1: Aquinas College will be a leader in the manifestation of Dominican values in a diverse and inclusive Catholic institution of higher education.

OUTCOME 2: Aquinas College will be regarded as a high-value educational experience.

OUTCOME 3: Aquinas College will offer well-curated academic programs that are regarded as high-quality and relevant for the 21st century for traditional and post-traditional undergraduate and graduate students.

OUTCOME 4: Aquinas College will provide an appropriate and outstandingly satisfying overall experience for all of its students.

OUTCOME 5: Aquinas College will be a robust and financially secure organization.

THE 2020–2023 WORK PLAN AND MILESTONES

TASK 1: Completion of Science Project Funding

Primary Responsibility: President Kevin Quinn and Gina Covert, Vice President for Advancement
Primary Strategic Goals Affected: G3.1, G3.3, G4.2, G5.2

TASK 2: Creation of Strategic Enrollment Management and Student Retention and Success Plans

Primary Responsibility: Erin Craig, Vice President for Enrollment, and Brian Matzke, Associate Vice President of Student Success
Primary Strategic Goals Affected: G1.3, G3.1, G3.3, G3.4, G5.1, G5.3

TASK 3: Higher Learning Commission Re-accreditation

Primary Responsibility: Chad Gunnoe, Professor of History
Primary Strategic Goals Affected: G3.3, G3.5, G4.1, G5.1

TASK 4: Review of Overall Academic Program

Primary Responsibility: Heather Kesselring-Quakenbush, Interim Provost (Provost)
Primary Strategic Goals Affected: G4.1, G3.1, G3.3, G3.4, G4.3, G5.1

TASK 5: Creation of School of Business Plan

Primary Responsibility: President Kevin Quinn and Board Chair Matt Wey
Primary Strategic Goals Affected: G3.2, G3.3, G3.4, G5.1, G5.2, G5.4
Major Milestones and Completion Dates:

TASK 6: Creation of School of STEM/Health Sciences Plan

Primary Responsibility: Heather Kesselring-Quakenbush, Interim Provost (Provost)
Primary Strategic Goals Affected: G3.1, G3.3, G3.4, G4.3, G5.1, G5.2
Major Milestones and Completion Dates:

TASK 7: Branding and Communication Plan

Primary Responsibility: Marissa Sura, Associate Vice President of Marketing and Communication
Primary Strategic Goals Affected: G2.2, G2.3, G3.3, G4.3, G5.1, G5.2

TASK 8: Creation of Strategic Advancement Plan in Support of AQ 2030 Plan

Primary Responsibility: Gina Covert, Vice President for Advancement
Primary Strategic Goals Affected: G2.1, G3.2, G3.4, G4.2, G5.2, G5.4

TASK 9: Co-curricular and Student Orientation Outcomes

Primary Responsibility: Nick Davidson, Associate Vice President of Student Affairs and Athletics
Primary Strategic Goals Affected: G1.1, G1.3, G2.3, G3.5, G4.1, G4.4, G5.1

TASK 10: Refresh of STAR Days and AQ Days

Primary Responsibility: Erin Craig, Vice President for Enrollment, Heather Kesselring-Quakenbush, Interim Provost (Provost), and Nick Davidson, Associate Vice President of Student Affairs and Athletics
Primary Strategic Goals Impacted: G3.5, G4.1, G4.3, G5.1

TASK 11: Assessment of Academic Advisement

Primary Responsibility: Heather Kesselring-Quakenbush, Interim Provost (Provost), and Brian Matzke, Associate Vice President of Student Success
Primary Strategic Goals Affected: G1.3, G2.3, G3.3, G3.4, G4.3, G5.1

TASK 12: Completion of Statement of Catholic Identity and Inclusion

Primary Responsibility: Robert Gilmore, Associate Dean of Mission, Ministry and Service Learning, and Alicia Lloyd, Director of the Center for Diversity, Inclusion and Equity
Primary Strategic Goals Affected: G1.1, G1.3, G3.4, G3.5, G4.1, G4.4, G5.1

TASK 13: Creation of Risk Management Plan

Primary Responsibility: Lisa VanDeWeert, Chief Financial Officer

Primary Strategic Goals Affected: G4.4, G5.3, G5.4, G5.5

TASK 14: Creation of Master Facilities Plan and Housekeeping, Maintenance and Grounds Plan

Primary Responsibility: Lisa VanDeWeert, Chief Financial Officer

Primary Strategic Goals Affected: G4.2, G4.4, G5.5

TASK 15: Evaluation of Dining and Bookstore Services

Primary Responsibility: Lisa VanDeWeert, Chief Financial Officer

Primary Strategic Goals Affected: G2.2, G2.3, G4.3, G5.1, G5.3, G5.5

TASK 16: Improvement of Employee Engagement

Primary Responsibility: Lisa VanDeWeert, Chief Financial Officer, and President Kevin Quinn

Primary Strategic Goals Affected: G1.2, G1.3, G4.1, G5.4

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Aquinas College
Office of the President
1700 Fulton St. E
Grand Rapids, MI 49506