

Before we leave for Spring Break, I wanted to provide an update on the Board's activities since our last quarterly communication. For the sake of brevity, I focused on a few big bucket items that have taken up most of our time in the New Year– as always, reach out to board@stasonline.net if you have any questions or comment. I hope everyone has a very relaxing and wonderful week with family and friends.

*Erin L Russell
Chair, St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School*



FUNDRAISING

As you know, we must raise \$225,000 each year to support the operating budget of the school and keep tuition affordable. The Board successfully completed the Annual Appeal, and Giving Tuesday campaigns (for which they are solely responsible) that collectively exceeded budgeted amounts by 2%. Now, we are primarily focused on supporting our largest and most successful fundraiser, Spring to Auction. The Auction Committee, led by Johnna Hoffman, is doing an incredible job and the Board is stepping up to support the team where possible. I hope everyone will join us for this important and festive community event on **April 26th** – we look forward to seeing you there! In addition, every year at this time the Board conducts direct solicitations to potential donor families to support our scholarship programs beyond the \$225,000 referenced above. We also have been working on many engagement opportunities for alumni and parent alumni, including a very successful Holiday Happy Hour and our Wildcat Den chronicles. We have an Alumni Mass scheduled for May 4th!



BUDGETING

The Board builds a bottoms-up budget for each school year reviewing every category down to the details. We track our performance to budget closely so that we can improve the process in each subsequent year as well as curb expenses in year, if needed. Although it is not officially approved until October, we start this process in January to help determine tuition for the next school year. We take into consideration these **TWO PRIMARY GOALS** – **1. Keeping tuition affordable** for all those that seek a Catholic education for their child(ren). *Did you know that in the last 11 years we have only raised tuition a collective \$3,300 in total?* **2. Offering competitive faculty salaries** thereby allowing us to not only retain and attract faculty but also provide our faculty with a livable and rewarding wage. Although our most critical budget input is enrollment, we are disciplined on cost management and purposeful in how we take advantage of attractive treasury market rates and additional sources of grant funding. For our PreK programs, we conduct an annual market assessment of competitive programs in our area before setting rates.



MARKETING AND ENROLLMENT

The Board along with the administration is focused on developing effective marketing strategies to drive enrollment. We kicked off the year with the filming and editing of our Alumni Reflection Series to build brand, expand our audience and develop storytelling opportunities that were concise, earnest, and relatable. Wow, our alumni messages resonated with over 40,000 eyeballs and fantastic feedback. We are excited that these videos will be featured on our new website. In addition to targeted marketing placements with local media, we have developed additional materials to concisely tell “Why St. Thomas?” Also, we will be featured on two I-95 billboards this month! Most importantly, our Marketing and Enrollment Committee hosted one of our most successful Open House events in March. We had a tremendous turnout and improved our give-away swag alongside marketing materials. We appreciate our volunteer parents and student tour guides. We could not have done it without you! We continue to try to find time to drive the completion of our new website. Without an in-house marketing team, writing and design has fallen to the Board alongside amazing writing and website volunteers (thank you to Betsy Kremiski, Courtney McSherry, Andrea Espach and Sarah Nocerino as well as Julie Wallace and Maria Pierson for sourcing many photos). It looks great - so stay tuned.

To close, we are thrilled with the results from the first few months of our Pantry Project and appreciate all the hard-work of our Community Engagement leaders to get this important school-wide service initiative off the ground.

Looking forward, the Board will be spending the last few months assessing academic data and feedback from high schools on our students' performance, revising the 25-26 budget, reviewing student enrichment programs, and preparing for summer projects. We are excited by the plans underway for a new Library Learning Commons! We will update you on these initiatives at the end of the school year. It promises to be another busy summer around St. Thomas. Please continue to share the good news of St. Thomas as word of mouth is our most effective tool!

