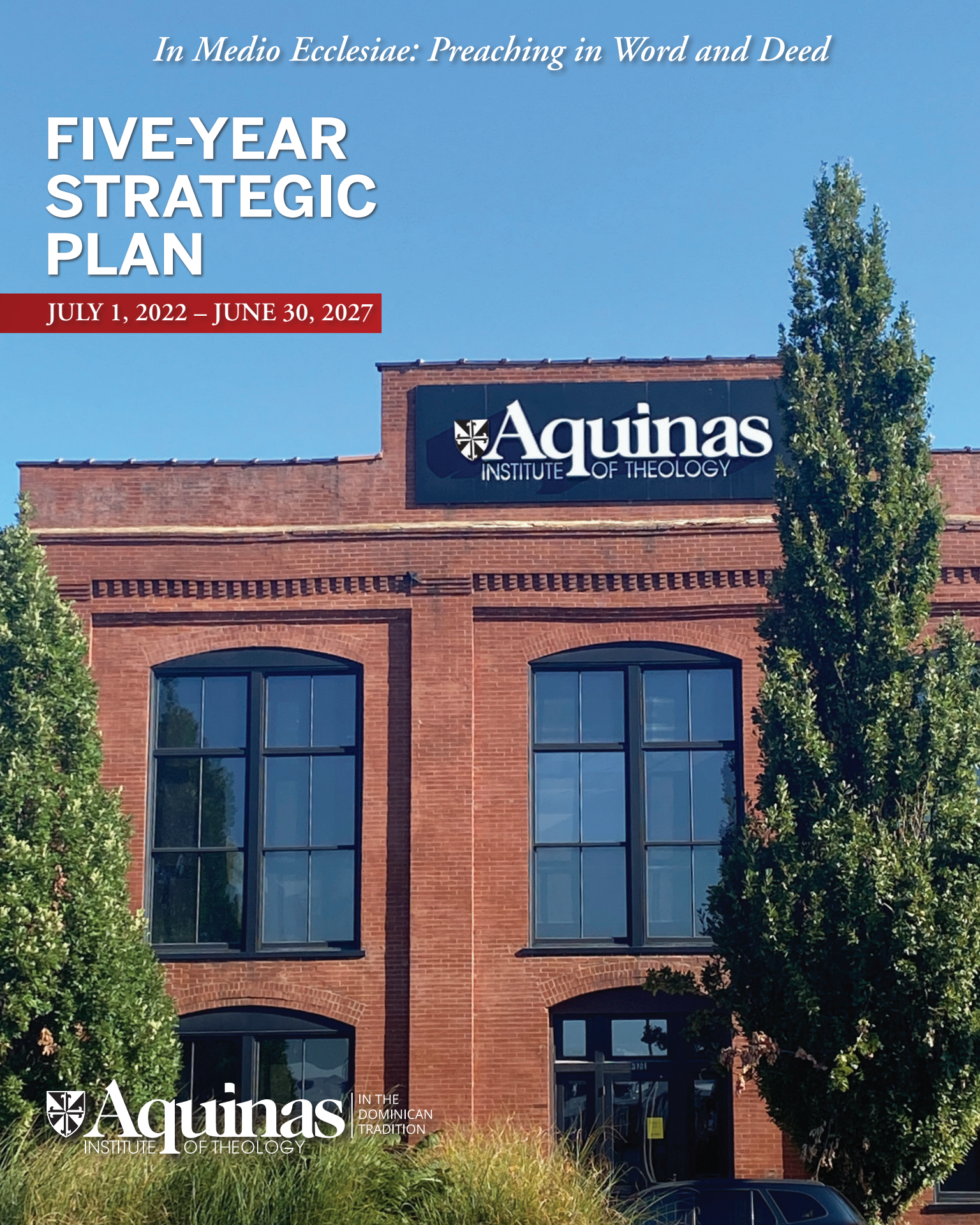
In Medio Ecclesiae: Preaching in Word and Deed

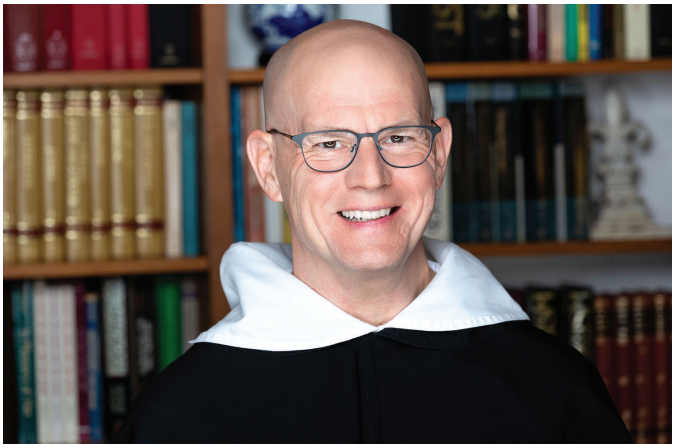
FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

JULY 1, 2022 – JUNE 30, 2027



Aquinas INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGY | IN THE DOMINICAN TRADITION





PREAMBLE

Drawing on the inspiration of St. Dominic, who intentionally centered himself in the middle of the Church *(in medio Ecclesiae)* so as to reach a broad spectrum of persons and perspectives in his study of the Word of God and his preaching, we at Aquinas Institute of Theology also purposefully place ourselves *in medio Ecclesiae* — where the Truth can be encountered. It is from the center of both the Church and society that Aquinas Institute is situated to strategically plan for the next five years.

Thanks to a 2021 Pathways Lilly Endowment grant for assessment and planning, we were able to gather pivotal information from various constituencies of our alumni and students that provided insights for the initial structure of our planning. The unique focus on the role of Aquinas in the intellectual life of our sponsoring Province of St. Albert the Great, as articulated in the *Acta* of their 2019 Provincial Chapter, also helped to guide us with principles to set the framework of our overarching goals (*Acts of the XX Provincial Chapter,* Chicago, 2019, 26-27). The student-needs assessment and alumni survey especially aided us in determining clear pathways and their related objectives for the next generation of Aquinas graduates.

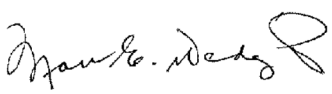
The structure of the **Five-Year Strategic Plan** takes its form from our **Vision for 2027;** it is inspired by "the middle way" of St. Dominic yet focused both on the inclusive ecclesial strategies

St. Dominic stood "in the middle of the Church, opened his mouth and the Lord filled him with a spirit of wisdom and understanding, clothing him with a robe of glory." It is from this same place, *in medio Ecclesiae,* that we seek to go forth.

of Pope Francis and our attentiveness to the rapidly changing demographics of the Church in the United States. That vision gives rise to the **Three Overarching Goals for 2027** that articulate the principal aims and aspirations of the plan. Following upon these overarching goals are the **Five Pathways to Action** that delineate the concrete tasks of the strategic plan, which are in turn tethered to specific objectives that are behaviorally stated and measurable. The work of the Aquinas Coordinators will be to set the metrics related to these objectives.

In the liturgical prayers for his feast day, we are reminded that St. Dominic stood "in the middle of the Church, opened his mouth and the Lord filled him with a spirit of wisdom and understanding, clothing him with a robe of glory." It is from this same place, *in medio Ecclesiae*, that we seek to go forth. Over the next five years we will implement a plan that will enable Aquinas Institute of Theology to flourish in its intellectual mission to preach the Word of God, so that others may join us in pursuing the saving and life-giving Truth of Jesus Christ.

Sincerely in St. Dominic,



Fr. Mark E. Wedig, OP
President



PART I: OUR IDENTITY

Mission Statement

Impelled by the Catholic faith and the Dominican mission, Aquinas Institute of Theology educates men and women to preach, to teach, to minister, and to lead.

Hallmarks and Identity

- Unique Dominican approach to education grounded in the search for *Veritas* and built upon a particular legacy of Thomism that is expansive, comprehensive, and all-encompassing.
- A view of theological mission that is clearly directed to serving the Dominican charism of preaching.
- Geographically located in the middle of the United States, Aquinas' theological mission finds its home in the middle as well, striving to follow in the footsteps of St. Dominic, who intentionally centered himself *in medio Ecclesiae* so as to reach out to others in all directions.
- A Center of Institutional Studies, designated by the Order of Preachers to form Dominican friars in fulfillment of the *Ratio Studiorum Generalis* and rooted in the intellectual tradition of the Order so as to carry out its preaching mission.
- Two complementary student constituencies: Dominican student brothers preparing for ministry and lay women and men, along with other religious and ordained ministers, preparing for life-long service to the Church.
- Close-knit community situated adjacent to Saint Louis University where students have access to all the academic resources and many student support services of a major Catholic research university.
- **Signature programs:** the Doctor of Ministry in Preaching, the Master of Arts in Practical Theology–Health Care Mission, the Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies–Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, and the Graduate Certificate in Health Care Mission.
- **Core programs:** the Master of Divinity, the Master of Arts in Theology, the Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies.

PART II: VISION AND GOALS FOR 2027

Vision for 2027

As Aquinas Institute of Theology looks ahead to 2027, our Dominican theological school will respond to the challenges and needs of the Church and society through our unique mission in the following areas and ways:

- In a time in history when ecclesial and societal institutions are severely divided and polarized, Aquinas' theological mission to stand *in medio Ecclesiae* will characterize an essential way to strive for "the Truth" and contribute to the life of the Church.
- In response to the challenge of the 2021-2023 Church Synod "to open a participative and inclusive ecclesial process that offers everyone — especially those who for various reasons find themselves on the margins — the opportunity to express themselves and to be heard in order to contribute to the edification of the People of God," Aquinas will focus on new forms of community engagement and evangelization to reinvigorate its preaching mission.
- Attentive to the rapidly-changing demographics of the Catholic Church and society in the United States, Aquinas will create innovative ways to respond to new and emerging ecclesial frontiers, giving a particular emphasis to those under represented in the Church, especially Hispanic and Black Catholics, those disengaged from the Church, and those without any religious affiliation.

Three Overarching Goals

Arising from Aquinas Institute's Vision for 2027, we present the following three overarching goals that articulate the principal aims and aspirations of the strategic plan:

1. To institute organization-wide processes for evaluation and assessment in order to strengthen academic excellence.
2. To extend the school's presence and influence both locally and globally through active community engagement of diverse publics.
3. To achieve financial sustainability through a culture of philanthropy and institutional advancement to assure adequate resources to advance the school's mission.

PART III: PATHWAYS TO ACTION

Five Pathways to Action

Proceeding from the Overarching Goals, the following Five Pathways to Action will delineate the concrete tasks of the strategic plan, which in turn will be tethered to specific objectives that are behaviorally stated, measurable, and linked to departments responsible for carrying them out:

PATHWAY #1:

To attain academic excellence, Aquinas Institute will implement across all departments a comprehensive institutional effectiveness plan that integrates proper assessment and mission effectiveness into all academic programs, student life initiatives, and administrative operations, including the allocation of institutional resources.

Objectives

a. To set metrics and to collect and evaluate data across academic programs and support services that lead to an institution-wide culture of evaluation and overall assessment plan.
[Assessment and Reporting, Executive Team]

b. To interface with Board of Trustees committees for determining and setting proper assessment metrics for all programs and services.
[Academic Dean, Faculty, Communication and Marketing, Institutional Technology, Enrollment Management, Development, Registrar, Business Affairs, chairs of the following BOT committees: Academic Affairs, Finance, Marketing and Communications, Development]

c. To lay the groundwork and set in motion a self-study for ATS reaffirmation of accreditation beginning in the fall semester of 2024.
[Faculty, Self-Study Director and Assessment and Reporting]







PATHWAY #2:

To attain academic excellence, Aquinas Institute will establish a strategic and comprehensive enrollment plan that sets achievable metrics for inquiry, application, matriculation, and student services for all Aquinas academic programs.

Objectives

a. To build a strategic enrollment management infrastructure, with the help of consultants, that implements a measurable recruitment plan for all academic programs.
[Enrollment Management, Institutional Advancement, Marketing and Communication, BOT Academic Affairs, BOT Enrollment]

b. To collaborate with institutional advancement to market programs to prospective student populations with a plan to measure outcomes.
[Institutional Advancement, Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communication, BOT Marketing and Communications, Degree Program Directors, Alumni]

c. To integrate student needs assessment into a comprehensive student life plan.
[Enrollment Management, Assessment and Reporting, BOT Academic Affairs, BOT Enrollment]

PATHWAY #3:

To increase its community engagement of diverse publics, Aquinas Institute will execute a wide-ranging strategy for the school's institutional advancement through its Center for Community Engagement and Evangelization, its collaboration with other religious and civic institutions, and its partnerships with interested individuals for the mutually-beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources.

Objectives

a. To create a Center for Community Engagement and Evangelization that advances the school's outreach to local and global shareholders through non-degree programs.
[Institutional Advancement/Center for Community Engagement and Evangelization, Relevant BOT Committees]

b. To provide offerings for individual enrichment and continuing education in theology and ministry to interested individuals and parishes through the Center for Community Engagement and Evangelization.
[Institutional Advancement, Center for Community Engagement and Evangelization, Relevant BOT Committees]

c. To establish academic programs to provide for the intellectual formation of permanent deacons in the dioceses of the Southern and Central parts of the United States in particular.
[Dominican Provincial Leadership, Academic Dean, BOT Academic Affairs]

d. To implement the Memorandum of Understanding between Aquinas Institute and the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians) to provide greater opportunities for academic and institutional collaboration.
[Academic Dean, Director of Operations, Development; Vincentian Leadership, BOT Academic Affairs]

e. To develop programs and other opportunities for collaboration and outreach with alumni and local academic institutions of higher and secondary education.
[Academic Dean, Development, BOT Academic Affairs and Development]

f. To integrate development, enrollment, and communication plans into institutional advancement.
[Enrollment Management, Institutional Advancement, Marketing and Communication, BOT Academic Affairs and Marketing and Communications]

PATHWAY #4:

To achieve financial sustainability, Aquinas Institute will promote a culture of philanthropy in which the Board of Trustees, the administration, faculty, and staff embrace initiatives that advance fundraising, "friend-raising", and institutional advancement to further the Aquinas mission.

Objectives

a. To develop and integrate strategies to promote institution-wide participation in the school's development plan that include faculty and staff outreach and service.
[Faculty, Development/Institutional Advancement, BOT Development]

b. With the assistance of consultants, to integrate all development strategies, into institution-wide planning.
[Development, Business Manager, BOT Development and Finance]

c. To set metrics for development by effectively utilizing data-management software.
[Assessment and Reporting, Development]

d. With the assistance of consultants, to develop a marketing and communications plan with measurable outcomes that will advance the mission, the academic goals, and the institutional needs of Aquinas Institute.
[Communications and Marketing, Enrollment Management, BOT Marketing and Communications]







PATHWAY #5:

To achieve financial sustainability, Aquinas Institute will establish a 5-year financial and institutional sustainability plan that will enable the school to fulfill its mission for the next 20 years.

Objectives

a. To further diversify revenue and plan realistically for these initiatives to achieve break-even or surplus financial results for Aquinas over the next five years.
[Business Affairs, Development, BOT Finance and Development]

b. To achieve optimum financial reporting structures and metrics that accurately inform the administration and Board of Trustees [Members] of the school's financial profile.
[Business Affairs, Operations, Assessment and Reporting, BOT Finance]

c. To achieve and maintain unrestricted cash on-hand representing one half of the annual expense budget.
[Business Affairs, Operations, BOT Finance]



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23 SOUTH SPRING AVENUE, SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI 63108

314.256.8800 | INFO@AI.EDU | AI.EDU