

Preserving the St. Norbert Legacy: A Shared Promise of Stewardship 2024

To the St. Norbert Community,

Let me begin by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to colleagues across the college who have worked together to understand the challenges facing higher education and their impact on our campus. Demographic shifts, increased competition, and inflationary pressures are negatively affecting many institutions. St. Norbert College is taking immediate action toward creating a sustainable budget model that preserves our mission and ensures educational quality.

I am grateful for the collective leadership of our Board of Trustees, Norbertines, and campus community, for contributing to the numerous actions that comprise our developing stewardship plan. Many individuals have labored to make difficult decisions preparing us for an even brighter future as our college advances toward its sesquicentennial.

The Board of Trustees—notably Board Chair Fred Schmidt, Vice Chair Patti McKeithan, Finance Committee Chair Greg Nicklaus, and Vice Chair Phil Flynn—have demonstrated leadership in guiding efforts to address financial challenges that have been building in recent years. Their championing of our strategic actions reflects the collective resolve of the Board of Trustees to address the significant challenges and opportunities before us. Similarly, I am grateful for the support and generosity of Abbot Dane Radecki, O. Praem., the Abbot's Council, and our Norbertine colleagues as we work together to improve the college's operating performance and competitive positioning.

The unavoidable necessity of immediately addressing the college's financial situation prevented me from beginning my presidency as envisioned. However, during this process, I have grown to admire and cherish the ideals of St. Norbert College even more. My focus and commitment is to improve institutional performance so that we may continue to provide an outstanding, holistic education shaped by our three core traditions: Catholic, Norbertine, and liberal arts. Delivering on the promise of such a transformative education is the sacred mission driving our actions.

Our current situation

The college experienced two consecutive years of negative operating results (FY22 and FY23), and the FY24 budget showed a large deficit which we resolved through the reductions in Fall 2023, resulting in a balanced budget this fiscal year. In October 2023, the Board of Trustees directed the administration to balance the FY25 budget to address multiple years of negative operating performance, reduce future budget deficit projections, and prevent further erosion of the college's financial performance.

We considered multiple alternatives to balance the FY25 budget, including a substantial tuition increase, but our commitment to accessibility and affordability far outweighs such a consideration. Given this, we are responsibly reducing recurring expenses while ensuring educational quality *and* economic vitality. We continue our focus on mission integration, educational excellence, and student success while working to improve operations, contain costs, and identify ways to generate additional revenue.

The path forward

Our work to protect our institution's legacy, itself part of the 900-year legacy of the Norbertine Order, involves immediate and long-range efforts. Just as personnel and operating cuts were necessary to balance the current year's budget, balancing the FY25 budget (June 1, 2024 to May 31, 2025) again necessitates reductions. At last week's meeting, the Board of Trustees approved recommendations to balance the budget for the coming year, including:

- General non-personnel expense reductions
- Strategic use of endowment drawdown funds
- Improved annual fundraising results
- Savings from health plan design adjustments
- Increase in the Norbertine endowment distribution
- Personnel savings, including position and administrative expense reductions

More information regarding these decisions can be found [here](#).

The collaborative work and leadership across the college that has helped to address the unexpected scale of budget deficits identified upon my arrival last fall has been extraordinary. As we address immediate financial shortfalls, we continue our ongoing work: ***Preserving the St. Norbert Legacy: A Shared Promise of Stewardship***. Current strategic priorities inform this work and will be further engaged when the college launches its next strategic planning process.

Below are just a few of the many initiatives our community is pursuing to address negative operating results in recent years and position the college for future success:

- Deepening mission integration efforts by highlighting our distinctiveness as the only Norbertine college in the world;
- Balancing the FY24 and FY25 budgets through a series of cost-containing and revenue-generating efforts exceeding \$9.2 million;
- Establishing and implementing an Academic Portfolio Prioritization review process to facilitate ongoing program assessment to inform resource allocation decisions over time;
- Approving new academic offerings through internal program development (e.g., Engineering Physics major/minor and Earth Science major/Sustainability minor) or collaborative partnerships with groups such as RIZE (e.g., Supply Chain Management and Healthcare Administration majors);
- Advancing an Athletics Optimization Strategy to increase enrollment and fundraising results by expanding rosters, adding club sports, and raising dollars to address equity issues across programs among other institutional priorities;
- Launching an Integrated Planning and Budgeting Committee to link planning, budgeting, and assessment to improve transparency and support continuous improvement;
- Leveraging technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness across areas;
- Monetizing underperforming assets or enhancing their revenue-generating potential; and

- Empowering an Innovation Task Force to vet ideas and pressure test the most promising initiatives for possible investment.

The extraordinary generosity of the Norbertines

Despite all of the planning, reductions, and improvements, it was only through the extraordinary generosity of our founder and sponsor, the Norbertine Order, that we could achieve the Board of Trustees' directive to balance the FY25 budget. Abbot Dane Radecki, O. Praem., and the Abbot's Council granted my recent request for an exceedingly generous, multi-year gift demonstrating their support for college leadership and efforts to advance institutional mission. The Norbertines continue to be agents for positive change in this community and worldwide. St. Norbert College seeks to emulate the Norbertine spirit of generosity by sustaining a caring community of learners committed to the greater good of the college and the larger community.

Our tradition of excellence continues

Despite the short-term challenges facing the college, our community has much to celebrate:

- Breaking into the top 100 for national liberal arts colleges (#93) for the first time and rising in our social mobility ranking (#39), a measure of how successfully the college graduates Pell-eligible students (U.S. News & World Report);
- Planning for the May 2024 groundbreaking ceremony for the state-of-the-art Donald & Patricia Schneider Family Hall;
- Making incredible progress on our comprehensive fundraising campaign goal of \$125 million, celebrating the anniversary of the college's founding in 1898; and
- Delivering on our winning athletic tradition across multiple sports.

Moving forward together

As we continue to work to preserve the legacy of our beloved institution, we will track and communicate our progress. Senior leaders will continue to work with students, faculty, and staff through appropriate shared governance processes to take the steps necessary to ensure the college remains a compassionate and supportive community of learners as we respond to the needs of our time.

We will successfully navigate these challenges together—preserving the noble legacy of the college to which we are heirs for the benefit of future generations. I look forward to continuing to learn, serve, and lead—together.

With gratitude and faith,

Laurie M. Joyner, Ph.D.
President