



ST. EDWARD'S UNIVERSITY

A Destination University for a More Just World

2023-2024
STRATEGIC PLAN REPORT

As we reflect on the past year, we celebrate numerous historic achievements

at St. Edward's University. In the midst of a challenging moment for higher education everywhere, the institution has achieved its highest-ever ranking by *U.S. News & World Report*; has ranked third in the country among master's-granting institutions for producing Fulbright students; and has received a record amount of grant funds and private gifts. We are honored that our efforts have been recognized by the Texas Legislature, the Austin community and federal funders.

President Fuentes celebrates students' milestone achievements at the December 2023 Commencement.

+ These accomplishments are the **result of hard work** by the entire St. Edward's community – faculty, staff, students and alumni – to whom

I am personally grateful. As we continue our identity as a destination university for a more just world, our community remains anchored to our Holy Cross mission. We remember to care for one another so that we can build a better world on our campus and beyond.

+ St. Edward's remains committed to academic excellence in the liberal arts and sciences as we develop new programs to address the critical needs of society. The establishment of our **School of Health Sciences** has been very well received and is a testament to our effective partnerships with the Austin community. We celebrate the launch of our RN to BSN nursing program. Having secured approval from the Texas Board of Nursing, we are also starting our traditional Bachelor of Nursing and Accelerated Bachelor of Nursing programs in Fall 2024 with more than 800 incoming freshman applications for admission. At a time when professionals with advanced nursing credentials are in high demand, we are pleased to have quickly hired six respected faculty. Our nursing students will learn in state-of-the-art simulation and clinical skills labs. The university is grateful to its partners who have supported us in building a healthcare program that will give back by training compassionate, ethical, and, in many cases, bilingual practitioners.

+ In addition to building these programs, we have **adapted our Computer Science curriculum** to respond to industry demands. The addition of tracks in cybersecurity, software development and artificial intelligence will prepare our students to take advantage of expanding opportunities in these fields. Recognizing the role that data science and animation play in the Austin economy, we have added faculty in these areas as well.

+ Our Holy Cross values teach us to meet students where they are, by offering individualized support for their academic, social, personal and career development. We have launched numerous initiatives to help all students succeed through college and beyond. St. Edward's has supported underserved



students through our **College Assistance Migrant Program** for more than half a century. Our initiatives for first-generation college students continue that tradition. We have built wrap-around support for these students, including a first-year seminar, a first-gen parent track at orientation, and customized internship programs.

- + In addition, we have created programs that support academic success as well as a more vibrant, dynamic campus life. We now offer tutoring within the residence halls, and we have strengthened our **Honors Program Living Learning Community**. New programs for international students build friendships and connect them to resources in Austin. And a mutually beneficial partnership with Huston-Tillotson University has brought 136 H-T students into our community as they live in our residence halls. We celebrate the addition of five new varsity athletic teams: men's soccer, men's and women's indoor track, cheer, and STUNT, a competition using technical elements of cheer that is the fastest-growing female sport in the nation. To enhance career preparation, we have built a framework supporting students in junior-year internships and have engaged Faculty Fellows to help students connect their classroom education with career options.
- + St. Edward's is increasingly recognized as a leader in environmental justice. A new living laboratory on campus, **the East Woods**, is devoted to teaching and research of environmental issues. The university was noted as a Tree

Campus USA by the Arbor Day Foundation for the ninth consecutive year, and the Austin Community Foundation partnered with us to support additional tree-planting efforts. With the help of a grant from the City of Austin, we launched the Climate Resiliency Living Laboratory.

- + We celebrate these investments along with many others: this past year St. Edward's received **a historic number of gifts over \$500,000**. Many recent gifts have enabled us to expand scholarships and offer more students a St. Edward's education. We continue to move toward the launch of our capital campaign and have already received commitments of \$42 million. We are incredibly grateful for the community's support of our priorities.
- + Over the past three years, St. Edward's has seen an **11 percent growth in enrollment**. This significant accomplishment tells us we are doing something right, but it is essential that we continue to reflect, to recenter our Holy Cross mission, and to remain committed to social and environmental justice as we move forward. St. Edward's University is on the right trajectory, and we are grateful for every achievement, but our work continues. We hope you will join us.



MONTSERRAT
'MONTSE' FUENTES, PhD
PRESIDENT,
ST. EDWARD'S UNIVERSITY

OUR VISION

St. Edward's University, a Holy Cross, Catholic institution, will improve lives and transform communities by providing an excellent education of distinguished quality that prepares students to create a more humane, just and sustainable world.

OUR GOALS



Academic Excellence and Distinction

Achieve academic excellence and distinction through courageous teaching, research and creative work, and the development of knowledge, skills and opportunities to connect to the world.



Living the Holy Cross Mission

Build a culturally inclusive and aware community that fosters diversity, equity and justice in the Holy Cross tradition and through Catholic Social Teaching.



Vibrant and Inclusive Campus

Foster Hilltopper pride and wellbeing through intentional investment in physical space, arts, athletics and multicultural, social and experiential programming where all students engage and thrive.



Austin Impact

Engage local communities through transformative experiential learning, research, service and leadership experiences.



Infrastructure and Resources

Develop infrastructure and resources to achieve the strategic plan goals and ensure institutional sustainability.

Celebrating Outstanding Accomplishments

We marked significant milestones in the second year of Strategic Plan 2027.

- + St. Edward's was listed for the sixth time on the **Phi Theta Kappa Transfer Honor Roll**.
- + **The Bill Munday School of Business AACSB-accredited online graduate programs** ranked #12 nationally and #1 in Texas for student engagement in the *U.S. News & World Report 2024-2025* rankings.
- + The university earned the **Excelexia in Education Seal of Excelexia** for success in serving Latino students.

- + Texas House Resolution 23, filed by Representative Lulu Flores (HD 51), recognized St. Edward's for **its robust support for Latino students and their academic success**.
- + St. Edward's earned the **NCAA Division II Presidents' Award for Academic Excellence** for the fifth consecutive year.
- + The student newspaper, **Hilltop Views**, collected 25 awards at the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association Convention.

+ We welcomed another **diverse, accomplished freshman class** to St. Edward's.

659
Freshman students

6%
International enrollment

65%
Minority enrollment

55
Countries represented

33%
First-generation college students



#6

Best University in the West*

#7

Moved up from #17 as a **top performing university for social mobility***

13

Years that St. Edward's has been a **top producer of Fulbright Students**

#3

Fulbright Student producer among master's institutions

8

Online, hybrid and in-person **graduate programs**

81.5%

First-year retention rate for first-generation students in fall 2023

*U.S. News & World Report

\$14.5

MILLION

St. Edward's is the recipient of more than **\$14.5 million in active research grants**. For the second consecutive year, faculty in the School of Arts and Humanities received the distinction of a National Endowment for the Humanities award. The university currently holds federal funding from the NSF, USDA, NIH, EPA, NASA, and the U.S. Department of Education. The \$5M USDA NextGen grant is already positively impacting hundreds of students at St. Edward's with paid internships, state-of-the-art lab equipment and expert seminars.

\$1.8 MILLION

Our annual expenditures of federal, state and foundation funds on **activities that support faculty and student achievement** is \$1.8 million.



Expanding Academic Opportunities

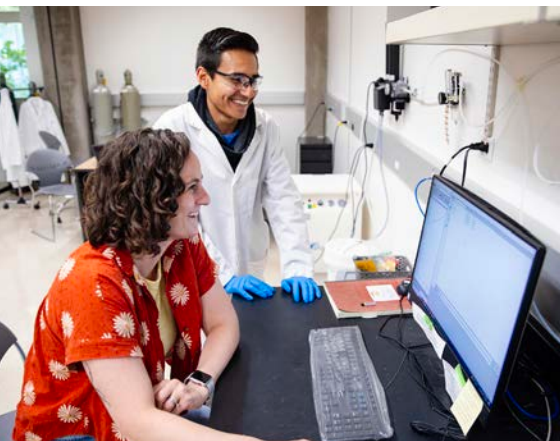
Our Health Sciences initiative continued substantial progress. The pre-licensure Nursing programs received approval from the Texas Board of Nursing to launch in Fall 2024. The renovation of Fleck Hall is complete with the **Nursing lab space** and the **Simulation Learning Resource Center (SLRC)** ready to welcome students.

We focused on Academic Clusters and programs that connect to the Austin

economy by creating **software development, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity concentrations** in the Computer Science degree and hiring faculty in data science and animation. Over the past year, we've developed 26 graduate pathways that link existing undergraduate majors to our graduate programs, providing a streamlined way for students to complete both degrees at St. Edward's.

“
Focused on our university mission and driven by courageous teaching and innovative research, our community of dedicated faculty prepares future leaders to solve the world's most pressing problems.”

Jason Callahan, PhD
Professor of Mathematics
President, Faculty Senate





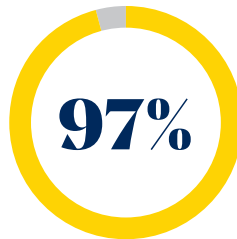
Making an Impact in Austin

We have almost achieved our **five-year goal that 100% of graduates will participate in Advanced Experiential Learning**, and we've established systematic tracking methods to measure student participation. 680+ internship sites have hosted St. Edward's students in the past 3 years, and 45 sites hosted 3+ interns during that time period.

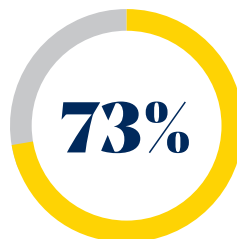


Our valued partners throughout Austin and beyond are instrumental in providing networking, advanced experiential learning, internships and hiring opportunities for students to pursue their career aspirations after graduation from St. Edward's University."

Alexis Stokes, JD
Dean
The Bill Munday School of Business



of graduates participated in Advanced Experiential Learning
5-year goal 100%



of seniors completed internships
5-year goal 85%

680+
active internship sites in the past 3 years

Delivering a Vibrant Student Experience

286

Student-athletes made the Lone Star Conference Commissioner's Honor Roll by earning a 3.3 GPA or higher in 2023-2024

8

Years Hilltoppers have received the prestigious NCAA DII Presidents' Award for Academic Excellence

4

Productions from our award-winning Mary Moody Northern Theatre

1379

Students lived on campus, enhancing student engagement and success



St. Edward's has prepared me to embrace and inspire the world surrounding the hilltop. With a highly valued education, invaluable connections, and countless transformative experiences, I have witnessed St. Edward's stand firm in its mission of educating the hearts of our students, molding them into committed and visionary leaders."

Mikayla Pastrano '25
President,
Student Government Association



Living the Holy Cross Mission

Student Achievement

We invested in the success of first-generation and underserved students with new initiatives including:

- + A **First-Year Seminar** that helped close achievement gaps and increase retention rates for at-risk students.
- + 100+ incoming **first-generation freshman students** participated in a special set of Orientation activities during Anchors Weekend.
- + 60+ **parents of first-generation entering students** participated in new, tailored programs during Parent Orientation.

Faculty and Staff

At the end of 2023, we completed our Benefits and Compensation Study and moved to the implementation stage, using peer data from the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources, developing a sick pool leave bank to support employees experiencing catastrophic leave situations, diversifying and enhancing our benefits package and also addressing internal salary inequities for faculty and staff.

Faculty and staff also came together in the Spring semester to recognize and celebrate longtime employment at St. Edward's, career accomplishments and peer recognition for excellence.



Cultivating an inclusive and vibrant campus through university collaboration empowers the next generation of leaders on the hilltop to go out and take on their world in Austin and around the globe.”

Abbie O'Neill
Associate Director of Student Involvement
Chair, Staff Council



This year saw the return of the men's soccer team and the second year of cheer as a varsity sport. These teams brought 46 new student athletes, eight more than the combined goal. St. Edward's now fields 13 varsity teams.

Athletics also hired staff for **STUNT** and men's and women's **Indoor Track** teams and initiated new **student athlete recruitment** in order to launch these teams in the 2024-25 academic year.

Our award-winning **theater training program** at **Mary Moody Northen Theatre**, one of the nation's few undergraduate-only programs incorporating a full season under the Actors' Equity Association, celebrated **more than 50 years** of theatrical productions on the hilltop.

We celebrated the first year of a three-year **external partnership** with **Huston-Tillotson University** with 136 students living in Teresa Hall.

Building for the Future

Strategic Enrollment Management

We added targeted recruitment programs and strengthened retention initiatives, resulting in stronger incoming student academic profiles and transfer partnerships.

- + The number of freshmen admitted within the **top two academic ratings** increased by 42%.
- + We continued building academic partnerships with Austin Community College (ACC) and hosted a **“Hilltopper Takeover”** event at ACC, featuring deans, cabinet members, admission representatives and students.
- + Faculty and staff **contacted admitted students** through the It Takes a Village campaign. Deposits increased significantly among students who spoke to one of the 74 faculty and staff volunteers.

29% Increase in freshmen admitted to the Honors Program



Environmental Justice

For the 9th year, St. Edward's was honored with the designation of **Tree Campus USA** by the Arbor Day Foundation.

We opened the **East Woods**, a campus space devoted to the teaching and research of environmental issues.

With a grant from the City of Austin, we launched the **Climate Resiliency Living Laboratory**.

We achieved our 5-year aspirational goal for **reducing energy consumption** on campus, decreasing energy used to 103.5K MBtu.

“

As a Climate Resiliency Living Laboratory intern, I promote environmental justice with Associate Professor Amy Concilio and Sustainability Coordinator Roy Johnson. We monitor, collect samples from, and maintain native Texas trees threatened by drought, high temperatures and freezes. It's an honor learning from them and preparing for the effects of climate change.”

Janiece Jefferson '25
Intern and McNair Scholar



Investing in Our Students

STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

\$71
MILLION

Scholarships, grants and aid awarded to students in 2023–2024

\$5M

Amount of endowed and restricted scholarships awarded
(23% of students)

171 donor-funded scholarships and awards supported 725 students

PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT

\$6.2+
MILLION

In new giving in fiscal year 2024



27% increase in unrestricted giving

10% increase in the number of \$5K+ donors

12% increase in average gift amount for new gifts and pledges

MAJOR GIFTS



\$750K

from the Tejemos Foundation for scholarship grants to support students from Uganda

\$525K

donor gift to the Bill Munday Outstanding Business Student Endowed Scholarship and The St. Edward's Fund

\$500K

bequest to support athletics from Mary and John Lucas '65

\$500K

bequest to endow The Dr. Emma Lou Linn Scholar Athlete Award and The Dr. Emma Lou Linn Student/Faculty Research Fund from Dr. Emma Lou Linn and Lauren Love

2024–2025 PRIORITIES

1 Advance Academic Innovation and Technology

- + Cultivate pedagogical approaches and ethical, innovative AI practices

2 Elevate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Endeavors

- + Enhance grant infrastructure, research productivity and creative endeavors
- + Seek Research College and University designation

3 Bridge Student Learning Achievement Gaps

- + Implement strategies to mitigate learning disparities, academic achievement, retention and overall success

4 Enhance Residential Learning Experiences

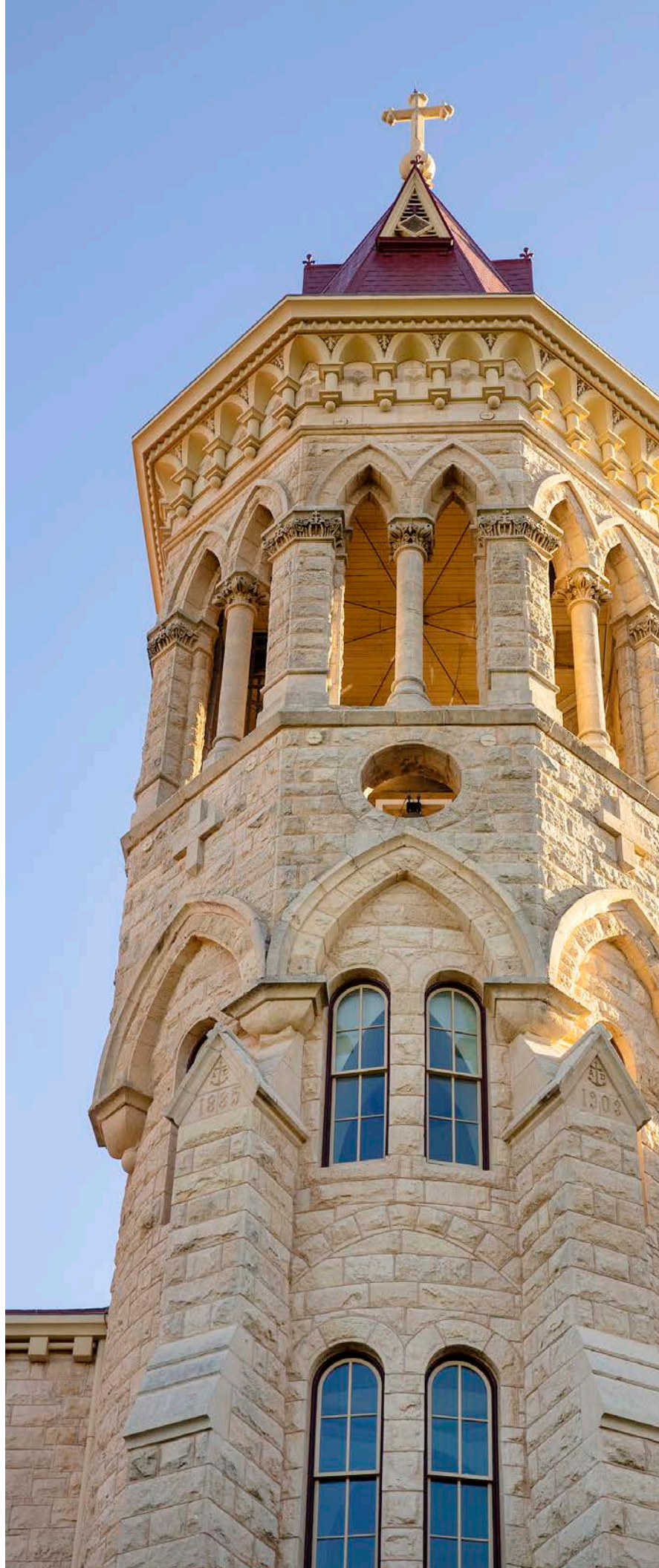
- + Integrate academics into residential life to promote retention and holistic student development

5 Strengthen Austin Strategic Partnerships and Tailored Training

- + Offer community and industry partners specialized academic programs, training, research, graduate programs, lifelong and executive education

6 Build Community

- + Clarify shared governance and our governance structure with respect, inclusion and appreciation
- + Prioritize transparent communication and engagement across all levels to operate with one shared vision



Preparing for the Future

Year 3 of Strategic Plan 2027 promises a continued partnership between St. Edward's and our Austin community. Together, we will address regional challenges in healthcare and technology and leverage the robust ecosystem of Austin and Central Texas to provide a transformative education for our students. Our focus remains on integrated experiential learning opportunities, particularly internships and undergraduate research with faculty, that prepare students for post-graduation opportunities.

The School of Health Sciences has already made an impact with the launch of our RN to BSN program and, this year, the traditional and accelerated BSN degrees. In the coming year, we will continue to build the nursing program, so we can offer graduate nursing education in Fall 2025. We also will welcome a program director for occupational therapy and prepare to enter the OT accreditation process. These programs align with our mission and prioritize equitable access to healthcare and the training of healthcare professionals from a wide variety of backgrounds.

In the realm of academic innovation and technology, we will have a campuswide conversation about the role artificial intelligence will play in our curriculum and programs. Employers will expect our graduates to be familiar with these tools, and our job as a university is to help students develop AI fluency and thoughtfully consider the implications of using these technologies. We will build on the work of a St. Edward's team that has been studying how AI impacts our work, and learn from a Faculty Fellow hosted by the Center for Teaching Excellence and focused on the use of generative AI in the classroom. We will be studying how best to incorporate AI into the curriculum in ethical and innovative ways, and how AI might support faculty research, scholarship, and creative work.

The university has made incredible progress in expanding its portfolio of federal grants and foundation funding. Our priority has been to

cultivate a campus environment that encourages and supports faculty in seeking external funding for their work. Their impressive success has also created opportunities for more students to engage in research with their professors. As we celebrate these accomplishments, we continue to move toward our goal of achieving the Carnegie classification of Research College and University.

In addition to undergraduate research, St. Edward's is known for offering an individualized approach to education. We are expanding efforts to support first-generation students academically, socially and financially. In courses such as mathematics and biology, where some students traditionally have struggled, we are introducing new initiatives to help students succeed and prepare them for their higher-level classes. And for students who seek greater academic challenges, our Honors Program is developing a residential community and peer mentorship.

This personalized approach extends to our career preparation programs. As we progress toward our goal of seeing 85 percent of students complete at least one internship before graduation, we are increasing our focus on junior-year internships. This strategy encourages students to prepare for their internship earlier, leading to a more meaningful experience. It allows students to gain professional experience before the senior-year internship and increases access to desired career fields, which is central to our long-term goal of increasing social mobility. Our partnerships in the community are critical to creating access to relevant internships for all students.

As we move into Year 3, I am excited to note that the priorities of Strategic Plan 2027 have become central features of the academic experience at St. Edward's. In the midst of a continually evolving external environment, we have maintained focus and continue to make tremendous progress toward our shared vision.

Marianne Ward-Peradoza



**MARIANNE
WARD-PERADOZA, PhD**
PROVOST,
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